

# **Ngā wāhine kaha from Syria:**

**The experience of former refugee women from  
Syria resettling in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Masters in  
Development Studies Degree**

**April 2017**



# Abstract

This thesis examines the experience of former refugee women from Syria resettling in Aotearoa New Zealand. It focuses on Syrian women who have resettled in the Wellington region and Dunedin - the two main areas to which Syrian refugees have been allocated. The study documented Syrian refugee women's perspectives about resettlement satisfaction, their strengths and challenges, and their ideas for community development.

The methodology and analysis for the study incorporated the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to resettlement and the Mana Wahine framework. Through forty-five survey participants and three focus groups, the study found that the integration of wairua/spirituality, cultural identity, language and whanaungatanga/relationships in the family was very important for Syrian women's resettlement in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This study found gender roles between men and women strongly exist in the Syrian community. Many refugee women found their roles changed and lost the support they used to have from family members back home. Participants also expressed facing isolation resulting from cultural aspects. These show refugee women have bigger challenges to integration compared to their male counterparts, and that Syrian women have specific cultural rights related to their gender and religion. However, refugee resettlement services and community development were delivered the same way for men and women, and more types of supports are needed for refugee women.



**I dedicate this thesis to my beloved children:  
Ruben Manasye Setiawan and Kezia Tabitha Setiawan**



**Who have seen me fall, fight back and stand tall**

**Who turn my tears to joy every time I fall**

**My children, you are the air I breathe**

**The rain drop of every falling leaf**

**A thousand miles we have travelled so far**

**My shooting stars that's what you are**



# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family who has always been there for me with their endless support and encouragement-they are the biggest treasure in my life. I would also like to thank my wonderful husband Tony Fitzgerald for loving me, making sure our children are well looked after and for taking temporary ownership of my neglected kitchen. I thank my children Ruben Setiawan and Kezia Setiawan for their constant pat on the back, and also my two other children Garrett Fitzgerald and Shannon Fitzgerald. They fully understood that my positionality as a fulltime mother with fulltime job and research study in English, which is my third language, certainly needed a whole village to support.

I am forever grateful for the assistance, guidance and supervision of my mentor Dr. Polly Stupples during the writing of this thesis. Her richness in knowledge and kindness in heart have given me consolation throughout the research process-particularly when I felt I had enough and just wanted my life back, which unfortunately came up quite often during the study.

I would also like to thank my managers at New Zealand Red Cross: Rachel O'Connor, Rachel Kidd, Shane La'ulu and Lucy Anderson for their inspirations in humanity and words of optimism. Special thanks to my colleagues Sarjon Warde, Ramia Saidawi, Yousef Mazraeh, Taghrid Basha and Marwa Othman, who shared their expertise and knowledge in cross-cultural areas of Syrian refugees.

I truly appreciate and value the knowledge I learned from Riripeti Reedy, she has given me deep understanding in the possibility of applying Mana Wahine framework into this research study and the resettlement of Syrian refugee women.

Most of all my gratitude goes to the participants of this research study for their time and generosity in sharing their experiences with me.





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# Acronyms

ANZASW	Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Social Workers
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CAB	Citizen Advice Bureau
CLC	Community Law Centre
CRF	ChangeMakers Refugee Forum
ELP	English Language Partners
ETC	English Teaching College
GP	General Practitioner
HNZ	Housing New Zealand
ICCI	Inter-Church Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRD	Inland Revenue Department
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
MBIE	Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MRRC	Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-Government Agency
P2E	Pathways to Employment
RFSC	Refugee Family Support Category
RTR	Refugee Trauma Recovery
SWRB	Social Workers Registration Board
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
WCC	Wellington City Council
WINZ	Work and Income New Zealand

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## **General context, purpose, and aims**

Refugee placement is a highly complex and large-scale problem given the number of refugees in the world. Around the world, millions of people are prepared to suffer and to risk death in search of safety for their lives because staying where they are seems almost impossible. Refugee movements in Syria and other Mediterranean countries have gained extraordinary momentum in recent months (UNHCR, 2015).

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, 50 Syrian families have been displaced every hour of every day (OCRA, 2015). Within Syria, public facilities such as healthcare, education systems, and other infrastructures have been destroyed. In addition, attacks against residential areas, historical places, schools, hospitals, water systems, power plants, places of worship, economic assets and other civilian infrastructures continue relentless. Across all aspects, the war situation in Syria has worsened since the beginning of 2015. At the end of 2015, humanitarian and protection needs of citizens had become tremendously high and continue to rise at a staggering rate (UNOCHA, 2016). In the absence of a solution, human rights violations, abuses and tortures continue to occur in the context of widespread insecurity and in disregard of international law, international human law, and human rights law (OCHA, 2016).

Some of the refugees who have fled this horrific situation have been welcomed to New Zealand over the last two years. This thesis explores the experience of Syrian refugee women resettling in New Zealand. I focus on refugee women because they carry more responsibilities for the protection of their children and face more challenges in practising their culture and their religion. In this thesis, I draw on a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to resettlement and Mana Wahine - a Māori strengths-based feminist theory, as my theoretical frameworks to advance the argument that former refugee Syrian women have different

needs from Syrian men, and they show resilience but face big challenges in their refugee journey.

New Zealand is one of over 140 countries that are signatories to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relation to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2015), which are two key international agreements on refugees that have immigration consequences. New Zealand also has protection obligations under the 1984 Convention Against Torture and 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (OHCHR, 2016). New Zealand plays an important role as a good international citizen and places a high value on human rights.

By fleeing their native countries, refugees are unwillingly giving up their established social identity and traditions. Resettlement in a third country gives refugees the chance to build a new social identity; however, having no knowledge and understanding of the culture of the resettlement country can be a big challenge for refugees. Hence the initial settlement period is likely to be a period of re-socialisation, during which refugees become familiar with their new way of life and learn the necessary skills in order to resettle and gain a foothold in the social structure they are as yet unaccustomed to (Neuwirth, 1988). At this stage, refugee women depend on appropriate support from the host country.

After refugees arrive in New Zealand, they are granted New Zealand Permanent Residency. They are officially New Zealanders or Kiwis. Many choose to call themselves “former refugees”, and others do not want to have any affiliation with refugees. For the purpose of this research, I call this group refugees or former refugees, and I focus on those who came from Syria from 2014 to 2016 and were settled in the Wellington region and Dunedin.

New Zealand’s first Syrian refugees arrived in November 2014. When refugees arrive in New Zealand, they are in a safer place but their long journey has just begun because adjusting to their new environment involves a high degree of complex processes (Boscan, 2013; Debski, 2008; Ennis, 2001; Fangen, 2006; Gray & Elliott, 2001). Some refugees struggle to cope, making it another very difficult experience in their journey. In addition to the trauma they suffer, refugees must navigate their new societies, during which various factors



influence their successful resettlement. To add to the complexity, the definition of successful resettlement is still open to much interpretations and debates.

Refugees bring certain expectations of what their new lives will entail in the host country upon resettlement (Shrestha, 2011). Host country governments have their expectations as well, as do non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social workers, volunteers and other individuals who help facilitate refugee resettlement (Lang-Cox, 2012). Essentially, all parties involved have the same goal: a successful resettlement.

In this research project, I analyse the experience of former refugee Syrian women who have resettled in New Zealand in order to determine the extent of which their resettlement has been successful in their own terms and to explore what other support is needed for this particular community. Underpinning the primary research objective are the major research question and two sub-questions:

Main question: What is the experience of resettlement like for Syrian former refugee women in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Sub-questions:

- From the participants' recent experiences, what are their strengths and challenges as refugee women?
- How would they like to be supported in developing their community?

I hope this research project can fill a knowledge gap, as there has not been any research study done in this area on Syrian women in New Zealand. Such literature can be usefully incorporated into intercultural awareness to develop activities that are culturally appropriate to Syrian community development, particularly for the women. Through this research, I would like to optimise the inclusion of former refugee women rather than exclusiveness and generalisation; this may be the key to meaningful participation and successful resettlement. It fits well with the community development aspect of development studies.

## **My positionality and interest in this research project**

Being a migrant myself and a resettlement social worker by profession have inspired me to conduct a research study in refugee resettlement. My role in providing resettlement support for newly arrived refugees has given me a tremendous opportunity to be involved and work with people from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Although a tough life was the main reason for my own voluntary migration, unlike refugees, I had the opportunity to choose which country I wanted to migrate to as well as allowing enough preparation for my children and myself to resettle in a new place. However, even in these circumstances both my children and I had mixed emotions in facing the fact that none of us knew whether we were going to resettle well or hate the place and not be able to cope. Refugees have little or no choice about their movement or destination. Because of the persecution they face, their most basic rights are on the line and most of the time they do not know when or in which country they are going to resettle.

In my profession, I see the challenges faced by refugee women when they first arrive on a daily basis. Not being able to communicate in English, adapting to the new culture, challenges in practising their religion, shifting gender roles and learning to navigate the city, the new institutions and the new system seem to be common resettlement issues. Former refugee women also have expectations that are frequently not met when they resettle, and this impacts on their wellbeing.

## **Why Syrian former refugee women?**

There are three different categories refugees under the quota programme: emergency cases, medical cases and women-at-risk category. In considering the nature of resettlement under the women-at-risk category, a big number of refugees from Syria are women, and some of them are women with children. Not many support facilities in New Zealand are designed specifically for former refugee women as single persons or solo parents, yet the challenges they face are formidable. In my work, it is clear that more targeted programmes to support women are needed.

The majority of Syrian women are Muslims, and refugee Muslim women face a number of tremendous obstacles in the resettlement process within New Zealand. Syrian Muslims are a religious minority in New Zealand that faces the potential of racial attack in a climate of fear and suspicion that has emerged after terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe. As former refugees, they are struggling to put past traumas behind them and find security in a strange land with different customs. As women, they are trying to find a voice for themselves amidst ethnic traditions that limit their range of expressions.

In a Wellington-based study of Burmese former refugee women, Kamri-McGurk (2012) found evidence to suggest that former refugee women appreciate the opportunities New Zealand has to offer. However, learning a new language, new culture, and seeking employment have been identified as some of the barriers faced by the former refugees. Another main concern expressed by the former refugee women interviewed by Kamri-McGurk was keeping their culture and families intact, as much as they would back in their home country. Similar findings were reported by DeSouza (2011), on former refugee women who are on their own in New Zealand, in that raising children in New Zealand brought extra stresses to their resettlement. These included concerns about the loss of culture, values and language within their families and concerns about the consumption of alcohol, gender mixing and lack of respect to elders as less acceptable values. As Martin (1992) argues refugee women often experience a new role as principal maintainers of the traditional culture.

Collie, Kindon, Liu, and Podsiadlowski (2010) conducted a research study on how young Assyrian women in New Zealand manage their expectations and assumptions about how they should adapt or maintain their culture. Whilst a number of participants pointed out that they considered New Zealand to be their home, some New Zealanders made it difficult for them to feel this way. Some participants stated they were being discriminated against, although most of those who perceived discrimination in New Zealand indicated that they would prefer to live in New Zealand rather than return to Iraq because they had become used to the New Zealand lifestyle and could no longer speak Arabic.

Almost all of the Syrian former refugees under the refugee quota programme resettled in the Wellington region and Dunedin. The Syrian refugee women who

arrived in that intake faced no exceptions to such challenges in their resettlement. Many of them were of the Sunni faith, but there were very few mosques in the Wellington region, and in the locations that were far from where the former refugees were residing. This has made it challenging for them to remain engaged with their community. Dunedin became a new resettlement location in 2016 for Syrian former refugees. As a new resettlement location, it has had some challenges too, such as very few shops selling halal foods and all the services being inexperienced in providing services to refugees.

Different gender roles are also part of the Syrian culture where men and women have different roles and degrees of authority. It is evident that the different gender roles among Muslim refugee communities have contributed different cultural expectations and can lead to isolation (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007), which can have negative impacts on the women's resettlement. While human basic rights were well looked after in New Zealand, HRBA focuses more on higher level rights than basic human rights. In this research I have adopted a Mana Wahine framework to help understand the importance of gender roles and the types of support needed for the resettlement of Syrian women.

It is hoped that this research, the first on Syrian women's experience resettling in New Zealand, will be a step towards understanding the complexities of the issues that unfold, and to support the needs of this newly settled group. And it contributes to a small but significant body of literature on the experience of women refugees resettling in New Zealand.

## **Method/design of research**

I have used a mixed-method design research. First, I used a survey with Syrian women in Wellington and Dunedin on to gather responses on their resettlement experiences. The surveys consisted of multi-choice questionnaires. The surveys were used as baseline data consisting of multiple-choice questionnaires to allow for statistical analysis. The questions were in writing and translated into Arabic. The questions were also explained verbally to participants who were illiterate.

Building on the survey, I ran three focus groups with Syrian women to further explore their experiences. The focus groups were based upon phenomenological enquiry, which used both qualitative and naturalistic

approaches to inductively and holistically understand the participants' experience in context-specific settings. It involves studies that are carried out in the participants' natural setting (Mitaera, 2008), from which meanings were taken from the data to reach conclusions.

During the focus groups I ask the questions in an interactive way where participants were free to talk with other group members (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Group members influenced each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion. The participants were given prior notice to allow them to think about the issues ahead of time, so that their minds would have already started forming opinions when they attended the focus groups.

## **Thesis outline**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. After introducing the thesis in Chapter One, Chapter Two provides the context of this study by explaining the international context of refugees and refugee situations in Syria before turning to New Zealand and its resettlement programme.

Chapter Three examines the relevant literature, focusing on Syrian women and describing their plight during the refugee experience and resettlement challenges. This chapter also describes the Human Rights-Based Approach to resettlement and Mana Wahine used as the theoretical framework of this research project.

Chapter Four discusses the methods of this study, which uses mix-method that is both quantitative and qualitative, together with the reasons for choosing this approach. The practical steps taken to conduct the surveys and focus groups are explained. The ethical considerations of the study are also set out in this chapter.

Chapter Five presents the findings and analysis of the surveys and focus group discussions. Then I discuss how my findings connect with the literature on refugee resettlement in Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven provides some conclusions, followed by some recommendations for refugee resettlement service providers and possible areas for future research.

# CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF RESETTLEMENT FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

## Introduction

In this chapter, I hope to explore why and how Syrian former refugees come to New Zealand and what services are available for them in order to help answer the research question: “what is the experience of resettlement like for Syrian women in New Zealand?” I start with defining refugees in the context of this research study, while distinguishing them from internally displaced people, migrants, asylum seekers and stateless people.

This chapter also explains some of the background to the conflicts in Syria, the resulting refugee crisis and the refugee resettlement programme in New Zealand, with the purpose of understanding why appropriate resettlement support is necessary for Syrian former refugees. This chapter goes on to describe the role of Immigration New Zealand as a government agency and NZ Red Cross as an NGO in resettling Syrian former refugees in order to understand what types of support quota refugees receive on arrival in Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) and the services provided for them once they resettle in the local resettlement areas.

## 2. 1. Defining refugees

The official definition of refugees was set by the United Nations. In 1951, the United Nations held a conference of ambassadors on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons in Geneva. This conference led to the treaty called the “Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees” on 28 July 1951. The legal definition of a refugee, according to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, is that of a person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or,

owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (United Nations, 1967).

However, there are many groups of people who flee their homes in fear of their lives but may or may not apply for refugee status. For example the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) who may have fled their homes for similar reasons as refugees but are within the territory of their own country (OHCHR, 2016), which according to the 1951 Convention, they are not officially refugees. This type of refugee situation has very little chance, if any, of resettlement in another country.

Another refugee situation is when people fleeing their country of origin, enter another country as visitors or migrants and seek asylum in that country. An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of nationality and applied for asylum in another country, but their claim to refugee status has not yet been decided (MBIE, 2015). Some asylum seekers, whose asylum applications have been unsuccessful, voluntarily return to their home country, while others are forcibly returned, and some find it too dangerous to return (Refugee Council, 2016).

Stateless Persons also have neither an official refugee status nor a citizenship (OHCHR, 2016). Statelessness is usually caused by discrimination against certain groups (United Nations, 2016), for example the Rohingya minority group in Myanmar, who practise Sunni Islam which is distinct from the majority population who are mostly Buddhist (Lewa, 2009). Because they do not have citizenship, stateless people are very vulnerable, with minimum to no access to health care, education and employment in the country where they reside. Some stateless persons cross an international border and claim refugee status in another country while others never leave the country they reside in.

The discussion above shows that there are many categories and situations refugees are under, and how complex refugee experience can become. While refugee resettlement is a big area, this study can only cover a very small part of it because I only focus on refugee resettlement of Syrian former refugee women who are officially recognised and registered by UNHCR and come to New Zealand under the New Zealand refugee quota programme.



## **2.2. The Syrian war and the refugee situation in Syria**

To understand the importance of resettlement for Syrian former refugees, it is necessary to understand the cause of the conflicts that have led to their flights. Below I briefly summarise Syria conflict, including the political agendas being escalated by different countries and causing such suffering to millions of civilians.

### **The Syrian war**

Many people have different opinions on what has been happening in Syria and who is responsible for the situation that led to the biggest refugee crisis in the world from a single conflict in a generation (ECHO, 2016). Historically, “Greater Syria” encompassed much of Levant – today’s states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan, and also a portion of Turkey (Nassar, 2013). Recently, Syria’s geopolitical position brought it to the attention of many different rivalries between the U.S., the U.K. and France on one side, and Russia and China on the other (Hashemi & Postel, 2013) and it has often been a battleground for these powerful nations.

The majority of Syrians are Sunni Muslims, but in February 1971, Hafez al-Assad became Syria’s first Alawi President, which changed the Syrian tradition of having a Sunni President (van Dam, 1979). Van Dam argues that after years of conflicts, Syrians hoped that Hafez al-Assad would bring stability to the country but in contrast, a monopoly on trade with the rest of the world was also operated by the Assad regime. Patterson (2000) concurs corruption then became the norm and an appalling situation developed as smuggling rings and an illegal market spread over the Syrian and Lebanese borders. The corruption in the Syrian government also aggravated the situation: in 1978, 99.6 percent of the voters approved Assad’s new term, while 1985 the vote was 99.9 percent (Patterson, 2000). According to Patterson, there was no other candidate to vote for and the vote percentage was used to claim that his regime was democratic and had the support of the people.

In 2000, Hafez al-Assad died and was succeeded by his second son Bashar al-Assad. Syria’s parliament quickly voted to lower the minimum age for presidential candidates from 40 to 34 (Federal Research Division, 2005), so that

Bashar could be eligible for the office. Eleven years after he became president, a catastrophic civil war broke out in Syria.

The civil war began in March 2011 with nationwide protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government, whose forces responded with violence (New Zealand Immigration, 2015; The Guardian, 2014; BBC, 2016). The conflict developed from peaceful protests to an armed rebellion after only months of military operations (The Guardian, 2014). The Syrian Army used heavy violent tactics to handle rebels, and the Syrian government also asked civilians who were pro-government to hold weapons and fight rebel groups. The situation had made the conflict move to civil war. In early 2012, the opposition formed the Free Syrian Army (Starr, 2012) but, not long after, some radical Sunni jihadists came to the surface (NZ Immigration, 2015). The radical Sunni jihadists not only emerged from within Syria but also came from countries outside Syria to join the fighters. Most of the groups, such as Islamic Front, were considered terrorists by USA and Europe (NZ Immigration, 2015).

In 2013, a Lebanese party, Hezbollah, officially entered the war in support of the Syrian Army (Sullivan, 2014). They were very much concerned with what was happening in Syria (Sullivan, 2014), their closest ally. Also in 2013, to the east of Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), a jihadist militant group that was initially linked to Al-Qaeda in Iraq (NZ Immigration, 2015), made rapid military gains in both Syria and Iraq, eventually conflicting with other rebels.

In August 2013 hundreds people were killed after rockets filled with the nerve agent sarin were fired at several suburbs of Damascus (BBC, 2016). The Syrian's government blamed rebels but Western powers blamed the Syrian's government for this attack.

ISIS soon became bigger and stronger; it currently holds big parts of Iraq and Syria (BBC, 2016) and practises Sunni Islam in an extreme and violent way. Every rebel side involved in the Syrian war is known for their intolerance towards other doctrines, whether it is Alawite, Shiite, Kurds, or others. They are also known for their unwillingness to accept other religions or even moderate Sunni Muslims (NZ Immigration, 2015).

In June 2014 Bashar Al-Assad was re-elected in a wartime election and he was sworn in for his third seven-year term in July 2014. The Parliament Speaker says Assad won 88.7% of votes in Syria's presidential poll (The Syria Times, 2014). By the end of 2014, about half of the Syrian population was displaced, including an estimated 6.5 million IDPs, 4.4 million registered refugees, and 1.5 million non-refugee migrants (UNHCR, 2015). Until now in 2017, this situation has led millions of Syrians to flee to neighbouring countries like Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon.

From the brief explication above, it is obvious that the conflicts in Syria started long before the civil war in 2011. However, it was not until the civil war that the rise in the number of Syrians fleeing Syria reached such enormous numbers that humanitarian assistance has never been more important to help Syrians. The protection of refugees is the international community's responsibility, Goodwin-Gill (2001) argues the primary protection is linked to providing solutions, and one of them is resettlement in a new community, which New Zealand has been taking part of.

### **The situation with Syrian refugees**

Syrians who fled the country and became refugees stay predominantly in poor areas of countries bordering Syria. According to UNHCR, 4,8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6,6 million are internally displaced within Syria (Syrian Refugees, 2016). In the transit countries, Syrian refugees live in camps and in the community, and they have large humanitarian needs in terms of protection, shelter, and nutrition. Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries, particularly those who live in the camps, face major challenges, including limited to no access to basic services, due to the restricted ability of those countries to provide the scale and type of basic services needed by the Syrian refugees. Given the vulnerabilities of refugees in neighbouring countries, and the complexity of enduring conflict in Syria, it is no surprise that many seek resettlement in a third country such as New Zealand.

In Europe, Syrian refugees made a wide range of requests for asylum, with Germany being the largest, followed by Sweden, France, United Kingdom, Denmark (Martinez, 2015). They also request for asylum in other parts of Europe - in Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Bulgaria (Martinez,

2015). While many countries are taking humanitarian responsibility for Syrian refugees, there are many Gulf countries that have offered zero resettlement to Syrian refugees. These countries are: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain (Martinez, 2015).

In responding to the conflict in Syria, New Zealand has accepted a number of Syrian refugees. Most Syrian former refugees who resettle in New Zealand as a third country come from Lebanon as a transit country (NZ Immigration, 2016). When they arrive in New Zealand, many of them have health related issues as a result of poor conditions in the transit countries. Refugee camps in general, and in Lebanon in particular, are often poor, overcrowded, filthy and unhealthy places to live and at the same time become a place that many refugees live in for many years (Ramadan, 2012). The poor facilities in the camps have caused refugees to develop medical issues, malnourishment and have lack of access to education.

In regard to basic human necessities, life in the refugee camps is often far from having necessary needs. According to OCHA (2013) refugees have little access to clean water, basic toilets and proper waste systems. Many pregnant women arrive in the refugee camp with complications because most of them did not have pre-natal care in Syria (OCHA, 2013). Many suffer respiratory diseases, such as pneumonia and bronchitis caused by pollution and unsanitary conditions (OCHA, 2013), and many school age children do not attend school in Lebanon because the parents cannot afford to pay the fees. The camps in Lebanon as described by Ramadan (2012) in his research on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are like “a slum or shanty town”, and they are part of the city but never integrated with the city – they never truly belong there.

Therefore, when former refugees arrive in New Zealand, having lived in the camps for a number of months or years, they require very specific support and services. The Syrian former refugees are no exception: many school age children, particularly female children, have inadequate education to enter school in New Zealand based on their ages. The Syrian refugees, including many Syrian teenagers, have very low to no literacy level, both in Arabic and English. This has caused significant issues in adjusting to their new society, and many are also suffering from trauma and multiple health issues. For these reasons,

Syrian refugees need forms of support that are specific to their needs in their resettlement in New Zealand as supposed to general resettlement support.

### **2.3. Refugee resettlement in New Zealand**

Refugee resettlement in New Zealand began in 1944 with the acceptance of nearly 900 Polish refugee children and their guardians (NZ Immigration, 1994). Today in 2017, New Zealand is one of only a small number of countries that take part in UNHCR resettlement programmes (MBIE, 2012; NZ Red Cross, 2016). Other countries that provide resettlement programmes include Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America (UNHCR in MBIE, 2012). New Zealand has a reputation in providing good quality resettlement support to refugees (Amnesty International, 2016). However, there have been debates about the quantity of the quota that had not increased until 2016 since 1997 until 2016 (HRC, 2010). From 1997, the quota was set at 750 refugees per year (HRC, 2010). Only recently, in 2016, did the New Zealand government announce a quota increase from 750 to 1000 refugees per year. Many agencies, such as NZ Red Cross, Amnesty International and ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, have been advocating increasing the refugee quota, and the corresponding resources needed to deliver the resettlement services.

Unlike many other countries, New Zealand has not based its acceptance of refugees on their “resettlement potential” (Ministry of Health, 2012), examples of which include level of education and the potential of finding employment. Rather, the New Zealand Government views refugees as vulnerable people who need emergency assistance set by UNHCR.

There are three ways in which refugees arrive in New Zealand (NZ Immigration, 1994; Ministry of Health, 2012). The first way is through the refugee quota programme, which is divided into three categories: women at risk, people with disabilities or needing medical attention and emergency cases as well as refugees in general (Immigration New Zealand, 2013). All quota refugees are granted permanent residency status as soon as they arrive in New Zealand. This means they are entitled to government assistance, including state housing,

financial assistance, subsidy to medical care, and education. The size and composition is set by MBIE and MFAT after consultation with UNHCR, relevant government departments, NGOs and refugee communities.

The second way refugees come to New Zealand is under the Refugee Family Support Category (RFSC). Those entering New Zealand under this category are relatives of refugees already living in New Zealand. The third way is through seeking asylum. Asylum seekers are people who have arrived in New Zealand, fear returning to their home country and seek refugee status (MBIE, 2015). Asylum claims are assessed in accordance with the Immigration Act 2009 (MBIE, 2015). Successful claimants are eligible to apply for permanent residence status and, five years after the permanent residency, New Zealand citizenship.

Once again the discussion above shows that refugee resettlement in New Zealand is a large and complex field of research. This study focuses only on former refugees from Syria under the quota programme.

In regard to the geographic pattern of source countries, New Zealand's refugee intake has changed over the past 46 years in response to changing global circumstances and humanitarian needs. Between the 1970s and 1980s Indochinese refugees were the dominant group resettled in New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2012), and a more diverse range of source countries of refugees arriving in New Zealand was the result of a broader global focus that began at the end of the 1980s. The numbers of quota refugees, who have arrived in New Zealand in the last 10 years, by country of origin or nationality, are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Quota refugees 2006-2016

Nationality	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	Totals
Afghanistan	199	66	29	55	5	6	26	40	157	143	726
Algeria		5									5
Armenia		6									6
Bangladesh											0
Bhutan		75	195	176	117	89	122	91	96	31	992
Burundi			6	36	12	8					62
China	11		8				3	3			25
Colombia		29	48	71	96	42	96	124	76	99	681
Congo	3			5	2	3					13
D R of	22	21	55	63	6	8		9	4	2	190
Djibouti		3									3
Ecuador				7	10	16	12	23	12	7	87
Egypt									6	2	8
Eritrea	1	76	49	23	7		1	33	2	7	199
Ethiopia	7	12	3	30	5	7	1	1	4	2	72
India	10	3	1						1	1	16
Indonesia		4	1					3		2	10
Iran	10	11	2	12			4	6	3	1	49
Iraq	6	90	113	36	7	113	128	71	44	19	627
Jordan						1					1
Laos											0
Liberia									4	1	5
Libya											0
Mauritania		10									10
Myanmar	397	251	152	126	230	351	271	222	159	217	2376
Nepal	6	5	1	6			2	1	9	2	32
Pakistan		1								4	5
Palestine	3	5	29	16	5		12	25	31	26	152
Peru					1						1
Russia											0
Rwanda		25	4	8							37
Saudi Arabia									1		1
Somalia		18		5	4	11	2	12	27	13	92
Sri Lanka	3	4	2	13	12	24	57	75	35	24	249
Stateless					1			4			5
Sudan	11	30	2	21	4		14	4		3	89
South Sudan								3			3
Syria									83	252	335
Thailand									2		2
Turkey	1										1
Uganda					3					1	4
Vietnam	7									16	23
Yemen										1	1
Zimbabwe											0
Totals	697	750	700	709	527	679	751	750	756	876	7195

Note: The financial years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 were affected by the Christchurch earthquake. Since the earthquake, Immigration has not resettle refugees in Christchurch.

Source: NZ Immigration, 2016. Retrieved from:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/statistics/rqbarrivalsstatpak.pdf>

From the table above, it is evident that New Zealand did not resettle Syrian refugees until the refugee crisis in Syria. The first Syrian refugees arrived in New Zealand in November 2014. In September 2015, the New Zealand Government announced 600 extra places for Syrian refugees beyond the quota programme (Woodhouse, 2015) over two-and-a-half years due to the ongoing crisis and public pressure. A further 150 Syrians were welcomed in 2016 as part of the existing annual quota intake of 750 refugees (NZ Immigration, 2016).

Table 2 below shows the statistics from July 2016 to March 2017 quota refugees by nationality.

Table 2: Quota refugees by nationality Jul 2016 – March 2017

Nationality	Jul 16	Sep 16	Nov 16	Jan 17	Mar 17	Total
Afghanistan	4	22	27	26	29	108
Bhutan	25	19	8	7	1	60
Colombia	28	21	25	35	29	138
D R Congo						0
Ecuador	2	2	1	2		7
Egypt		1				1
Eritrea						0
Ethiopia	1					1
India		1				1
Indonesia						0
Iran	6		2	8	3	19
Iraq	3		12	2	4	21
Liberia						0
Myanmar	30	17	36	28	33	144
Nepal	1	3	1	1		6
Pakistan		3	5		12	20
Palestine	11	27		7	10	55
Russia				1		1
Somalia			5		7	12
Sri Lanka	10	5	4	8		27
Sudan						0
Syria	46	45	46	45	40	222
Thailand			1			1
Uganda						0
Vietnam						0
Yemen			1			1
Total	167	166	174	170	168	845

Source: NZ Immigration (2017). Retrieved from

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/statistics/rqbarrivalsstatpak.pdf>

From the table above it is apparent that there has been a significant rise in the number of Syrian refugees resettling in New Zealand compared to any other



ethnic group. In fact, with 222 people, Syrian refugees make up the biggest ethnic group in the quota intake in the last nine months.

### **2.3.1. Support for quota refugees on arrival at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)**

Refugees require extensive support specific to their needs. Much literature, such as in Wanigayake (2001) and Gabriel, Morgan-Jonker, Phung, Barrios, and Kaczorowski (2011), provides evidence to suggest that refugees have health issues that could be attributed to pre-migration experiences such as war and evacuation-related mental health issues, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse. Refugees also experience tremendous challenges of life in refugee camps, such as poor sanitation, poor nutrition and lack of access to health care (Wanigayake, 2001; Gabriel et al., 2011). Moreover, Gabriel et al. (2011), in the case of refugees in Canada, argue that on arrival, refugees have a high incidence of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B, syphilis and gastrointestinal parasites, as well as mental health issues. In New Zealand, quota refugees receive an organised programme of resettlement and support on arrival at MRRC, including orientation, health, education, welfare and housing support. The following are a number of services provided to quota refugees on arrival in Mangere Refugee Reception Centre:

#### **Orientation to New Zealand Way of Life**

Former refugees under the quota programme are provided with six-week orientation run by Auckland University of Technology at MRRC. AUT's centre provides orientation programmes to introduce to their new environment and refugees are given the opportunity to develop English language, literacy and other skills as well as the chance to reflect on the challenges of entering a new society (AUT, 2015). AUT (2015) team argues this orientation programme is very useful for many refugees in assisting them with going through the early stages of resettlement in New Zealand. However, the amount of information absorbed by refugees in the six weeks of orientation would depend on many factors such as their level of education, trauma experience and their willingness to learn about their new society. It is likely that the higher the level education

they have the more information they absorb, similarly with their willingness to learn about New Zealand.

### **Financial assistance**

To help former refugees start their new life in New Zealand, they are eligible for the same benefits and entitlements as other New Zealanders. Benefits are paid to refugees weekly, depending on their age, if they have a partner, employment and other situations. The Special Needs Grant (re-establishment grant) is a payment to help people in specific circumstances to re-establish themselves in the community (Work and Income, 2016). There are two types of re-establishment grants: non-recoverable re-establishment grant (refugees do not have to pay it back) and recoverable re-establishment grant (refugees have to pay it back). The amount of the non-recoverable re-establishment grant is \$1200 for up to three children under 18 years old and the amount of the recoverable re-establishment grant is \$800 per family (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). These grants are usually used to pay for whiteware items and to pay bond-and-rent payments in advance for their houses. Work and Income can also approve other items, such as winter clothing, shoes and small appliances depending on the needs.

### **Accommodation**

Former refugees are initially accommodated at MRRC during the first six weeks, and thereafter in housing provided for them. New Zealand Immigration finds houses suitable for the refugees.

### **Physical and mental health screening**

There is an urgent need for an understanding of refugee health status on arrival (Gabriel et al., 2011) in order to ensure former refugees getting the appropriate health support. All former refugees arriving in New Zealand under the quota system receive physical and mental health screening tests at the MRRC. The records of the test are then being sent to the appropriate agencies such as Regional Public Health Nurse (RPHN) and the medical centre where the refugees will permanently resettle. These tests are provided free of charge to all quota refugees.

In regard to mental health screening, an NGO called Auckland Refugees as Survivors (RAS) offers mental health assessment, initial treatment, and referral

to all newly arrived refugees. NZ Immigration, AUT and DHB can refer clients to the RAS programme, or clients can self-refer free of charge.

### **Dental care**

At the MRRC, basic dental care, such as fillings and extractions, is offered to adults and children (Ministry of Health, 2012). This does not usually include dentures or treatment for advanced periodontal conditions. Children under 18 years are screened by the dental therapist and receive treatment only for acute conditions, since they will shortly access free dental services in the community.

### **Ongoing health care**

MRRC has started using GP to GP electronic transfer from June 2016, where the GPs in Mangere send their patients' records directly to the local GP at the medical centre where the refugees are registered.

The discussion above shows that refugees receive support in MRRC to prepare them resettle in the local resettlement areas throughout New Zealand. As soon as the six weeks of orientation programmes above are completed, the newly arrived refugees are allocated in one of the six resettlement areas: Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, and Dunedin. Currently, NZ Red Cross is the primary agency of refugee resettlement in New Zealand (Red Cross, 2016). The subsection below will explain the assistance NZ Red Cross provides in refugee resettlement once they arrive in their local resettlement areas in order to understand the types of support provided to former refugees and help identify whether the support is sufficient to the resettlement of former refugees in New Zealand.

### **2.3.2. NZ Red Cross Resettlement support for Syrian former refugees in New Zealand**

It is evident in much literature that former refugees have barriers to accessing services, and difficulties with language, finances, transportation and lack of familiarity navigation the services. Furthermore, Gabriel et al. (2011) suggest these barriers often translate into decreased utilisation of services in many areas. Results from a pilot study in Canada also indicated that recent former refugees have lower utilization rate of physicians and hospital services

compared to other residents. As the primary resettlement agency, NZ Red Cross' goal in refugee resettlement is to support former refugees in their resettlement to ultimately gain independence (Red Cross, 2016).

Although the types of services from NZRC are the same across New Zealand, there are slight differences in service delivery due to the inconsistency of available service providers/agencies in the local community. All of the Syrian quota refugees receive support from NZ Red Cross. NZ Red Cross aims to complete the resettlement programme in six to twelve months after the former refugees' arrival in the community. The resettlement team consists of social workers, resettlement caseworkers, cross-cultural workers and trained volunteers. The services are delivered with the help of Arabic speaking caseworkers, cross-cultural workers or interpreters. While the former refugees are attending the programme in Mangere, Red Cross starts the process by recruiting and training the volunteers for each family. Two or three days prior to the family's arrival, Red Cross in collaboration with Anglican archdioceses and Catholic dioceses set up the houses and arrange furniture delivery. Once they arrive, each family is supported by a Red Cross key worker who manages the case.

In the first week of their arrival, along with the local orientation programme they would have appointments made with Work and Income for whiteware items, and also with a medical centre and an English assessment. During the six to twelve months of Red Cross's involvement, the Red Cross key workers engage the newly arrived refugees with other agencies for their resettlement needs. Red Cross key workers and volunteers teach the newly arrived refugees how to make appointments with other agencies and also how to ask for an interpreter when they need it. In this way, refugees can start their independence by doing the tasks by themselves. A key worker (which can be a caseworker or a social worker) supports former refugees through the following programmes.

### **Local orientation programme**

It is widely acknowledged in the existing literature that former refugees need culturally appropriate orientation programmes to support their resettlement (Behnia, 2008; Kornfeld, 2012; Dalgaard & Montgomery, 2015). Red Cross provides an orientation programme specifically designed for refugees to learn

about New Zealand systems and to integrate well in the society. It runs five-session joint agency workshops between Red Cross and local government agencies and NGOs. Through the orientation programme, former refugees learn about their rights and responsibilities and services available in their local areas. Transport is reimbursed, and lunches and childcare are provided for former refugees attending the sessions. Red Cross key workers ensure all newly arrived former refugees attend the orientation programme in their local areas.

### **Ensuring former refugees get the right entitlements**

Part of the New Zealand government's obligation is to ensure former refugees are able to meet their basic human rights such as food, clothing and housing. In New Zealand, quota refugees are eligible for benefits like any other New Zealanders, Red Cross's role is to ensure former refugees get the right entitlements, understand their rights and obligations, and are able to engage with their local Work and Income and IRD.

### **Housing**

New Zealand recognises the human right to adequate housing, which means the New Zealand government is responsible for protecting the right of people in New Zealand to enjoy adequate housing and providing remedies (Human Rights Commission, 2017). New Zealand Immigration allocates houses for refugees when they resettle in the local area. Red Cross then engages former refugees with their landlords (Housing New Zealand, Wellington City Council or other housing providers) and assists refugees with understanding their rights, paying their rents on time, and being able to manage their housing issues. Currently, the most affordable housing option is HNZ, followed by Wellington City Council housing and lastly, private rental. However, people who live in HNZ are not entitled to an accommodation supplement. Red Cross assists former refugees who are not living in HNZ properties to get an accommodation supplement from Work and Income. The Accommodation Supplement is financial assistance in the form of a weekly payment to help people pay their rent, board or the cost of owning a home (Work and Income, 2016). The amount of the assistance will depend on the total income, any assets, the accommodation costs, family circumstances and the location where the former refugees live.

## **Children's schooling**

Reflecting on former refugee children in Australia who engaged in a programme at Safe Haven play centre, the staff witnessed a variety of incidents, including parents violently disciplining their children, violent peer interactions, and other behaviours that are commonly deemed “unacceptable” in Australia (Wanigayake, 2001). In my work as a social worker, I have also witnessed some former refugee children pretended to shoot other children with a gun, impersonated slitting their siblings with a knife and seized other children around the neck. On one occasion a child was randomly hitting other children at school and caught on camera. Such behaviours reflect the stresses and traumas of former refugee children. Therefore, former refugee children need extra support in adjusting to New Zealand environment and education systems. In New Zealand, Red Cross ensures all school age children are enrolled at their local schools, and that the children attend school regularly and are engaged in extra-curricular activities. In this way, all school-age former refugees can exercise their right to education. Save the Children currently funds school uniforms for former refugee children.

It is also the Red Cross key worker's role to liaise with the teachers and the Ministry of Education to ensure that the former refugee children are getting the right support. When necessary, the former refugee children are supported by bilingual tutors, bilingual teacher aides and counsellors. For children with special needs, the Ministry of Education also provides funding to support them in their education needs; for example, learning New Zealand sign language and access to counselling.

## **Adult education**

All adult former refugees also have the right to education (Human Rights Commission, 2010). By engaging with a training provider, a former refugee can build his/her skills and knowledge, and also connections with other students, many of whom are also former refugees. Although some former refugees have high education and can speak good English, most refugees arrive with very limited English proficiency and sometimes are illiterate. For former refugees who do not speak English, their inability to communicate in English is a significant barrier to thriving in their new home (Mitschke, Mitschke, & Slater,

2011). Kornfeld (2012), in her research study on cultural orientation programmes and resettled refugees' perceptions, found former refugees' lack of English proficiency as the greatest challenge in finding employment and keeping a job. Some former refugees found employment but were quickly fired because they could not understand instructions. In New Zealand, part of the requirement to receive benefits is engaging in training or seeking employment.

Red Cross's aim is to ensure all adult former refugees enrol in English classes or other training programmes or are seeking employment. In New Zealand, almost all of the English classes are free for former refugees, especially for low level English. The key worker engages former refugees with these education providers. Work and Income and Study Link can provide financial support for refugees in their high level English course and other education needs.

### **Health**

It is argued by many literatures that refugees often come from countries lacking appropriate medical care (Mitschke et al., 2011; Gabriel et al., 2011). In the case of Syrian refugees, war and conflict also impact on refugees' access to medical care (OCHA, 2013). When they arrive in the resettlement country, they also face numerous barriers to accessing health care (Gabriel et al., 2011), hence support for former refugees is necessary during their initial resettlement. New Zealand recognises the right to health, which includes access to both timely and appropriate healthcare (Human Rights Commission, 2010). Red Cross ensures all former refugees are enrolled with medical centres, seen and assessed by their General Practitioners (GP) and also visited by Regional Public Health Nurse (RPHN) in their homes within six weeks of their arrival in the local areas. The key worker for each family liaises with RPHN and GP if there is any health problem other than what has been reported in MRRC. The Red Cross key worker also ensures former refugees understand how to make appointments and ask for interpreters if required. While appointments for children under 13 years of age are free (Ministry of Health, 2015), currently former refugee adults receive subsidies for their GP visits. This allows them to access low cost to free GPs for up to one year.

## **Employment**

The majority of former refugees want to work as soon as they arrive in New Zealand. Research studies also show that employment has been recognised as one of the key aspects in successful resettlement (O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014). Furthermore, Kornfeld (2012) suggests employment is one of the most important issues to be discussed in the early resettlement period and many of the former refugees bring skills and experience. However as most of them have very limited English to none, seeking employment become a big challenge. Hence former refugees need assistance during their resettlement period in finding employment opportunities (Mitschke et al., 2011; Kornfeld, 2012).

New Zealand recognises the right to work. This means New Zealand government has the responsibility to ensure all New Zealanders have equal opportunities and outcomes at work (Human Rights Commission, 2017). In order to assist former refugees setting their employment goals, a division of Red Cross called Pathways to Employment (P2E) provides support to former refugees who are work-ready in seeking employment. The P2E team assists former refugees in writing their CVs, developing education and employment plans, organising employment workshops, preparing refugees for job interviews and providing advocacy for potential employers.

### **Providing support for high needs and complex situations**

Many refugees arrive in New Zealand with complex issues such as trauma (Dalgaard & Montgomery, 2015), relationship issues, addiction, mental illness and many other medical issues (Ministry of Health, 2012). In order to provide appropriate services to former refugees with complex situations, Red Cross employs qualified social workers who are registered with the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) and are also members of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). This means all Red Cross social workers' practices are guided by the SWRB Code of Conduct (SWRB, 2016) and ANZASW Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 2015) to ensure that social workers have high professional standards. The social workers conduct assessments, visit the clients at their homes, and make referrals to mainstream agencies.



### **Providing regular home visits and psychosocial assessments**

It is argued that home visits provide support in refugees' natural environment (Allen & Tracy, 2008), and visiting former refugees at their homes compared to meetings in an office environment creates more friendly settings that can help key workers develop trust and inform the types of interventions (Allen & Tracey, 2008). Red Cross key workers visit the newly arrived former refugees at their home four times during the period of service delivery. The first visit is called 'initial visit', and it is done in the first week. The second visit is in six weeks' time; this is when the key workers provide a comprehensive assessment of where the former refugees are at in their resettlement, whether they have been engaged with a GP, all school age children are attending school, all adult former refugees are attending English classes or other training, the family is receiving the right benefits at the right amounts, and if there are other needs that need to be addressed or referred to other agencies for further support. The third visit is in six months' time when the key workers conduct another assessment on the former refugees' achievements, followed by another visit when the resettlement programme finishes and the case is ready to be closed. The last visit is when the former refugees give any feedback on how the programme went and if there is anything need to be improved.

### **Engaging with spiritual and ethnic community**

A research study conducted with Bosnian refugee women who resettled in the Southern United States affirmed that spirituality and support from the community played an important role in the refugee resettlement (Sossou, Craig, Ogren, & Schnak, 2008). A study on African torture survivors indicates that public and private practices to accommodate refugees' spiritual needs are likely to be used by refugees to cope with their traumas, although there is no factual evidence of its beneficial or damaging impact on the mental health of refugee torture survivors (Leaman & Gee, 2011). Similarly, Mitschke et al. (2011) concur that many Karen refugees in their research study, who resettled in the United States, appreciated the opportunity to attend church and engage with their own community. The feelings that refugees are cared for, supported, valued (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010) and connected with their community are also key to successful resettlement.

In New Zealand, Red Cross's role is to assist newly arrived former refugees to engage with their ethnic, local and spiritual or religious communities. This helps former refugees to develop their support networks within and outside their ethnic community groups. To resettle well, former refugees need to participate in the community and integrate in the new society.

## **Conclusion**

Syrian refugees have become the biggest ethnic group in the recent quota intake into New Zealand and the numbers are likely to increase due to the ongoing conflicts in Syria. The Syrian former refugees who resettled in New Zealand receive resettlement assistance from the first day they arrive in the country. The New Zealand Government provides an initial orientation in the first six weeks of the refugee resettlement. NZ Red Cross then provides resettlement support in the local resettlement areas. The resettled Syrian former refugees are provided with the necessary assistance equal to that of New Zealand residents but their needs may be complex, cultural adjustment may be difficult, and resettlement and integration may take far longer than the initial period for which support is provided.

# CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

In order to understand the resettlement experience of Syrian former refugee women in New Zealand, it is useful to examine the literature on women's resettlement, and to consider frameworks that may shape our understanding of the challenges women face, and the strengths they bring as integration. This literature review begins, therefore, by examining the literature on resettlement experiences of former refugee women in relation to their integration into the new society.

This review draws upon literature directly pertaining to Syrian former refugee women where possible, but as such literature is rather scant, it also draws on the broader literature on resettlement of former refugee women in New Zealand.

This chapter then identifies two frameworks that I argue are important in considering refugee integration for Syrian women. The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to resettlement promotes collaborative and participatory processes that support the empowerment of marginalised or vulnerable groups on the basis of rights rather than needs. Mana Wahine is an extension of a Kaupapa Māori framework that focuses specifically on the empowerment of Māori women and, that importantly, encompasses elements of wairua or spirituality, maintaining culture, language, and whanaungatanga or relationships in the family. I suggest that this integrative and holistic framework could be valuable for supporting the resettlement challenges and opportunities of Syrian women.

### 3.1. The refugee resettlement and integration experience of women

Refugee resettlement can be a very complicated experience. For many refugees it is difficult and confusing (Boscan, 2013), many are survivors of torture and bear the scars of traumatic experiences (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). Refugee resettlement is different from integration in that resettlement involves short-term achievements, while integration involves much longer processes. It is also evident these processes are not straight forward and their success cannot be measured directly (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). The following table can give us some examples of indicators to evaluate refugees' level of integration in their new society.

Table 3. Examples of indicators to evaluate refugees' level of integration.

Dimension	Short-term (settlement)	Longer term (integration)
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entering job market</li><li>• Financial independence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Career advancement</li><li>• Income parity</li><li>• Entry into field of prior employment</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established social network</li><li>• Diversity within social network</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessing institutions</li><li>• Engaging in efforts to change institutions</li></ul>
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle (e.g. diet, family relationships)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engaging in efforts to redefine cultural identity</li><li>• Adapting or reassessing values</li></ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Citizenship</li><li>• Voting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participation in political parties</li><li>• Participation in socio-political movements</li></ul>

Source: Canadian Council for Refugees (1998), retrieved from:

<http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/bpfina1.htm>

In the settlement and integration processes, it is argued that the impacts of migration are not the same for women and men (Gray & Elliot, 2001; Debski, 2008). It is clear from the literature that former refugee women often have histories of trauma and abuse associated with their status as refugees and with their gender. Despite such challenges, former refugee women are described as strong, creative, resilient and courageous (New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Council Inc., 2006), and able to utilise their energy, skills and abilities to bounce back and improve their situation as well as that of their families, extended families and communities (Debski, 2008). It has been argued that the resources of former refugee women are able to be mobilised to meet their needs and also to serve to the whole refugee community (Ferris, 2007).

Indeed, as a social worker, I have felt privileged to work with many resilient Syrian women. These women have experienced many disasters, lost their family members and even been severely tortured but were still able to manage to pull themselves together and journey thousands of miles to New Zealand to resettle and find a new hope. Through my work, I have met some resourceful Syrian women who have helped shape my understanding of what is considered important in resettling their ethnic group in New Zealand.

I have also witnessed the different challenges that these women face in resettlement, in comparison to men and children. There are many adjustments that need to be made and, for many Syrian women, the adjustments may involve a change from more communal responsibility to more individual care of children and elderly, and many of them may enter paid employment and education for the first time. Others may have been widowed or separated and enter a new role as the heads of households (Kamri-McGurk, 2012), while at the same time providing financial support to extended families who have been left behind.

Because of the complexity of this experience, and the new emotional and social demands on former refugee women, it is argued that while basic needs are extremely important (Catholic Community Services in Boscan, 2013), integration should include access to a wrap-around support that can help them to cope and integrate well into their new roles and environments.

Such support also needs to acknowledge gender differences. In particular, the host society and support providers need to be aware of the family and community's expectations in the roles of refugee women, such as caring for children, and carrying out most household chores and cooking, which are attributed to them by men in the families (husbands, fathers, brothers) and have significant negative impacts on their integration, promote isolation, and stimulate social, economic and cultural dependency (Sansonetti, 2016). The different gender roles partly explain why young males are more often encouraged by their refugee community to integrate in the host society compared to young females (Sharma, 2011).

The slow process of integration for former refugee women is also due to the fact that these women have lost all the support they used to receive from other family members in their country of origin. This may be the main reason why former refugee women have far less participation in the community than former refugee men and find it more difficult to access other aspects of resettlement, such as education and employment (Lamb, 1996), and why there is also an increased probability of isolation. Preventing isolation of former refugee women is a precondition to benefiting from the policies and measures in resettlement that the host country implements, which has been proven to have a relevant positive impact on these refugee women's integration (Spitzer, 2006) as well as more generally on their community.

A joint effort between former refugee community and the host country society is necessary to prevent isolation and for refugee women to integrate because it is recognised that integration is a two-way process: it requires both the former refugee community as the minority and the host country as the majority to adapt. Former refugees have to be ready to adapt to the host society without necessarily giving up their culture of origin. On the other hand, the host country has to be prepared to welcome and support former refugees. The Commentary of the Working Group on Minorities to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (OHCR, 2005) establishes that integration is an underlying concept in minority rights. While integration is necessary for refugee resettlement, it is also necessary to ensure that integration does not become unwanted assimilation.

Integration differs from assimilation in that integration allows pluralism, of culture, language and religion (OHCR, 2005).

It is the host government's responsibility to ensure appropriate policies are in place to support refugees' integration. Ineffective integration policies can aggravate or prolong the effects of traumatic experiences most former refugee women encountered in their refugee journey (UNHCR, 2007). Moreover, Hynes (2009) found that negative experiences with public officials and other service providers strongly impact on the possibility of refugees to trust the new environment.

In order to support a successful resettlement, host society organisations supporting former refugee women should recognise the importance of refugee women participating in decision-making that affects their lives. The needs and rights of female refugees based on their individual life paths (Smith, 2009) could be developed by directly involving refugee women in their resettlement planning, intervention and decision-making. This approach may not be a familiar concept to refugee women but can be successful if given the opportunity. It is also crucial that public institutions and NGOs develop integration measures that strongly take into account the needs expressed directly by former refugees, and former refugee women in particular, who are the best experts on their own stories and experiences. In New Zealand, NGOs such as NZ Red Cross, Catholic Social Services, Multi-Cultural Services and ChangeMakers Refugee Forum may play a central role in fostering former refugee women's integration by involving them in decision-making processes in order to promote more participation and contribution in the society.

As the main resettlement service provider in New Zealand, NZ Red Cross' aim in refugee resettlement has been promoting independence to integrate well in the society. The former refugees' independence is built by teaching former refugees to use public transport, make appointments, understand their rights and responsibilities, learn English or other training, and link them with mainstream agencies (NZ Red Cross, 2016). In this way the key workers do not deliver the service by doing it 'for' but 'with' refugees as active participants. However, some agencies have often presented the identity of female former refugees as stereotyped images of fragile, needy and non-independent subjects

(Szczepanikova, 2009) who need other people to do things for them, which is not particularly empowering for the integration of the refugee women.

The participation of former refugee women in the design of integration programmes can also help to address the challenges of resettlement when the former refugees' culture and customs are significantly different from those of the host country, like in the case of Syrian women in New Zealand. In integrating into the new way of life, former refugee women also express difficulty (Sansonetti, 2016) in feeling included and accepted in their new home. That experience is often attributed to a constant pull between two worlds (James, 2013): their native culture and the culture of the host country. In order to integrate well, cultural rights, together with their basic physical human rights, need to be considered as an integral part of resettlement.

For this reason, refugee resettlement needs to take into account the aspects of supporting former refugees in realising their human rights, empowering them to adjust and integrate in the new way of life, and providing culturally appropriate assistance to support their development in their new home. The possibility of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in refugee resettlement will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.2. Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to refugee resettlement**

Resettlement services for quota refugees in New Zealand are currently delivered in the first six to twelve months upon refugees' arrival in the local resettlement areas, but integration does not stop after the 12 months' orientation. Therefore, it is also important to consider integration in relation to the period following initial resettlement. NZ Red Cross and INZ provide services at the early stage of resettlement in ensuring refugees have a place to live, are learning English, have their basic necessities met, get the right entitlements, look at the possibility of employment and can find their way around the unfamiliar environment. Integration takes much longer; it lasts many years, if not generations, (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998) before refugees can fully participate and contribute in the society.



HRBA is useful to resettlement and integration because it clearly asserts empowerment and the rights of refugees to participate and contribute, free of barriers. This is particularly relevant to former refugees. However, gender equality is also an important right to assert in resettlement and integration because women's needs are different from men and tend to be unexamined in current refugee resettlement practices.

Different authors have described HRBA in different contexts. In refugee resettlement an HRBA is based on the suggestion that resettlement should lead to empowerment of vulnerable groups (Ghai, 2001; Mugadza, 2012; HRBA, 2003). This represents a dramatic change from traditional approaches to assisting vulnerable people, which focused mainly on the essential needs of the poor and the provision of specific products and services to meet those needs. In contrast, HRBA seeks to empower people through an approach that is inclusive and promotes participation focused on rights rather than needs (Ussar, 2010). The approach is regulated and operated based on international human rights standards and aims towards promoting and protecting human rights. It looks to examine inequalities and resolve discriminatory practices and unfair distributions of power (OHCR, 2006), that delay the integration of refugees into their new society.

There are different interpretations of HRBA, but among those differences, there are several common principles (Gready, 2008). According to Gready the first principle is to place the government at the centre of responsibility. Secondly, HRBA outlines participation, accountability, equality and non-discrimination, transparency, and empowerment as fundamental principles (HRBA, 2003). This means that everyone is entitled to freely and fully contribute to, participate in and enjoy political, economic, social and cultural development in his/her community. Refugees can be considered as integrated into the new society if they are able to fully participate in and contribute to in those main areas.

However, it is argued that the individual refugees should be free to choose their own level of participation and contribution, and in the area they wish to do it (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). HRBA sees people as active participants and the key actors in their integration rather than as passive recipients of the support. On that account HRBA may therefore suggest empowering former refugees to participate and function as citizens of their new

country (Mugadza, 2012), and ensure the host society is able to support former refugees in participating as they choose and have the opportunity to contribute.

The table below underlines the differences of features between a rights-based approach and a needs-based approach to refugee resettlement (Rother, 2008 cited in Mugadza, 2012).

Table 4. Differences between rights-based and needs-based approaches to refugee resettlement.

<b>Rights-based approach</b>	<b>Needs-based approach</b>
Main emphasis is on the process and outcome.	Main emphasis is on input, output and outcome.
Focuses on accommodating to the rights of individuals.	Focuses on meeting needs.
Identify group and individual rights as legitimate claims to duty bearers.	Identify needs as valid claims.
Empowerment is the core to enable groups and individuals to claim their rights.	Needy groups and individuals are seen as objects of development intervention.
It is an entitlement for groups and individuals to receive assistance.	Groups and individuals deserve assistance – may be perceived objects of pity.
Development programmes focus on structural causes and their manifestation. Goes deeper to reveal underlying causes of a depriving situation and challenges existing power relations.	Development programmes focus on the immediate causes of problems and deal with issues on the surface.

Source: Rother (2008) in Mugadza (2012, p.7)

From the table above, it is apparent that a needs-based approach focuses on assisting former refugees with solving immediate issues in order to meet the needs of former refugees, while a rights-based approach focuses on strengthening the capacity of refugees to claim their rights by participating in the

resettlement processes. Hence, while the needs-based approach supports refugees in their urgent needs in resettlement, the rights-based approach aims to assist former refugees for longer periods of integration.

### **3.2.1. The increasing importance of HRBA to refugee resettlement**

The importance of applying HRBA to resettlement has increased since it offers practical solutions and adds values to overcome some challenges in resettlement. In many literatures, such as Gready (2008) and Mugadza (2012), the empowerment and accountability of HRBA are what make the approach appealing. According to them, some of the reasons for adopting an HRBA are: firstly, its rationale, which relates to the intrinsic rights of each person and the assurance from the State as the primary duty-bearer to guarantee these rights (Van der Ploeg & Vanclay, 2017; Gready, 2008; Mugadza, 2012) by ensuring that national legislation and policies are implemented at national, provincial, and local levels (OHCR, 2006). This reasoning works for both the recipient and duty-bearer, because respect and dignity can be maintained amongst the rights holders at the same time as moral pressure, which can be exercised upon the support provider/duty-bearer. Secondly, this approach stresses partnership and participation, so it has the potential to encourage rights holders and duty bearers to take collective action in pursuit of social change (Therien & Joly, 2014). Thirdly, there is an ethical relationship between power and responsibilities of those people who are engaged in the process (Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 1999), which in this case is the integration of former refugees.

However, Uvin (2002) cautions that, considering the many agencies with diverse political motivations who are adopting HRBA, the term HRBA may be being used to express ongoing practices (Katsui, 2008), thereby validating existing policies. Nonetheless, the increasing importance of HRBA, as argued by many literatures, has a significant relevance for refugee resettlement (Mugadza, 2012), in this case for Syrian women in New Zealand in particular, in empowering the Syrian women to participate in and contribute to their society.

### **3.2.2. The relevance of HRBA to Syrian former refugee women and their resettlement**

A number of principles underpin a rights-based approach for development in Syrian refugee resettlement, in this study on Syrian women, which are: their

right to partake in decision-making processes affecting their lives; a non-acceptance of tolerating discrimination and inequities that prevent or delay their integration; and holding service providers accountable for helping to protect and attain human rights (CARE, 2005).

#### **3.2.2.1. Participation**

HRBA treats refugees as responsible actors and participation as an essential right for refugees. By encouraging former refugee women to participate in decision making, HRBA challenges present power relations and has the potential to promote more equality between men and women, and also between former refugees and the host community (Kamri-McGurk, 2012). Involving former refugee women in decisions that affect their lives can help improve the quality of their wellbeing (Posner & Clancy, 2005) and the outcome of their resettlement.

#### **3.2.2.2. Countering discrimination**

It is known that recently established former refugee communities, in particular women, have found it particularly difficult to integrate, and they face multiple forms of discrimination (Berry, 2012). Therefore, an approach that supports a non-acceptance of tolerating discrimination and inequities right from the start of their resettlement process is needed in order for former refugees to integrate well. An obvious example relates to refugee communities in the UK and Denmark, who face discrimination as a result of their status as refugees and also their race, which is different from the host community (Valentine, Sporton, & Nielsen, 2009). This is particularly acutely felt by the majority of Somali women who wear headscarves. Countering discrimination and upholding the right to equal treatment are explicitly stated in HRBA.

The non-discrimination principle in the UN Common Understanding is particularly relevant to former Syrian refugee women, because they are more likely to have these rights violated, and therefore, they require greater protection than what is offered by the core of human rights regime (Berry, 2012).

#### **3.2.2.3. Holding the host society accountable**

HRBA deliberately focuses on people achieving the minimum conditions for living with dignity (CARE, 2005) by understanding the cause of vulnerability and

responses to it. Additionally, Article 25(1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) contends that: everyone has the right to a standard living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and his/her family. This means the Government is responsible for the very basic needs of former refugee women, which according to UDHR are: food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control (UDHR, 1948). Such protections are reinforced by international law, such as the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

While HRBA covers these three important areas (promoting participation, countering discrimination, and holding governments and service providers to account), less attention is devoted to cultural integration and cultural rights.

There is also an increasing awareness of the importance of the recognition of refugees' culture for refugees' integration and contribution to multicultural society (Pasikowska-Schnass, 2017), but this is not always covered adequately in most resettlement initiatives in New Zealand. The five goals of the Refugee Resettlement Strategy measure self-sufficiency, housing, education, health and participation (NZ Immigration, 2017). Similarly the right to participate in cultural life and spirituality are not as present as they ought to be in the Human Rights-Based Approach to Refugee Resettlement (ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, 2016). It is also argued by Symonides (1998) that in comparison with other categories of human rights, cultural rights are the most underdeveloped and quite often forgotten. For this reason, I will discuss the importance of taking part in cultural life to Syrian women using the Mana Wahine framework. While various literatures acknowledge the importance of wairua/spirituality, maintaining culture, language and whanaungatanga/family relationships, it is the holistic integration of these factors in support of women's empowerment that makes Mana Wahine a valuable framework in the context of resettlement of former refugee women in New Zealand.

### **3.3. The rights to participate in cultural life in Mana Wahine framework**

Everyone has cultural rights. The UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity affirmed that culture should be regarded as: “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, tradition and beliefs“ (UNESCO, 2001 p. 1).

The scope of cultural rights addressed in the literature, depends on the broader definition of culture (Symonides, 1998), which is intimately related to the values of what is important and unimportant to people. It can be reflected through the spiritual beliefs people identify with, the language they choose, traditional values, and through relationships with family members and their community (Human Rights Resource Centre, 2000).

In refugee communities, participation in cultural life has both individual and collective elements. They may be exercised as an individual, in association with others, and within a community or group (UNESCO, 2002). Many women in the refugee community practise communal responsibilities in many aspects of their cultural life, such as in maintaining their ethnic culture and celebrating their cultural events. The ability to exercise this collective element of cultural rights for refugee women, in particular Syrian women, can guarantee adequate consideration for the relationships uniting each individual to their environment. Considering the cultural rights of refugee women signifies consideration for their freedoms and opportunities to choose their values and beliefs, and the abilities to access necessary cultural resources to exercise their rights and responsibilities (UNIFR, 2010; UNESCO, 2001).

One of the challenges to former refugee women enjoying exercising their cultural rights is isolation. In a study carried out by Rida and Milton (2001) on former refugee women in Perth, they found the majority of Muslim women had the desire to learn English but faced many barriers such as inconvenience of being in mixed sex courses, unsupportive community and insensitive partners. These issues are common to most refugees, in particular Muslim women, who face isolation resulting from cultural aspects (Casimiro et al., 2007) of integration. In a study on Muslim refugees in Australia, Casimiro et al. (2007)

also found that Muslim men were the watch-people of information, and former refugee men sometimes restricted women's access to information, resources and connections, especially outside their networks. The participants of their study stated that gaining their spouses' permission to participate in an event or being out in public is part of showing respect to their husbands. They also expressed that their isolation had become worse after they resettled in Australia. Furthermore, the participants stated that their husbands and male relatives had increased strict control of their activities and social interactions to prevent them becoming like 'Australian women' in a non-Muslim foreign country (Casimiro et al., 2007). On the other hand, concerns were also raised by the participants of the study about their personal security and the negative attitudes encountered from Australians for practising their culture and spiritual beliefs. This shows refugee women have bigger challenges to integration compared to their male counterparts, and that Muslim women have specific cultural rights related to their gender and religion.

The exercise of cultural rights cannot be achieved without a collaborative approach from the refugee community and the host society. I argue there is a need for specific support for refugee women, in particular Syrian women, in order to meet their cultural rights. The Mana Wahine framework can help explain the correlation of the characteristics attached to Syrian refugee women.

Mana Wahine is a feminist Kaupapa Māori framework (Smith, 1990) that emphasises the correlation of being female and Māori. Mana Wahine stresses the autonomy of Māori women as equal to but different from Māori men (Smith, 1990; Pere, 1982; Wyse, 1992).

Simmonds (2011) states that Mana Wahine is often understood to be a type of Māori feminism. It extends the Kaupapa (set of values and principles) Māori theory by specifically exploring the intersection of being Māori and female and all of the multifarious diversities and complexities of that intersection (Simmonds, 2011). Fundamentally, Mana Wahine is about making visible the narratives and experiences of Māori women. Irwin (1992) (cited in Simmonds, 2011) contends that Māori women must be provided with the time, space, and resources that are essential for developing the skills to exercise their cultural rights, starting with exploration, reclamation and celebration of their stories as Māori women.

Although Mana Wahine emerges from Kaupapa Māori, I have found it to be useful for thinking through the challenges and rights of Syrian women because it encompasses the opportunities to explore and celebrate their distinct identity while adapting to the host community for their best well-being outcomes. Many research studies show that spirituality, culture, language and family influence the well-being of refugee women, although well-being is a difficult concept to define (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2009), because it very much depends on culture and context. However, it can be said that personal well-being is a collaboration between physical, cognitive, spiritual and emotional well-being (Debski, 2008). All these factors are interconnected and influence each other, and Mana Wahine acknowledges those interconnections.

The following discussion is framed using key factors identified by Linda Smith (1990), Rose Pere (1982) and Mason Durie (1998) on the cultural rights of Māori women that I am suggesting may be applicable to the cultural rights of Syrian women. Those key elements are: wairua/spirituality, maintaining cultural identity, language, and whanautangata/relationships in the family.

### **3.3.1. Wairua/spirituality**

The importance refugees place on spirituality for resettlement and integration has been raised by many researchers in various refugee contexts. For example, (Guerin, Elmi, & Guerin, 2006) state that mental health within the newly arrived New Zealand Somali community was assisted by regular collective religious and cultural celebrations by the community members.

Furthermore, UNESCO recognises the importance of spirituality and a higher degree of satisfactory resettlement when spiritual existence is achieved, as stated in UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001). This means that in order to resettle Syrian refugees and their community, there has to be a consideration of the spiritual existence of this ethnic group.

In Māori, a word that can be interpreted as 'spirituality' is *wairua* (Smith, 1990; Pere, 1982; Durie, 1998). Many Māori believe in Atua (spiritual beings) with supernatural influences. Every act, natural phenomena, and many influences were considered to have both physical and spiritual implications (Pere, 1982). Māori people believe that Atua could help them obtain benefits, overcome barriers, achieve desired goals (Pere, 1982; Burland, 1969) and provide



security. There are many examples of spiritual events and different types of offerings to various Atua by the Māori of former times (Pere, 1982). In Māori culture, the spiritual world is as important as the physical world, and their beliefs, values, culture and traditions ensure that both worlds are recognised, sustained and nurtured together as one (Smith, 1990; Pere, 1982; Durie, 1998).

It is acknowledged that religion is often a factor in the root causes of refugee migrations (Nawyn, 2006). However, religion also functions as a coping mechanism, as it offers hope as argued by Boscan (2013) that Somali Bantu refugees are happier and more successful when they are able to develop a religious or ethnic identity. She also notes that the support of religious and ethnic community members is as crucial as settlement and specialist services. They provide spiritual and social support, a sense of belonging and creating a safe space, and provide assistance in learning about culture (Pittaway , Bartolomei, & Doney, 2016; DeSouza, 2012).

Furthermore, in a study conducted by DeSouza (2012) on former refugee women in New Zealand, the support of religious and ethnic community members was critical to the resettlement of the women, and filled in gaps that the extended family would have otherwise filled. Spiritual support was important, as was having support from people who understood their language, culture and religion (DeSouza, 2012). These provide evidential basis on the importance of acknowledging and recognising spirituality in refugee policies and resettlement strategy of Syrian women in New Zealand.

Currently New Zealand has developed a wide range of networks of agencies whose mission is to assist former refugees in their process of settlement and integration (NZ Red Cross, 2016; ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, 2016; Anglican and Catholic Parishes, 2016). However, agencies could work harder to support the spiritual needs for refugees in their resettlement, which would allow both former refugees and host community to promote inclusion.

Another element that is just as important as spirituality (and is interconnected with spirituality) is maintaining cultural identity. In the next section I will describe the relevance of maintaining culture to refugee resettlement based on numerous literatures.

### **3.3.2. Cultural rights and cultural identity**

The importance for former refugees of maintaining their cultural identity has also been recognised in the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, which notes the connection between “intercultural respect and a culture of peace” (UNESCO, 2005). Further, the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity notes “policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace”. This requires that government take positive measures to encourage the promotion of minority identities (UNESCO, 2005). On the other hand, the refugee community needs to adapt to the host community. States need to create favourable conditions for the maintenance of minority characteristics (UDHR, art 1, 1948; ICCPR, art 27, 1966); promote intercultural dialogue and understanding; enable minorities to enjoy their own culture, practise their own religion and speak their own language (ICCPR, 1966); and tackle discrimination and intolerance (UDHR, 1948).

Enjoying one’s cultural identity is a human right, as discussed above, and it is also an important component of refugee resettlement. This may mean any resettlement service delivered to this ethnic group needs to take into account their cultural identity, not only to support them to maintain the identity but also to respect their beliefs. Similarly, according to Mana Wahine, if a woman’s beliefs are accepted and respected, particularly by people who are meaningful to her, she thrives (Pere, 1982). NZ Red Cross hires cultural advisors and cross-cultural workers in order to address cultural diversity within the refugee community. Cross-cultural workers become the bridge between New Zealand culture and refugees’ ethnic culture, and they also assist key workers and refugees with language support. Male and female Arabic speaking cross-cultural workers are available to assist key workers working with Syrian former refugees.

In the context of refugee resettlement, the host community accepting and respecting refugees’ native culture helps them in their integration. A number of literatures, for example research studies on refugee youth (Beiser, Puente-Duran, & Hou, 2015; Shepard, 2008), have found that maintaining refugees’ native culture and identity helped them to make good choices, retain focus, and avert distractions associated with negative elements of the host youth culture

(Qin, et al., 2015). Former refugees who combined their native culture with positive aspects of the host culture were the ones who did best in their adaptation (Qin et al., 2015). A number of research studies on immigration and assimilation suggest that preserving ethnic identity, through parental culture and mother tongue language, and connection to the ethnic community can facilitate successful adaptation in the process of acculturation (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2009; Shepard, 2008).

Moreover, multiculturalism has also been shown to have a negative influence on depression and other psychological adaptation issues. For example, in drawing on a sample of 246 seventh and eighth grade Mexican American adolescents, Love and Buriel (2007) found that biculturalism has a negative correlation with depression levels. Compared with their peers with bicultural orientation, youths who were more assimilated into the U.S. culture reported more problematic behaviours and less parental monitoring. Kunz (1981) points out the cultural compatibility of the resettling refugees and the host country as a factor affecting resettlement outcomes. Similarly, he holds that multi-ethnic and pluralistic societies would tend to be receptive to newcomers and sees this as a factor that aids resettlement. These results are consistent with other studies that found the bicultural lifestyle to be the most adaptive (Berry , 2003; Organista et al., 2003).

Former refugee women in New Zealand have been found to value living in a multicultural society, and they appreciate community and spiritual support and being able to maintain their culture for the sake of their children (DeSouza, 2012). Former refugee women have concerns that their children will become disconnected from their traditional culture and lose access to their traditions, language and values (DeSouza, 2012).

In the following section, drawing from different literatures, I discuss the benefits of maintaining one's native language and also of learning the host society language in refugee resettlement.

### **3.3.3. Language**

Language is an important part of the cultural rights of every former refugee. The right to language is not only considered as a way to communicate with other people but also as part of a refugee's identity. UNIFR recognises universal

respect for this right and it cannot be achieved without valuing language diversity (UNIFR, 2010). There are many ways in which former refugees can exercise their language rights. These include any communication with others, through media work and with one's self. Whichever way, it is for the resettlement service providers to prioritise access to information and education (UNIFR, 2010), for example, providing information in different languages, having an interpreter present at appointments and English classes available for former refugees. In the context of Syrian women, the language rights are the right to preserve and recognise Arabic as their native language and part of their self-identity. The rights to language can also be considered as the rights to learn English in the host country.

The Māori term for their language is *Te Reo*, 'reo' having several important cultural connotations as a Māori proverb says: "Ko taku reo taku ohoho, ko taku reo taku mapihi mauria" (Myftari, 2015), meaning in English "my language is my awakening, my language is the window to my soul". This is a proverb closely associated with language revitalisation in the wake of the danger of the language being lost (Higgins, 2015), a struggle that is very important in maintaining culture (Durie, 1998). Language expresses the values, beliefs, and ideology of people in a powerful way (Pere, 1982; Hemara, 2000; Durie, 1998). Command of the language is argued to be critical to the experience of being Māori (Sharples, 2014). The Māori language is argued to be fundamental to the retention and maintenance of the Maori heritage, for it enshrines the ethos and the life principle of the Māori people (Pere, 1982): "toi te kupu, toi te mana, toi te whenua", (retain the language, retain prestige, and in so doing retain one's identity with the land (country)) (Higgins, Rewi, & Olsen-Reeder, 2014).

Similarly in Syrian culture, language is not only a tool to communicate with other people but also a window to their cultural and spiritual life. Arabic is the language of Muslim religion and it is used in prayers and the Qur'an. This means all Muslims pray and worship in Arabic regardless of their native language (Cox, 2001) because they believe the Qur'an originated straight from heaven in Arabic. For example, I was brought up in Indonesia, which has the biggest Muslim population in the world, and although the national language is bahasa Indonesia, I heard the calling for prayers five times a day in Arabic.

Muslims hold that the power of Arabic in Qur'an would suffer in inaccuracy if translated into other languages (Tamara, 1997).

Arabic also gives Syrian refugees' a sense of belonging to their ethnic group and community, and it is also part of their self-identity. It is with this understanding of the benefits and the importance of retaining the native language while learning the host country's language that I include this concept in analysing the resettlement experience of Syrian former refugees in New Zealand.

Many research studies have shown positive impacts from the ability to maintain one's native language and learning the host language (Brown et al., 2011; Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Dustmann, 1994) and have highlighted the advantages of bilingualism. These studies argue that people who are bilingual have more social and cognitive benefits, including greater sense of belonging, greater empathy towards other people and greater tolerance.

In addition to such positive benefits, it has been found that not being able to speak the host society language can worsen the vulnerability of refugee women because they become unable to communicate their needs (Debski, 2008; Gray & Elliott, 2001). A combination of a lack of language proficiency, adjusting to a different social status than the one they were accustomed to back home, a different culture, and confusion about new systems leads to difficulty in adapting (Fangen, 2006). Hence, learning the host country language is crucial in refugee resettlement. Erden (2017) states that speaking the host language provided opportunities for refugees to understand the local culture and social functions better. Language could also minimise problems originating from discrimination and help refugee women defend themselves in an undesirable situation (Gray & Elliot, 2001).

Several studies have also found a significant association between refugees' English language proficiency and job earnings (Chiswick & Miller, 2002; Olliff & Couch, 2005; Dustmann, 1994). Studies in the United States and Canada have shown that English language proficiency is an important determinant of refugees' labour market participation (Portes & Bach, 1980). In their study of refugees in Portland, Mamgain and Collins (2003) found that English language proficiency upon arrival was the best predictor of level of income. According to

Olliff and Couch (2005), English plays a central role in the successful integration of refugees in American society. Chiswick and Miller (2002) demonstrated the important role of English language abilities among individuals from non-English speaking countries, with English language competency improving the earnings of refugees. Additionally, English ability has a significant positive correlation to receiving a job other than an entry-level job, maintaining a job, and advancing to a better position (Tollefson, 1985).

English language proficiency was also found to have a positive correlation to psychological health, or psychological adjustment/adaptation (Kim, et al., 2011; Brown, Schale, & Nilson, 2011; Hewagodage, 2015). However, despite these conclusions, other studies have found that adequate English proficiency is not the only element in gaining employment (Mojab, 1999; Warriner, 2007) and successful refugee resettlement. Another important element is acknowledging the importance of family to refugees (Debski, 2008; DeSouza, 2012).

In the following section, I explore the significance of whanaungatanga (relationships in the family, extended family and community) in refugee resettlement. I will then connect it to social capital and the relevance to refugee resettlement.

#### **3.3.4. Whanaungatanga/maintaining good relationships in the family and its relationship to social capital**

Whanaungatanga deals with the practices that bind and strengthen the kinship ties of a family, and it consists of iwi (tribe), hapu (clan) and whanau (extended family) (Pere, 1982; Yoon, 1986; Burland, 1969; Durie, 1998; Te Whāiti, McCarthy, & Durie, 1997). Iwi is the largest unit in Māori society; within iwi there are many hapu/clans which are made up of whanau/extended family. In Māori culture, the commitment to *aroha* (commitment of people who see themselves as having the same ancestral presence and breath of life) is vital to whanaungatanga (Pere, 1982; Te Whāiti et al., 1997) and the collective points of view on what the community sees as important. These practices involve a strong feeling of support and faithfulness that made (and make) the whanau a strong group. Pere (1982) argues that men, women and children need to show commitment and loyalty to their family. Such loyalty also means that, in the

past they developed the ability to sustain and maintain themselves as a fighting unit when faced with challenges.

For Syrian women, the relationships in the family consist of those in the nuclear family, the extended family and the wider community network. However, these social relations have been disrupted by fleeing their country of nationality (Debski, 2008). Most of the time, fleeing involves leaving family and friends behind, which creates feelings of shame and guilt in refugees (Gray & Elliott, 2001; Debski, 2008). Pittaway et al. (2012) suggest that former refugee women frequently experienced guilt, isolation and cultural displacement concerning the family and friends who are left behind, but high-quality resettlement services can mediate the impacts of these challenges. It is, therefore, important to highlight the value of extended family members and community for refugee women, particularly women on their own, as well as the types of help that these family members could provide. Essentially, community connection (Griffin, 2012) is an important element in refugee resettlement to support the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of former refugees.

For Māori, it is argued that the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of the group depends on how well the family members complement and support each other (Pere, 1982; Smith, 1990; Durie, 1998; Te Whāiti et al., 1997). Men and women within a whanau are expected to come together spiritually, even when separated physically, to safeguard themselves and their children against other alien or negative spiritual or supernatural influences (Pere, 1982). From my work experience I am aware that Syrian former refugees practise sending prayers for people who are not with them physically because they are deceased, separated because their family members are resettling in different countries, or left behind in Syria. Because of this separation, it is likely that former refugee women need extra support in supporting their family and in building their community.

Many times, refugees have no choice in leaving their family behind when they flee for their lives, and this can create difficulties. In a research study conducted by DeSouza (2012) many former refugee women aspired to belong and contribute to wider society in the absence of their extended and informal family networks. In my work, I have seen many former refugee women volunteer to cook for hundreds of community members in community gatherings and events.

These activities provide them with a sense of belonging and pride that they have made a contribution to their community. It is recognised that former refugees receive much support from members of their own ethnic group (Griffin, 2012), and such support networks are very important.

Tomlinson (2010) expressed that participating in the community and its organisations provided an alternative transitional space for many women in their efforts to rebuild their lives. Furthermore, Pittaway et al.(2016) argue that the presence of social networks is essential to migration study. The hypothesis being that stronger networks correspond to less vulnerability in resettlement. For instance, close family ties and community groups in resettlement act as resources for refugee women, for example, in finding employment and establishing themselves (Lamba, 2003). For many former refugees, resettlement is a very challenging process, and a large element of the challenge is the way in which others and the former refugees themselves view their situation (James, 2013). In Morrice's (2013) study of resettled refugees in the UK, these individuals mostly learn more from non-formal learning. They trusted other former refugees in their transitional situation of resettling in a new country.

While former refugee women are often eager to be part of their community as a way of building their new family (*whanaungatanga*), it is not always easy for them to participate in the community. Despite some former refugee women wanting to contribute to the broader community, they may find it hard because they often have long periods at home with their children and are waiting for opportunities to participate in social networks (DeSouza, 2012).

The concept of *whanaungatanga* suggests that former refugee women can develop relationships with the wider community and exchange supports that are essential (Bishop, Ladwig, & Berryman, 2014) in building social capital.

The idea of *whanaungatanga* can be extended, it is argued, to include community development as a form of social capital (Robinson & Williams, 2001). In this study, the term *whanaungatanga* or kinship can include family, relationships, networks (Bishop et al., 2014; Durie, 1998), communication and cooperative support. It is argued that, in the Māori concept of social capital, the social capital moves from immediate family to the wider family, and then to the tribe and the extended family where the community consists of extended



families. Hence social capital is created through networks and relationships that are within all these expressions of family or extended family (Robinson & Williams, 2001). Whanaungatanga can be attributed to a sense of mutuality, support, hospitality and guidance (Bishop et al., 2014; Durie, 1998; Te Whāiti et al., 1997) which provide supportive interactions and solidarity in the family and in the extended community.

Syrian former refugees also have similar processes of developing social capital through their networks and relationships with the community, which can be seen as their extended families in the new context. As their family situations change when they resettle in a third country, former refugees also benefit from social interactions within and between ethnic groups to strengthen a sense of belonging and safety (Spencer & Le, 2006). The social interactions between the ethnic groups help strengthen solidarity and provide opportunity to take part in wider social activities (Pittaway et al, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

Resettlement services and community development practices aimed at ensuring former refugee women's rights cannot be gender neutral, because former refugee women have gender-specific challenges in resettlement and integration. In the case of Syrian former refugees, the specific expectations from men towards women to provide care for their children and be responsible for housework are not always taken into account in the resettlement strategy. Therefore, gender-neutral active social participation, education, and labour market measures are not likely to be effective in understanding the resettlement needs and experiences of former refugee women. This means policies or programmes for the reception and integration of former refugee women need to be gender-sensitive.

Former refugee women are also exposed to multiple forms of discrimination in accessing opportunities in the host country's social participation, education system and labour markets. Therefore, a resettlement approach based on HRBA seems important because it emphasises rights rather than needs, and looks at former refugee women as active participants instead of passive recipients. HRBA empowers former refugee women to participate in and

contribute to the New Zealand society and demands that their rights are met by the host society.

In addition, Mana Wahine is a possible framework to think through cultural rights in an integrated way and from a feminist perspective for Syrian women. Cultural rights, among other basic rights such as food, clothing, shelter and medical facilities, are essential to former refugee women in their resettlement and development. These cultural rights include the rights to spirituality, preserving native culture and language, and maintaining good relationships in the family. However, preserving native culture alone is not enough. It is also important for former refugee women to learn new ways of life in the host country, as demonstrated by many research studies that a multi-cultural orientation is associated with positive outcomes.

# CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

## Introduction

The main reason Syrian former refugee women resettle in New Zealand is seeking protection from war. These former refugee women had suffered acute violation of human rights, loss and separation from their family members, trauma and were not able to meet their vital basic human needs. From the experience they had, they can be considered a vulnerable group (Baird, et al., 2017; Mugadza, 2012). Hence a thorough ethical awareness needs to be considered in every aspect of this research study. Part of the ethical consideration is allowing them to tell their experience in resettling in New Zealand, in a way that is respectful and culturally appropriate.

This chapter argues for former refugee women as an important part of community with equal rights to participate and voice their views and therefore their narratives should be valued and respected. In accordance with the Mana Wahine framework (Pere, 1982), they are valued and respected as the owners of the stories and are capable of making decisions that affect their future. Reedy (2014), in her study on wāhine Māori and Pasifika women argues that women are capable of contributing to discussions and that there is an increasing need for women's participation in matters that affect their lives. Furthermore, in this study Syrian women are not only objects of research but are also the key actors who have the capacity to contribute to knowledge on refugee resettlement.

The knowledge these former refugee women contribute can inform the refugee community and resettlement agencies in order to be able to work with them more effectively. While much evidence shows the strongly different gender roles and needs between men and women in the refugee community, currently refugee policies, strategies and services lack of a specific focus on former refugee women. Hence the question remains - is there a possibility to deliver support to the Syrian women that is specific to their needs, thereby strengthening the Syrian women community in New Zealand?

In this chapter I discuss the process of identifying research participants, the cultural considerations, my positionality and the research methodology of this study. The chapter then discusses data collection and concludes with some reflections of the methods I used.

#### **4.1. Mana Wahine and narrative inquiry**

Mana Wahine is a theoretical framework that attends to women's empowerment. This framework emphasises the different gender roles between men and women and the importance of spirituality and culture that connect to experiences, faced by Māori women (Pihama, 2001; Pere, 1982). However, in this research study I explored the possibility of applying Mana Wahine in order to understand the resettlement experiences of Syrian women. In this research study, in analysing the Syrian women's experience and the aspects they considered most important, Mana Wahine helped me to understand and connect the importance of wairua/spirituality, maintaining culture, language and whanaungatanga/relationship in the family to the Syrian women in their resettlement.

Narrative inquiry can be described as an approach to the study of human lives (Mitaera, 2008), as a way of honouring lived experience as a source of knowledge. Moreover, narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experiences through living and telling the stories. Mana Wahine concerns the way Māori women define themselves and their relationship to experiences, which are different from Māori men. In this study, I used the concept to deepen my understanding of the narratives shared with me by Syrian women about their resettlement, and to understand their experiences as being different to those of Syrian men. Furthermore, I understood their experience to encompass an affiliation between past, present, and future.

In this study I intentionally thought back to the stories of my own resettlement experience as a woman resettling in a new country and the participants' experiences. This enabled me to come into a relationship with the participants that allowed our shared experiences to be more visible to me as a narrative inquirer and to the participants, and therefore, my lived experience and who I am also came under study because in narrative inquiry we are part of the phenomenon under study.

Being a migrant woman who had come to New Zealand with young children and not having any family members living in the new country, I experienced challenges when I arrived. As all of the participants in this study were former refugee women, many of them did not have any family members whom they could turn to when they needed help, so we shared similar challenges. This has helped me more in understanding the women's stories about their resettlement in New Zealand.

During the focus group discussions, I shared my resettlement experience with the participants with whom I had similar issues with them in terms of learning new culture, missing my relatives, feeling lonely, and finding it challenging understanding the New Zealand system. The difference was that I was not entitled to any government assistance as I was a migrant who had to apply for New Zealand residency, while the participants were granted New Zealand permanent residency as soon as they arrived in the country. Although we considered ourselves happy, it took time for me and my children to integrate well in the new environment. We call the process of coming alongside participants – taking turns telling stories with the participants – and then inquiring into the lived and told stories – “retelling stories”. In this narrative inquiry, which used the Mana Wahine framework, I began with telling stories, and as a researcher I involved myself in conversations with participants who told stories of their experiences.

The women in this research study talked freely about their resettlement in New Zealand. During the discussions, the participants reflected on the questions and discussed them with the other participants. The participants were the experts on the resettlement topic being discussed. On many occasions, the participants talked at the same time, but I did not stop them. Instead, with their permission I put a recorder in every corner so I could catch all of their conversations.

## **4.2. Research participants**

The research participants in this research project were limited to former refugee women from Syria. Under the refugee quota of women-at-risk category many of them are solo mothers. I initially wanted to conduct a research study only on Syrian women in the Wellington region. However, since Syrian refugees had started to resettle in Dunedin at the beginning of 2016, I extended my research

project to Syrian refugee women who resettled in New Zealand. I contacted the Red Cross resettlement manager in Dunedin to assist me. I was very fortunate that she was happy to help me in any way to conduct the research study on Syrian refugee women in Dunedin.

I chose to limit my research project to Syrian women because they have more challenges than Syrian men in their resettlement but no particular services are available to accommodate the women's particular needs. There has not been any research study done in the area of refugee resettlement for Syrian women, and with some funding available for Red Cross and other agencies to develop a community development programme for Syrian refugees, I hoped to contribute some insights from the women themselves on what they would like to see to happen and what type of reasonable support they would like to have in order to optimise their potential.

#### **4.2.1. Recruitment process**

In recruiting participants, I had the privilege of my social worker's role at Red Cross where I meet the Syrian community on a regular basis. I also had the benefits of having colleagues who are experts on Syrian culture and some of whom had also experienced the refugee journey. There are at least eight Arabic speaking staff members at Red Cross in Wellington and Dunedin who engage with Syrian former refugees in their roles as either cross-cultural workers or caseworkers. During my study, I met with the staff, in order to regularly consult with them so as to ensure that I conducted my research in the most ethical way, for example in getting permission from the participants' husbands prior to the focus groups. I was also in regular contact with the Arabic speaking staff and the social worker in Dunedin via emails, text messages and phone calls. Cross-cultural workers, who were experts in the Syrian community, familiar with Syrian culture and could speak fluent English and Arabic, assisted with the interpreting and explained any matters regarding the research study to participants who had questions. The focus group participants signed confidentiality agreements and were compensated with \$20 worth of Pak 'n' Save vouchers to show appreciation for their time and efforts in participating in this research project.

#### **4.2.2. Length of living in New Zealand**

The first Syrian refugees arrived in New Zealand in November 2014. I chose participants in this research to include people who arrived in 2014, 2015 and from the most recent intake in June 2016. The reason why I chose participants from different intakes is because the length of living in New Zealand can be an important factor in how the participants view resettlement, how they manage their expectations, and what aspects are considered as important in their resettlement. Furthermore, it contributes to how well they cope in their adaptation to the new environment. According to a research study on Iraqi refugees in Australia, a significant difference was found (Guajardo et al., 2016), and indicated that participants with longer periods of resettlement were experiencing higher levels of psychological distress compared to the newer arrivals which may be caused by many factors such as lack of community support, financial difficulties and separation from family members.

#### **4.3. Cross-cultural and ethical considerations**

All of the research participants were Syrian women, hence it was imperative to have a great awareness of the Syrian culture and the dynamic researching of both the culture and ethnic groups different from my own. I sought advice and ideas from Red Cross Arabic speaking cross-cultural workers on how best to conduct surveys and focus groups with the women, especially when considering that the two first focus groups were held during the Ramadan period. During this period Syrian women would usually be fasting and stay at home preparing for iftar (break the fast) for the family. The cross-cultural workers suggested meeting with the women's husbands and providing transport so they could go back home more quickly than they would by public transport. One cross-cultural worker suggested doing the focus groups after iftar but considering it was winter, the women might not be comfortable going home after dark. Hence, we conducted the focus groups during the day.

I was fully aware that sensitive issues or flashbacks from the past might arise during the discussions. Hence at the beginning of each focus group, and in the information sheet, I explained that if there should be any trauma events arising I would offer to contact Red Cross key workers or Refugee Trauma Recovery, an

organisation that provides services to former refugees who have experienced torture and trauma.

In reflecting on my position as a non-Māori who was using a Māori feminist framework, Mana Wahine, I sought advice from Riripeti Reedy of Ngati Porou. She is my former social work lecturer in Māori praxis at Whitireia New Zealand and currently serves at the Ministry of Women's Affairs. She suggested Mana Wahine is a conceptual framework not only for Māori women but also for women of ethnic groups other than Māori in celebrating being different from men and Pakeha women. I was unsure I could use the Mana Wahine framework for the Syrian women because of its position as part of Kaupapa Māori. However, after my search on different types of literature and recorded discussions with Riripeti, I was confident that Mana Wahine could be applied to non-Māori women, as the primary focus is to honour the voices of the women.

Approval was obtained from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee to undertake the research. The approval application includes the methodology, information sheet, consent form, interpreter agreement, survey questionnaire and focus group guide (see Appendices attached). The documents were all translated into Arabic, and before each focus group, each participant was asked to sign a consent form that was explained in Arabic by an interpreter.

#### **4.4. Positionality**

Working in the refugee sector for over six years could influence the way I thought about resettlement, which could lead to over-hypothesising (or predetermining) the findings simply because of the experience I have had in working with this community. My position as a social worker and a team leader at Red Cross could also create potential power inequalities with the research participants. Throughout the research I reflected on my positionality and tried to avoid predetermining or assuming any research outcomes.

#### **4.5. Mixed methods research**

The aim of this research study is to understand the resettlement experiences of Syrian women in New Zealand, and also what their strengths are, the challenges they face and the aspects they consider as the most important in



their resettlement. This involved understanding the meaning of different factors of what they considered as essential to their lives while they resettle in New Zealand.

I have used both quantitative and qualitative methods in this research. Mixed methods research refers to research that combines both quantitative and qualitative data within one research study (Halcomb & Hickman, 2014). Mixed methods research is about making the most of the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research in integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection (Halcomb & Hickman, 2014).

In this research study the mixed methods research combines quantitative survey questionnaires and qualitative focus groups. The quantitative research method allows me to focus on data that can be measured because it emphasised patterns and predictability (Herzog, 1996) while the qualitative approach allowed me to gather in-depth analysis of my discussions with the Syrian women, which helped me to understand how people interpret their experiences and what the interpretation means (Morgan, 2014). Furthermore, Halcomb and Hickman (2014) argue that the research problems that are best suited to mixed methods designs are those in which multiple perspectives on the research problem may be able to provide a more detailed understanding than could be obtained from a single perspective. The fundamental argument of the definition is that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either design alone.

Hayes, Bonner and Douglas (2013) argue quantitative research requires the collection and analysis of numerical data. The quantitative method in this study involved participants answering survey questionnaires consisting of five questions, and some of the questions were multiple responses. Second, with the qualitative method, some participants were invited to focus groups to further discuss their resettlement in New Zealand. Table 3 below provides an overview of data collection I carried out during my fieldwork.

Table 5: Overview of data collection

	<b>Surveys</b>	<b>Focus group</b>
18 June 2016	Wellington	
24 June 2016		Wellington
3 July 2016		Wellington
12 July 2016		Dunedin
12 July 2016	Dunedin	

I used this mixed methods design approach because it provided me with stronger data than using a single method of data collection would. For example, in this study, seeking to understand overall satisfaction of refugee resettlement using quantitative data alone might overlook factors that affect individuals accessing refugee services. Adding a qualitative component, such as investigating the experiences of individuals in their resettlement, would be likely to add significant insights to such a study.

This research study aimed to offer an opportunity for the Syrian women to express their experiences and ideas in resettling and in developing their community in their own words.

#### **4.5.1. Survey questionnaire data collection**

The purpose of the survey was to gather data as a baseline for the study. The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding their resettlement, whether they would like to be involved in community development and what they considered as important aspects of community development, what programmes might be useful, and what needed to be addressed logistically, such as childcare, interpreters and transport. The first data collection was held at 2016 World Refugee Day, where many Syrians attended the event. Initially I was going to survey up to 25 people in the Wellington region, but I had more people than I expected answering the questionnaire on the first day of the survey alone. At the end of the fieldwork period, 45 people had answered the questionnaires from the Wellington region and Dunedin.

The surveys were conducted with as many Syrian women as possible, with all questions translated into Arabic. Participants that were illiterate and pre-literate or found it difficult to answer the questions, were assisted by other participants who spoke reasonably good English. An Arabic-speaking interpreter also helped some participants by reading the questions for them to answer. There were three stages of data analysis:

### **1. Exploratory data analysis**

At first I explored all of the data to get an idea of what was in there. This data exploration may have led to additional data collection (SSC, 2001), but I did not think there was a need for additional data. I was confident that the data I collected from the survey in the Wellington region and Dunedin was clean and sufficient for the purpose of this study. The data analysis in the next stages was derived from a single consistent source of data.

### **2. Deriving the main findings**

I began this stage with coding the answer to each category. For example, I assigned S1 for excellent satisfaction with resettlement, S3 for not satisfied with resettlement. I then went on with compiling the data on an Excel spreadsheet. I made sure all files were compiled according to their variables. I then generated the summary of findings.

At the end of generating the summary of findings, I could begin to utilise the results of the data. I conducted some follow-up work to find further detailed findings; for example, analysing the answers the participants gave when ticking “other” also had unexpected results. I also made a change to the method of analysing the data. Originally I was going to rank the answer of Question 4: “what are the most important thing(s) in your resettlement? Please put in order if you can”. However, perhaps putting “if you can” in the question resulted in many participants not ranking their answers. Eventually, I changed the method to counting the answers provided by participants without ranking them.

### **3. Archiving**

At the final stage of this quantitative analysis, I kept records of the raw data. My efforts to obtain the information, the dates I obtained the data, and all materials related to the data analysis included, but were not limited to:

- The names data collected in the data
- Final findings spreadsheet
- Log files describing the analysis
- Charts or tables of findings
- Linking the data to the findings from focus groups

#### **4.5.2. Focus group data collection**

In addition to the survey data, I ran three focus groups with recently resettled Syrian women. Nine participants attended the focus group in Wellington city, six participants attended the focus group in Porirua, and eight participants attended the focus group in Dunedin. Participants were grouped based on: the diversity in terms of length of living in New Zealand, level of education, age, and location of where they live. For example, the nine participants in the first focus group consist of three participants who arrived in 2014, three in 2015 and three in 2016. Their level of education also varied from women who are illiterate to high school graduate. Their age ranges were between twenty-five and fifty-five years old, and they live between Wellington city, Upper Hutt and Lower Hutt.

I was careful to select participants who were not my active clients at New Zealand Red Cross, because of the possibility of conflict of interest. In each focus group, I followed three processes as discussed below:

##### **A. Introduction**

At the start of each focus group attended by participants and some of their children, I introduced myself and my role as a researcher, and I emphasised that I was not there on behalf of Red Cross but as an individual researcher because I was studying for my Master's degree in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. I explained that the discussions would help me gather information to understand their experiences of resettling in the Wellington region. I pointed out I was very keen to hear about the strengths and challenges they have with living in the new environment. The information they would give could help to understand the extent of which and what other support might be needed for their community group. An Arabic speaking interpreter was available for them throughout the discussions. They did not have to answer any questions they did not want to answer.

I clarified I would not use any of their names in the material or final research. The participants signed consent forms to participate in the research and gave me permission to record the discussions. I informed that the recordings would only be listened to by me, my supervisor Dr. Polly Stupples, and interpreters. The recordings would be destroyed in two years. After I explained about the confidentiality requirements of the research, the interpreters also signed a confidentiality agreement.

The women appeared excited about the focus groups. Some women said they did even not mind if I wanted to put their names on the final report. In every focus group, the women started with lots of laughter and could not wait to start telling their stories.

## **B. Discussion**

Prior to the discussions, the participants filled out the survey questionnaires. Each discussion took around 1.5 hours. I explained to the participants that they could talk openly and freely about their experiences and there would be nothing right or wrong about their opinions. The women appeared happy to discuss their stories, and they talked openly and seemed not to find any difficulties sharing their experiences and ideas. The participants often talked at the same time and could not wait for other participants to finish answering the questions, but with the help of good interpreters I managed to make the discussions more fun and interactive. Some of the participants were more vocal than the others, but all of the participants had a chance to talk. I used probes in every topic to get the discussions going. I told my stories of resettlement in New Zealand at the start of the discussion and sometimes to the participants during the dialogue to the participants. The participants described their feelings, hopes and aspirations of resettling in New Zealand. The stories about their families in Syria, children and husbands also painted the picture of their resettlement.

The two first focus groups were conducted during the Ramadan period. All participants were fasting, so they took the refreshments home to be eaten when they broke the fast. The third focus group was held after Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan), so it was held over food and finished off with lunch prepared by one of the participants.

## **C. Closure**

At the closure I asked the participants the final question of what other support they thought would be good for their community group to have. After the participants added the different types of support they would like to see happening, I asked them if there was anything we had missed. All participants thanked me and the interpreters for the discussions. After I turned off the recorders, many of the women said they hoped the results of the discussions would be useful and could be used to develop the community.

## **4.6. Method of analysis**

After the completion of the first focus group I immediately started to transcribe and review the tapes and notes. Yin in Rabiee (2004) suggests that data analysis in focus groups consist of a number of stages, i.e. examining, categorising and tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, in order to address the initial goal of a study. Following this concept, I identified six themes that emerged during the discussion that corresponded to the research questions and seemed to be encompassed by the Mana Wahine framework I adopted:

1. Feelings about resettlement
2. Thoughts on aspirations.
3. Thoughts on spirituality and practising religion
4. The importance of culture
5. Thoughts on language
6. The importance family

The themes mentioned above did not depend on each other, for example if a participant considered community was important it did not necessarily mean practising religion was important. This is consistent with Rabiee's (2004) view that analysis does not take place in linear form. I examined quotes from the transcripts relating to each of the themes and from there I identified sub-themes and arranged the quotes under these sub-themes. In some cases, I broke down the sub-themes to further sub-themes. For example, a participant might state she was "happy with resettlement" and give the following reasons "my family is here" and "I am feeling safe". I noted how often each theme and sub-theme appeared in the discussions. This allowed me to see that the sentence "I am

happy” in terms of feeling about resettlement appeared seven times, whereas “the volunteers help us a lot in practising our religion” appeared once. I also noted some non-verbal communications, such as laughter, smiles and tone of voice.

Although the main source of data analysis was the recorded spoken language derived from the discussions; nevertheless, reflection on the discussions, the settings and capturing the non-verbal communications expressed by the participants adds a valuable dimension to the construction and analysis of data (Rabiee, 2004). During the focus groups, therefore, I kept a reflexive diary by my side and continued taking observational notes once the focus groups finished, including the non-verbal communications the participants expressed during the discussions. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants in analysis chapters, I selected names of plants and flowers that grow in Syria to represent the participants’ names. This represents the women’s love of planting herbs and flowers that came out during discussion.

#### **4.7. Reflexivity**

I was glad that the data was collected in both quantitative and qualitative ways. The questionnaire survey was an excellent way to gather information in a short period of time and it was very cost effective. The answers became the baseline of the next method – the focus groups. By answering the survey questionnaire, the women already had ideas on what we were going to discuss in the focus groups. However, some participants found that the survey method of study was somewhat confusing in that they were not accustomed to ranking and to multiple response questionnaires. This method of survey was not flexible at all and the Syrian women may have found it challenging to quantify their personal experiences. There was a difficulty with translating the concept of “satisfactions” from English into Arabic, which further supports this inference.

Having the participants talk at the same time in focus groups was a challenge for me from which I learned to use more tape recorders in my subsequent focus groups. I do not speak Arabic and I did not have anyone to assist me taking notes. During the focus groups, I had to be the moderator, note taker and observer at the same time while often the participants often talked concurrently.

One of the things I could have done better was to ask someone to help me take notes and observe while I moderated the focus groups, although it would mean more cost to the study.

Finally, this research study is proven to be directly applicable directly to community development. As soon as I completed data collection, I was asked to conduct a meeting on the initial findings of the research with different agencies that provide support for former refugees. They hoped to use the information to understand what the Syrian community wants and needs in order to develop their community while they still provide the funding.

## **Conclusion**

The mixed methods approach has provided in-depth outcomes to this research study because the quantitative method allowed me to focus on data that can be measured while the qualitative method allowed me to gather in-depth analysis of my discussions with the Syrian women. Constant cross-cultural awareness was one of the most crucial aspects when conducting research with Syrian former refugee women. Using a Mana Wahine framework and a process of narrative inquiry enabled me to gain in-depth understanding the Syrian women's wairua/spirituality, culture, language and whanaungatanga/family in relationship to their resettlement.



# CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

## Introduction

In this section, the findings of the survey and focus group discussions will be discussed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 45 women participated in the surveys and 23 women participated in the focus groups. One focus group was conducted in Wellington, one in Porirua and one in Dunedin. The findings will be presented under the following themes: resettlement satisfaction, language, culture, the roles of family, and community development.

This chapter is organised into thematic sections, which correspond with the themes that emerged during the surveys and the course of discussions. The first section looks at issues of resettlement satisfaction, and provides a context to the chapter, and introduces the participants to the reader through their self-representations of themselves. This section highlights how they feel about themselves as both former refugees and as people who resettle in a new country, in addition to how they see satisfaction in resettlement.

The second section explores how the women perceive language as an advantage and challenge to their resettlement. Participants outline the experiences of their daily lives in preserving their mother tongue language and learning English at the same time. Furthermore, participants demonstrate their awareness of the importance of both actions for themselves and their families.

The third section looks at the participants' sense of pride in maintaining their culture and expanding the context of family to the wider community. It explores participants' perception of family, including how they imagine or define family. This section has a particular focus on communal systems in the Syrian community.

The final section of this chapter focuses on participants' thoughts on community development, looking at the level of involvement participants have with the community, their understanding of community development and, most

importantly, what they want to see and what kind of support they want to have in developing their community.

### **5.1. Resettlement satisfaction**

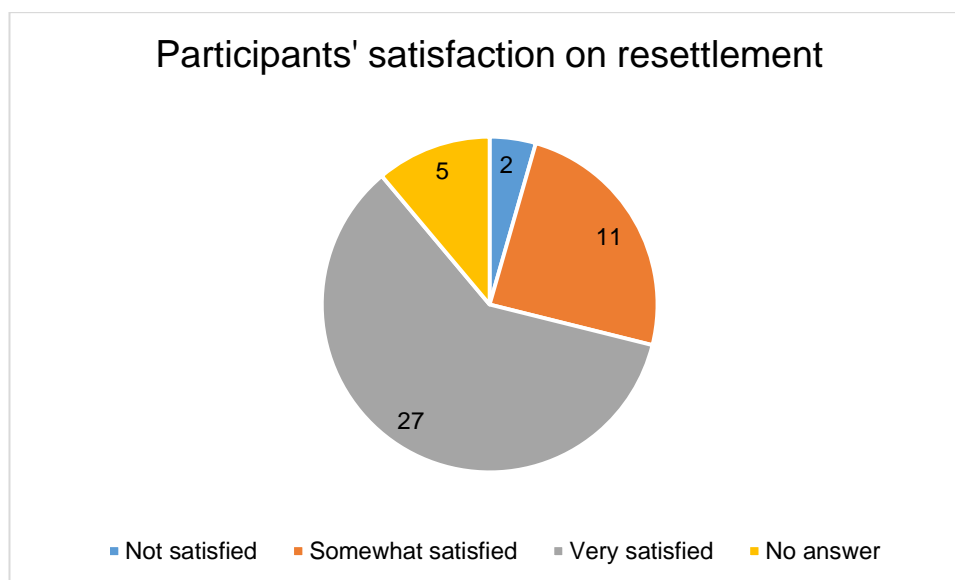
In analysing the survey and focus group discussions in the context of my research questions, it became apparent that the above themes were linked to each other. For example, in the discussions it was challenging to examine the notions of resettlement satisfaction without first exploring what satisfaction meant to the participants. Thoughts and definition of satisfaction were in turn informed by how participants felt about the happiness of their family members. Many participants at the focus groups commented that they appreciated the opportunity to talk about their experiences, and at the same time they realised that education, family background and past history may also be significant factors that they constitute as “happiness” or “success”. There may also be local factors such as the types of support offered by available agencies in the local areas; these are different in each area. The length of time an area provides resettlement support to former refugees may also be a local factor in how the community perceives and treats former refugees, which may contribute to the level of satisfaction or happiness in their resettlement.

The happiness of their family members has an enormous impact on each participant’s sense of satisfaction: if their children and/or husband are not happy, the participants are less or not satisfied in their resettlement. As Lilac, one of the young participants said, “I care more about my kids and their education.” In the survey and discussions, language featured strongly as a strength, the biggest challenge and the most important aspect of successful resettlement. It was mentioned again in discussions about aspirations and goals. The answers that participants gave to my questions illustrated how their voices had become integral to what types of support they would like to have in their resettlement, particularly in developing their community. Their comprehension of how they felt and thought is a critical component to what they consider as successful resettlement.

The 45 participants who responded to the survey had differing opinions on their resettlement experience but for the most part they reported considerable

satisfaction. Figure 1 below shows 27 survey participants answered “very satisfied” when asked how satisfied they were with their resettlement, 11 participants answered “somewhat satisfied”, two participants answered “not satisfied”, and five participants did not answer the question. The results created a baseline for the discussions held in the focus groups.

Figure 1: Satisfaction on resettlement



The concept of satisfaction is far-reaching. In this research study, it refers to some of the characteristics that research participants revealed during the discussions: the happiness of their family, feeling respected, and having their basic needs met as well as having self-confidence. The major themes that arose from the discussions were the participants’ strong awareness of themselves as both newcomers and former refugees who had a strong connection with their cultural roots and pride in themselves.

### **My heart is where my family is**

Most participants expressed their happiness being in being New Zealand, but their heart is where their families are. Some participants who are separated from their family members feel their hearts are still left behind in Syria. As a newly arrived former refugee Syringa stated, “I am happy, I am living with my (immediate) family here but my heart is not here, it’s in Syria”. Another participant added “we have family members in Syria”. Belsam repeated the statement by saying: “yes, it’s very hard, I have families who are left behind, they are not with me. I am thinking about them, it’s hard”. A participant who had been in New Zealand longer than other participants in the group (Tuffah) said, “I

want to go back to Syria”, and while other participants were laughing she added, “I dream to go back to Syria one day, I am not happy”. Laymoon stated “all of us we have a dream to go back” while another participant mentioned their hope that someday they could go back to Syria or their family members could join them in New Zealand. Mushmush expressed concerns about whether she can ever see her family again: “it’s sad because we cannot visit them, many Arab countries are not easy to enter. Even if you want to see your parents you have to stay in a hotel because you are not allowed in the community, because you are not residents of that country”.

The sadness of separation from family members who are left behind is not only caused by the distance between New Zealand and Syria but also by safety and financial issues that are getting worse in the civil war. Orchid said, “my family is in the city in Syria, the bombs are everywhere...it is in a very unsafe area, (and) there is no money”. Damask Rose has a similar situation:

“...they are in safe area in the rural areas, but they have no money and I can’t help them. They suffer from financial issues. My brother can’t go out from the area, he is trapped in that area. They can’t go out and they suffer”.

Further questioning revealed that some participants felt torn between their strong connection with their family members in Syria, and their own safety and their children’s future. Participants indicated some hope that in the future they could go back to Syria. Although they are very grateful of the kindness and support from people in New Zealand, many of them think Syria is their home, not New Zealand. With the first Syrian refugees arrived in New Zealand in 2014, the longest the participants have stayed in New Zealand is three years. The other component correlating to the participants’ satisfaction was feeling respected, which will be explained in the next subsection below.

### **Feeling respected**

Feeling respected was identified as a strong component in satisfaction. Tuffah felt the overwhelming support her family received when they first resettled, declaring:

“It’s very nice, we are getting help from people who are not from our ethnic group and not from our religion, it is nice for me. They are not from

our nationality and they are helping us a lot and giving us everything without taking money from us”.

Jasmine expressed similar feelings, stating: “...and we feel many people respect our traditions and they said oh nice! Nice! (showing me her hijab and clothing she was wearing) Looking at our clothing”. Orchid felt very glad to resettle in New Zealand because the people “...respect our customs, they are nice people, they love Syrians”. Toot said “there is no discrimination, no one look at us with bad look because we are Muslims”.

However, one participant, Inab, felt she was being extremely discriminated against because she was wearing a hijab. She said “..when I just arrived, (landlord) charged me fees because I am wearing hijab, that’s weird. I talked to Red Cross staff about it”. When other participants tried to clarify what happened, she added “when I got ticket for late parking, the Police put a notice on my car, not because I was late but because I was wearing hijab. I wasn’t late”. Other participants appeared to disagree with what Inab said. Another participant told a story where her daughter applied for a job but did not get the job because at the interview she was wearing hijab. She also said that one day she was driving in her car and someone “gave me a finger” – here she showed me her middle finger – because she was wearing hijab.

Most participants stated they felt respected and had never experienced discrimination. Besides feeling respected, participants discussed another important component of satisfaction, which was having their basic needs met.

### **Basic needs**

Participants exhibited strong feelings about being supported in meeting their basic needs in resettlement. These included accommodation prior to their arrivals in the local areas, financial support to meet their basic needs, and engagement with appropriate agencies for their health, education and social needs. They expressed the New Zealand government and people in New Zealand are doing their best to help them resettle. However, they felt the financial support they receive from Work and Income was not enough for their needs. In all three focus groups, participants said the financial assistance was inadequate for their day-to-day needs. As Lebanese Cedar stated, “..sometimes the money finish before the week is over because everything is expensive!”.

Participants incorporated the connection of their financial issues with difficulties in finding employment.

When asked what their aspirations are in resettlement, many participants said they would like their husbands to find employment. Many of them thought it was sad to see their husbands could not get a job and they have to rely on benefits. The young participants indicated they would like to improve their English, study further, gain practical skills and seek employment. When further asked what they want to study, they pointed out they would decide later when their English had improved.

Some participants believed rent and electricity bills were the main causes of their financial issues. "Rent and power bills are too expensive" as Balah stated, and "we are happy but the rent is very expensive and electricity is very expensive too".

Furthermore, Inab said, "I am paying my electricity bills \$203/week and I don't turn heater on, I never turn heater on, so it's expensive. I have concern about this I barely can afford the living expenses and the rent is very expensive that we cannot afford and the benefit is not enough".

Tulip added a similar statement: "the money goes to the rent from the benefit is too high". The situation with rent payments became more unsatisfying when participants found that each one of them was paying different amounts of rents, depending on the housing providers. As Rayhan said, "the problem is there are different types of housing, so we have to pay different amount of rent". Some participants were housed by Housing New Zealand (HNZ), some by Wellington City Council (WCC) and some by private landlords. Many participants affirmed that living in an HNZ property is the most affordable option although not many were satisfied with the house. The cause for dissatisfaction, as stated by the participants, who live in wellington, was that the properties were described as old buildings with old windows and the facilities were not as good as WCC's properties. All participants from Dunedin were housed by HNZ.

To the participants, a house plays a very important role in resettlement. Tulip said: "...I am not happy with my home, it's hard for me to settle. My fireplace is not working well, so I am not happy". Another participant was unhappy because her landlord had just moved into the nanny flat behind her house; she is

currently looking for another house. She also felt being treated unfairly because she is renting privately while many other participants had government housing.

Apart from financial issues and housing, many participants were disappointed with the New Zealand health system. The biggest issue they found was the waiting time to see a doctor at their health centre and the emergency services at the hospital. Every health centre has different fees and services available for former refugees. Some health centres waived their fees for up to one year, some of them charged small amounts around \$15, and some of them charged more than \$50. Almost all participants expressed their dissatisfaction at the waiting time to see their doctor at their health centre. Belsam and Syringa revealed their unhappiness at not being able to be seen by their general practitioners (GP) straight away when their health conditions were in a crisis situation. Mushmush presented a situation where her mother-in-law was very unwell, so she called the health centre to make an appointment with her GP but was told the GP would not be available for several weeks. She also mentioned the fees were too expensive – “it’s \$60 for half an hour”, and this was confirmed by another participant, Randa. Randa, who came to New Zealand with many health concerns, found it very hard to afford the fees; she said the fees were too expensive for her and she needed to see her GP often because of her medical conditions. However, some participants were happy with the health system, and they said they did not pay and the quality was very good. One participant who has disabilities said she was very afraid of her doctor but happy with the system.

In regard to emergency services, Rayhan gave an example of her dissatisfaction when she had a serious accident with her finger. She said she had a cut and could obviously see her bone, and she then went to the emergency department at the hospital. She said she was seen by a medical practitioner four hours later to stitch her finger. Another participant said she waited for three hours in a similar situation.

Despite a number of matters that influenced participants’ dissatisfaction at their resettlement, they noted having that self-confidence helped improve how they feel about resettlement.

## **Self-confidence**

The concept of self-confidence came up a number of times during discussions. Jasmine articulated that the key to independence is developing self-confidence by being willing to learn to navigate their local area: “I can go to the doctor, make appointments, WINZ...I went to WINZ by myself (*laugh*)”. Damask Rose concurred with what Jasmine had said; she went to appointments by herself and knew how to get to places, and these have built up her self-confidence although she did not speak much English. Inab declared to the group that she knew the local area very well, and she could come with me to a place and I would not be able to find my way out. This was followed by laughter from the other participants.

I saw a sense of pride from the participants when they announced how confident they were in navigating their local area. Belsam, with her big smile, stated: “we are 70% know how to get around Wellington. We know how to get to medical centre, English classes, shopping and school. We still need help but we are improving”.

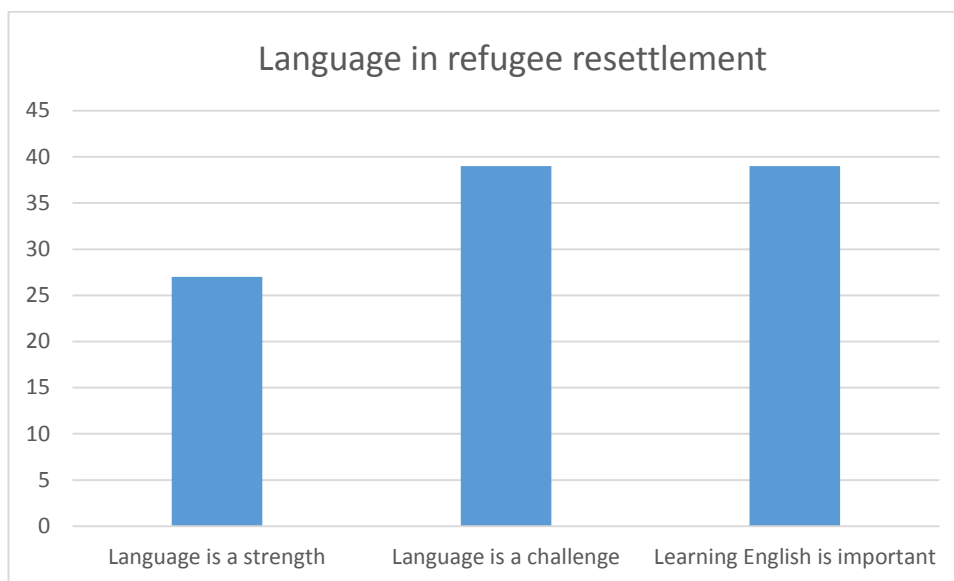
Participants believed self-confidence goes along with the ability to speak English; the more they can speak English the more their self-confidence is built. Discussions about maintaining Arabic and improving English will be explained in the next section.

## **5.2. Language is the bridge and gate to successful resettlement**

The chart in Figure 2 below shows that 27 out of 45 participants answered language as a strength, 39 participants considered language as a challenge and 39 participants answered that learning English is one of the most important aspects in resettlement.



Figure 2: language in refugee resettlement



All participants in the focus groups considered it is very important to learn English, and many of them believed if they could speak English they could get into employment and life would be easier. They could get around without being afraid of not understanding what people are talking about. All of the women receive support with learning English, most of them attend English classes, and many of them receive support from a home tutor who gives them English lessons once a week at their homes, and some of them have both English classes and home tutors. Lebanese Cedar said that “everything will get better” when she can speak English. Tulip stated, “now we are better, we start to learn more, we are better than before”. While participants considered learning English was a very important factor in resettlement, they also thought maintaining their mother tongue language was as important as learning the local language.

Maintaining Arabic while learning English was discussed at the focus groups, not only for participants but also for their future generations. The women strongly believed that maintaining Arabic was necessary and learning English was compulsory for being able to resettle well in New Zealand, and these two need to be in balance. Jasmine said “the most important thing for me is to teach my children the language both in Arabic and English”. Similarly, Damask Rose, when asked about language, stated her goal was “to teach my children to learn in English and to teach Arabic”. Furthermore she said, “I am worried because they (her children) can’t speak any English, will be good if I can have a teacher

for my children to teach English”. The women strongly believed that the biggest challenge when they resettle in New Zealand was language.

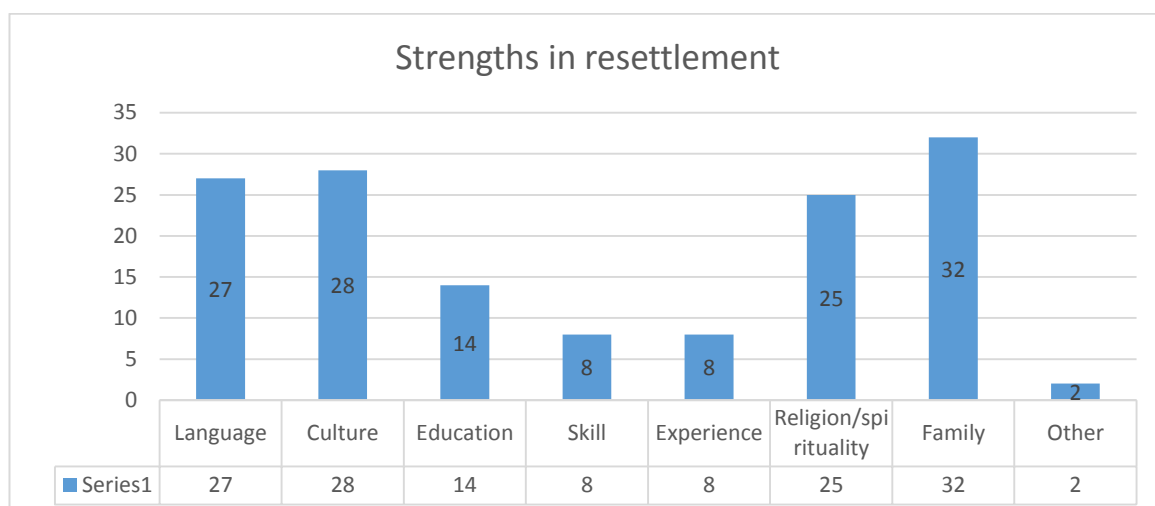
Several women stated they could be taught to go to places such Work and Income (WINZ), health centres and shopping centres easily but learning English took much more time and the key to building confidence was by learning English. Hibiscus stated: “Thank you for everything, but the most important thing and the challenge resettle is the language. I can go out by myself also out and about. I can go to supermarket, get food...”. The women realised that their level of education influenced their learning; they think the higher the education the better people resettle. When three women said they could go to their GP, WINZ, shops and make appointments themselves, Orchid said “she is educated (pointed at other participant), we come from the country side, we didn’t have education”.

Many participants expressed their gratitude at being able to learn English. Tulip stated “my teacher is very kind and very helpful. My teacher is giving me chance to learn”. Some of the participants had never been to school in their lives, so going to English classes gave them reassurance that there are many other exciting things they could do apart from cooking, taking care of their children and looking after their household. Learning English also gave them confidence that they have the same right as men to learn. Some women appreciated the tutors more when their English teachers allowed them to turn their cellphones on to remind them of prayer times.

### **5.3. The importance of maintaining mauri/culture and whanaungatanga/the roles of family members in resettlement**

The next chart below shows the strengths participants bring to resettlement. In the multiple response questions, the three top answers from 45 survey participants were family, culture and language.

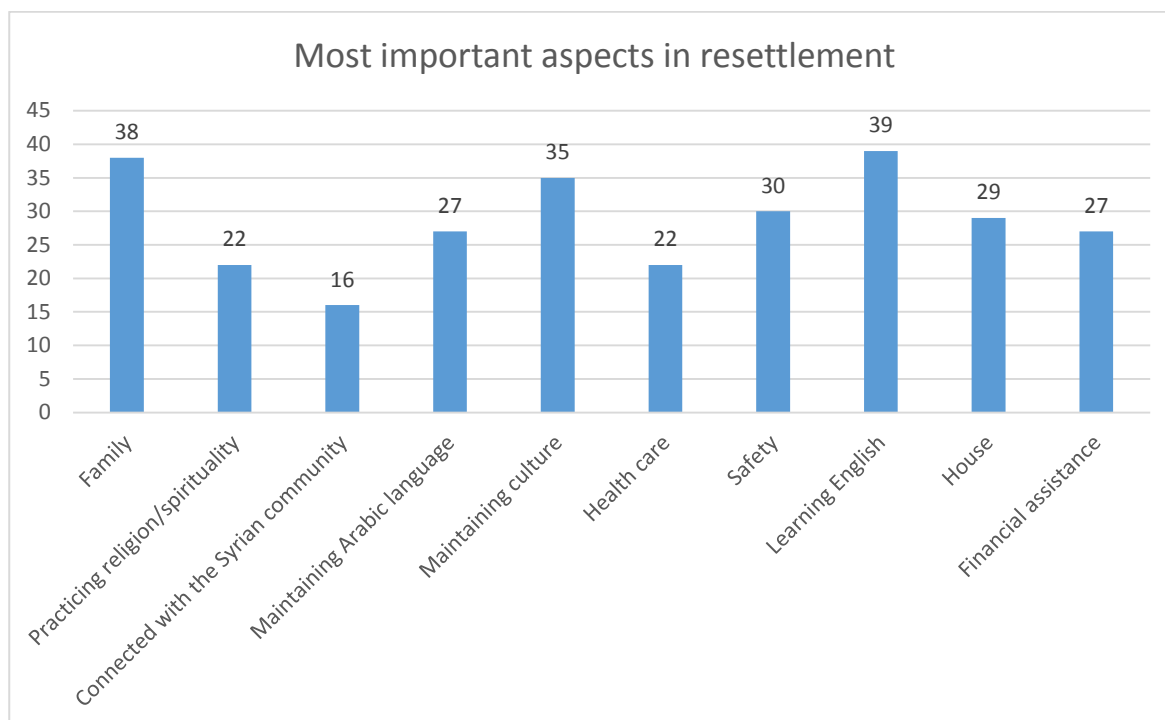
Figure 3: Strengths in resettlement



Religion or spirituality was considered as a strength by many participants although not as much as the three areas mentioned above. Most participants practised their religion at home with prayers and fasting, and they went to the mosque when there were celebrations. They said it is a compulsory for men to go to the mosque but not for women. The men go to the mosque at least every Friday but women can pray at home. Lebanese Cedar said, “In Islam, it’s not necessary that women should go to the mosque, we can practise it at home”.

Interestingly, when asked what they considered as important in their resettlement, the three top results were again language, family and culture, as shown in the table below:

Figure 4: Most important aspects in resettlement



In this section I will discuss the importance of maintaining culture and the roles of family members in resettlement as language has already been explained in the previous section.

### **Maintaining culture**

Whether how they dress, celebrate events, or practise religion/spirituality, in the discussions participants highlighted the importance of preserving their culture. All focus group participants agreed that maintaining culture is very important to their generation and the next generation. Culture provides participants with a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. Gender roles were strongly shown during this research study; for example, many of the women had to ask their husbands' permission to attend the focus groups and some of them decided not to participate on the day of the focus group when I picked them up from their homes. Their husbands answered the door and said their wives could not attend the meetings. Some of the men said their wives were unwell while I could see the women were in the other rooms waving their hands smiling at me. Some of the men just simply said their wives were not available to participate in the focus groups. All the women who did not come, did not meet me face to face to say they were not coming but the husbands met me on their behalf.

During the focus groups' discussions the participants emphasised the importance of community in maintaining their culture and traditions such as the traditions on how they celebrate the month of Ramadan. For example, the first two focus groups were held during Ramadan period, and to the participants celebrating Ramadan was not only because they are Muslims but because it is also part of their culture.

Participants expressed that during Ramadan, they used to have family members gathered at one place and spend much time having conversations and break the fast together, but now they cannot even hear the calling of prayer (adhan). They said religion and the customs that come with the religion have become part of their lives. Some participants said Ramadan was a big celebration in Syria where people sell food and clothing and a big number of people pray together. But in New Zealand they found Ramadan was "quiet".

Many participants found it challenging not to hear the adhan because they were used to hearing it at least five times a day. Jasmine, Damask Rose and Orchid specified maintaining culture is very important, and not hearing adhan is a bit challenging but they can manage. They used their cell-phones to remind them of prayer times.

### **Whanaungatanga/the roles of family in resettlement**

Before specifically discussing the importance of family in resettlement, it is useful to have an understanding of the terms used by participants when talking about family. The participants were particularly interested in using extended family and the community as the context of family. Participants stated that in Syria they had the support of their extended families to raise their children and sometimes help with some housework, but now they are more individual.

Participants confirmed they meet their community members from time to time, and some of them felt supported but some of them did not. Lilac sees the community members often but did not feel supported by them, and similarly, Tulip said, "none of us received support from the Syrian community, but we meet them". In regard to support from the Muslim community, Belsam said, "nobody is coming from the mosque", although participants confirmed they go to the mosque when invited to events.

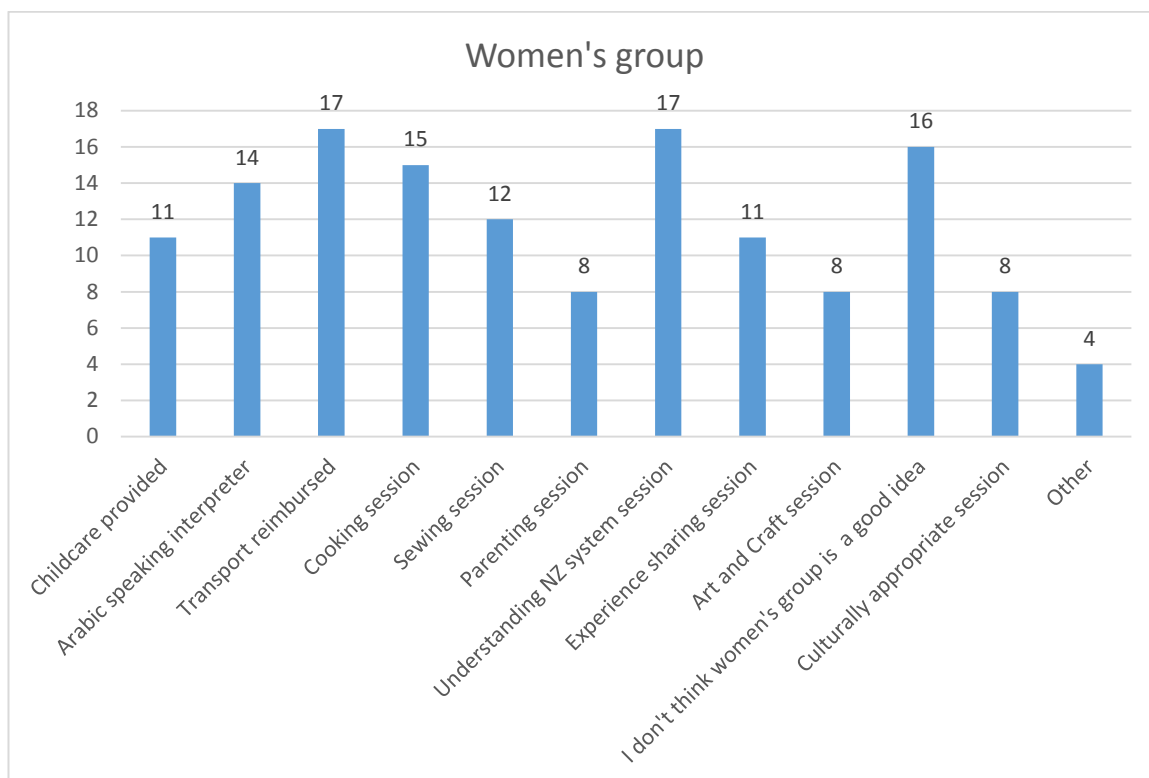
Zainab felt very happy when community members were visiting her: “we meet them, and they come to our house and visit us”. When asked whether it is a good idea to have a community gathering, she answered “yes please, that’s what we want to have. We want to meet with the community, which would be a great event, especially in a special month like this (Ramadan)”. Mushmush nodded her head and said, “for example a meeting or event with lunch, that would be really good”. Similarly, Belsam said, “yes, an event where we can meet and have lunch that would be a good thing”.

Many participants indicated they would like to extend the context of community to a wider Arab community and New Zealanders, not only the Syrian community. They stated they communicate better with other than Syrians and they would like to have good relationships with everyone. Lebanese Cedar strongly said “we are good with Arab community!”. All participants agreed that in building their support system, the community becomes their extended family and they are interested in engaging with the wider Arab community and New Zealand society as a whole.

#### **5.4. Appropriate community development**

In a multiple-response question survey participants were asked that if there was an opportunity to have a women’s group, what would need to be considered in the women’s group? Figure 5 below shows 17 participants answered that logistically, transport needs to be reimbursed, 17 people thought sessions for understanding New Zealand systems were very important, 16 people suggested women’s group was not a good idea, and 15 participants thought a cooking session was a good idea in a women’s group.

Figure 5: Women's group



During the discussions following survey questionnaires, the participants came up with many ideas for developing the community that I had not thought of before, such as starting a catering business, and community-based bread making and selling bread at their traditional market. This shows that although the women have just been in New Zealand for a short period of time, they have been thinking creatively about developing the community and ways to earn income for their families.

Knowing about what the participants think is clearly important in shaping community development. Despite the desolate refugee experience, the hardships of living in the refugee camps and currently living on benefits, these situations have not hindered the aspirations of the participants with whom I spoke. Indeed, it may have influenced the aspirations of some of the participants, which is another indication of determination and motivation among these women. For example, Jullanar is a woman with many talents; she is a solo mother who wanted to open a catering business or operate a food truck or a tailoring shop. She came to New Zealand with five young children and two adult daughters. She had been running cooking shows for New Zealanders and accepting small scale catering orders from different agencies. However, she

could not expand her business, although she lived in a six-bedroom house with reasonably sized kitchen; she had to cook in a commercial kitchen for her catering business:

“...I have to rent a kitchen if I want to do a business in food. My landlord wouldn’t allow me to use the kitchen in my house to cook and sell the food. I can’t afford to pay to hire a kitchen and I can’t use my kitchen either. The kitchen hire is hourly and it’s not cheap. It’s \$10/hour, I cannot afford. So, if I have to hire a kitchen, everything I earn needs to go to the hire and ingredients for the food. It’s not worth it!”

Mushmush was far less ambivalent than Jullanar. She expressed no desire to start her own business but would like to join other women who have more experience in cooking: “we can work together and start a small business in food. Some of us can cook and some of us can help”. One thing the participants all agreed upon was not to share the recipe with other people. Jullanar indicated she did not mind sharing the recipe if it is a simple cooking session, but not the original Syrian cooking. Dalyah laughed and explained to me that she was invited by a group of New Zealanders to teach them how to cook Syrian food, but she did not share the whole recipe with them. Some participants who used to make bread for a living suggested a community-based bread making and selling the bread at their traditional market. They said they wanted to bake the bread and sell it once a week.

Another area participants would like to develop was a community gardening club. Three participants looked at an example in Germany where former refugees were supported in opening a community garden. When Rayhan said “we also want to start a garden, in other country they help with starting a garden and we can manage the garden ourselves”, many participants shouted almost at the same time: “Germany!”. Mushmush added, “we want to work together, you can provide us with tools and a place”. They indicated they would like to plant herbs, fruits and flowers. Inab had been gathering Syrian herbs; she could not find those herbs in the garden centres but she found some of the herbs wildly growing in the street. She showed the herbs to her volunteers, who were New Zealanders, but none of them knew the names. Participants thought it would be great if they could plant those herbs in the community garden. They



also suggested having swings and slides for their children to play on in the garden so they could look after their children while looking after the garden.

Although it was very obvious that participants prioritised their children's needs over their needs, not many were interested in parenting sessions. Out of 45 participants in the survey, only eight were interested in parenting sessions; the rest chose other topics. In the discussions, participants did not think there was any problem with parenting. For example, Tulip said, "we provide with what the kids need, no difference". Khuzama stated she was taking care of her children in New Zealand the same way she did in Syria; there is no difference.

Participants indicated parenting sessions were not an interesting topic to have in the women's group.

Finally, participants said they would like to develop a sewing group. Most of the participants know how to sew, and Jullanar in particular was a professional sewer. They would like to start a business in tailoring, and hire a place where they can meet and receive orders; for example, altering jeans, shortening sleeves and making chair covers. Aster wanted to extend the tailoring to producing and selling Islamic dresses.

## **Conclusion**

After conducting the surveys and focus groups, it was apparent that the concept of satisfaction in their resettlement had many meanings to the participants, but most of them revolved around ideas of the importance of family, feeling respected, meeting their basic needs and having self-confidence. Some participants, however, could not imagine resettling at all. Gender roles between men and women were obvious among the Syrian former refugees. The participants considered the importance of spirituality and wished to be able to participate more to enhance their spiritual life; however, women had less opportunity to participate, which could lead to isolation. Community was considered as an important aspect in the participants' resettlement, and whanaungatanga in relation to Syrian refugee women development builds on social capital. In this study, the term whanaungatanga or kinship can include family, relationships, networks, communication and cooperative support.

The ability to understand the local language has had a significant impact on the participants' self-confidence. Language was also one of the biggest aspects in resettlement. Participants felt language was a strength, a challenge, and the most important feature in resettlement.

How participants perceive aspiration had an enormous effect on the way they felt about New Zealand as their new home, whether it was temporary or permanent. When they were hopeful, motivated and feeling supported, it was in these conversations about aspirations that participants revealed the depth of their knowledge about what they want to achieve beyond what they thought they could do. For some participants, resettling in New Zealand meant that for the first time they have an opportunity to attend classes, and learn how to read and write. However, at the end of the discussions, participants were able to come up with many ideas to develop their community.

# CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

## Introduction

This thesis sought to explore the participants' experience of resettlement in New Zealand. I sought to better understand their experiences and levels of satisfaction: to discover what strengths they bring and the challenges they face as women and how would they like to be supported in developing their community beyond the short-term orientation programme they currently undertake. It draws on a sense I gained through my professional experience of working as a social worker for the Red Cross, that women's experiences of resettlement differed from men, and that the voices of resettling refugees – their aspirations, goals and challenges – needed to be taken into account in the development of any programmes that may affect them.

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions above and existing literature about refugee resettlement. The first section discusses how Syrian women articulated resettlement and their satisfaction in resettlement. The second section uses the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to explore their resettlement experience in terms of accessing food, clothing, housing, and necessary health care and social services for an adequate standard of living. Using the Mana Wahine framework, the third section describes the extension of HRBA into the cultural rights of refugees in relation to spirituality/wairua, maintaining culture, language and good relationships in the family/whanaungatanga. This is further discussed in relation to theories of social capital.

## 6.1. Resettlement and satisfaction

All of the participants in this research are the first generation of Syrian former refugees. They became refugees under the ongoing Syrian civil war, which started in 2011. For the participants with whom I spoke, the idea of resettlement comprises of many different meanings. The participants have clearly given the subject a great deal of thought: while they greatly appreciated the opportunity to

resettle in New Zealand, being able to go back to Syria was a goal for which they visibly strive.

It was found that most of the former refugees in the sample were very satisfied with their resettlement in New Zealand. In addition to describing themselves as “happy” in survey responses, they articulated more detailed definitions of satisfaction in our discussion. Participants described specific examples of what needed to happen in order to successfully resettle, such as the ability to meet basic needs, the opportunity to learn English, and good healthcare services. This finding suggests that the fundamental human rights of these people are being met (HRBA, 2003): all participants were receiving financial assistance from Work and Income, engaging with English service providers, receiving subsidies for their health care, and none of them were homeless.

The discussions about resettlement satisfaction almost always, however, returned to the importance of family and their children. To the participants their happiness relies on the happiness of their children; this means they are happy when their children are happy by having their needs met. Participants’ comments about resettlement are therefore similar to comments that emerged in Kamri-McGurk’s (2012) research, which explored concepts of resettlement among Burmese refugees in Wellington. She found that among participants in her research, refugee women were very grateful for the “opportunities provided by New Zealand to live a safe life”, and this aspect was related to “their children and the freedom from worry” (p.107). She observed that when asked how participants imagine resettlement, they speak about their children’s prospects. This phenomenon is consistent with many literatures about resettlement for refugee women in that refugee women are usually expected by men in their family and community to take the main responsibility caring for their children (Sansonetti, 2016; Sharma, 2011). Hence, the idea of participants’ happiness seems to be attached to their children’s happiness.

Most of the participants said that they feel happier and safer in New Zealand than they did in their home country or in the transit country, such as Lebanon, Jordan or Egypt. However, participants are still lacking the security and support found within the extended families that they are used to. This finding concurs with DeSouza (2012), who found that refugee women in New Zealand are missing the physical and emotional support their extended family would have

otherwise provided. Many of them are facing the reality of long periods of separation from their extended families, which has caused great anxiety that they may or may not see them again. These experiences contribute to stress and uncertainty about their future and, in many cases, financial issues, as most of them feel the necessity to assist their family members who are trapped in the war zone and not able to meet their basic needs. As Orchid and Damask Rose stated, their families are “stuck” in the area surrounded by war and that “there is no money”. With all participants receiving benefits as their main income, the responsibility of sending money overseas adds to their stress in resettling in a new country.

Through the discussions, it became apparent that ideas about resettlement satisfaction were closely connected to meeting basic needs; the ability to exercise cultural rights such as spirituality, maintaining culture, language, and having good relationships in the family; and the possibilities for developing their community and expanding their networks. These aspects of resettlement and integration will be discussed in the following sections.

#### **6.1.1. Important differences in resettlement for women**

This study showed that gender roles strongly existed in the Syrian community. For example, some potential participants who opted out of the focus group on the day I picked them up and had their husbands to speak on their behalf showed how strong the gender roles were in the Syrian community. Some of the women who attended the focus group had to seek permission from their husbands as to whether or not they could attend the meetings. The findings were consistent with Casimiro et al.'s (2007) study that Muslim former refugee women needed to gain their husbands' permission to participate in an event or being out in the public in order to show respect to their husbands. As a result, former refugee women may have less social interaction than former refugee men if permission is not given by their husbands to interact with other people. In their research study, Casimiro et al. also contend that former refugee men sometimes prevent former refugee women from connecting with people outside their networks (Casimiro et al., 2007). This phenomenon can lead to former refugee women being isolated and unable to participate in, and contribute to their host society.

Some solo mothers in the study also found their roles and status had changed by necessity. They had to adapt to a new role, that of the head of the family, in order to care for their children and maintain their culture. This supports Kamri-McGurk (20123)'s research finding that many former refugee women enter a new role as the heads of households when they resettle in New Zealand. It also suggests additional reasons why former refugee women may be isolated and find it difficult to integrate. For this reason, former refugee solo mothers require a wrap-around support to cope with their physical and psychological resettlement needs as they were in a new environment with a new role.

All participants in this research study were wearing hijab, and some of them stated they felt discriminated against as a result of their distinctive appearance, which is different from their host community. This finding concurs with the study of refugees by Valentine et al. (2009), who suggest that refugee women who wear scarves acutely felt discriminated against in their host country. Such feelings can promote isolation and delay refugee women's integration process into the host society (Lamb, 1996).

In this study, many participants who had never felt discriminated against did not find problems accepting the host culture, but some who had experienced discrimination found it hard to blend into the host society.

I argue that, for a variety of reasons, the resettlement experience is different for refugee women and men, and therefore they have different resettlement needs. In particular, women may face more isolation and discrimination, and it may be harder for their voices to be heard. Because of this, former refugee women need specific assistance that can empower them to integrate well into their host society.

## **6.2. Meeting basic human rights**

This study provides some important insights into the participants' daily lives in their process of resettlement. The first is that while the participants have undoubtedly suffered past traumas as part of their refugee journey, their current life situations do not seem to be any less difficult. Article 25(1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) contends that everyone has the

right to a standard of living that is adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services. For participants of this study, focussing on the daily needs of providing food for the family and paying the bills often appeared to be the primary concern. Some of the women briefly shared events that had happened to them in the past, such as being tortured by the rebels. However, the women spoke much more often and in greater depth about not being able to pay their bills by the end of the week. In addition, they often discussed the cost of food, power bills, healthcare fees, rent and cost of transport being too expensive.

It was evident among participants that the financial support provided by the New Zealand Government did cover their basic needs in terms of food, shelter and access to health care – but only just – and it did not meet the participants' expectations. In our discussions, the younger participants seemed more accustomed to some of the daily manifestations of marginal living, such as not having anything left in their bank account by the end of the week. They also expressed not being able to financially help their family members overseas who are in difficult situations, and they showed outrage at the conditions under which their families were living in Syria.

Many of them suggested resettlement in New Zealand does not provide a permanent solution for their problems and they still considered Syria as their home. Their determination to struggle to regain their identity as Syrians was tangible; as Laymoon said, "all of us we have a dream to go back". Associating resettlement in New Zealand with the right to go back to their family's original homes illustrates how much the participants' ideas of happiness are intertwined with a place they call home. Although they hoped that resettlement in New Zealand was a temporary solution and they could go back home one day, they also take into account there is a possibility that their right to go back to Syria may not be a possible option.

In addition, despite the participants' basic rights being met, the research confirms that resettling in New Zealand leads to an increase of responsibilities for some women, whether they become heads of households or not. In many cases, women become the sole household member responsible for meeting the needs of the family. This is consistent with Kamri-McGurk's (2012) findings that

some former refugee women enter a new role as the heads of households when they resettle. This means some of the participants are responsible for both financing and taking care for their children. As a result, refugee women are usually more aware of the needs of their family and the necessary refugee resettlement services, and tend to be more committed to initiatives that could improve the inadequate living conditions of the community.

The research findings show that refugee resettlement programmes for Syrian women in New Zealand are mainly welfare based, and focus on meeting the basic rights such as providing financial support, English courses, basic health care and housing. There is an expectation that when the basic rights are met, refugees will be empowered to address other important rights such as cultural rights. However, for this to occur, greater support needs to be provided in the resettlement and integration process that considers empowerment strategies, and that supports the development of social networks to build social capital. Through such strategies, the participation of the refugee women in the wider community can be encouraged (Edward, 2010).

### **6.3. Cultural Rights**

Everyone has the rights to their own culture, which is usually expressed through spiritual beliefs, language, values and community people identify with (Symonides, 1998; Human Rights Resource Centre, 2000). The Government's responsibility is to enable minorities to speak their own language, practise their own religion/spirituality, and enjoy their own culture (ICCPR, 1996).

Spirituality, culture, language and family have played a large part in maintaining identity and shaping successful resettlement of Syrian women. These aspects are interlinked for obvious reasons: they were forced to flee; they hope to go back to Syria; they have lost their belongings and many of them lost family members; they want to maintain their identity; they have been separated from their family and support; and they need to learn a new way of life in a new culture.

The findings of this study show the importance of maintaining culture and spirituality in refugee resettlement, which is consistent with HRBA to



resettlement (Mugadza, 2012) and the right to participate in cultural life (UNESCO, 2001). The ability of participants to practise their culture and spirituality implies consideration of their freedom and opportunity to choose their values and beliefs, and it also gives them a greater possibility to integrate well in the host society (UNIFR, 2010). The findings of this study also concur with Dorais' (2007) findings in a study of Vietnamese refugees in Canada, which noted that spirituality provides comfort and a sense of home. Participants in this study expressed that resettlement service providers in New Zealand are trying their best to accommodate their cultural and spiritual needs although some of them felt discriminated against because of their religion. Support was provided by resettlement agencies to engage participants with their ethnic and religious communities. However, some of the participants stated they were of not much assistance.

Many of the participants' customs that they would want to continue to have were beyond what the service providers could offer; this included the wish to listen to the calling of prayers and mosques that could accommodate their religious needs. The participants also wished they could have more gatherings such as khutba (Muslim gathering to hear sermon) and community gathering for women only, to help with their spiritual needs. This study showed, therefore, the need to adequately support women, rather than treating men and women the same during the resettlement process. Such an approach would be supported by using Mana Wahine, which specifically supports women's empowerment.

### **6.3.1. Wairua/spirituality in refugee resettlement**

Participants expressed that spirituality has helped them in resettlement because religion gives them hope and, for some, the assistance from members of the community with the same religion also offers support. From the refugees' perspective, spirituality assisted nearly all participants at a particular stage or during the various stages of the refugee experience because practices in spirituality can provide therapeutic restructuring processes through prayers, reading the Qur'an and Islamic stories. This concurs with the study of religion in refugee resettlement by Ennis (2011) and is similar to Dorais (2007) and McMichael (2002), who suggest that spirituality and religion provide comfort to refugees in their resettlement country. Furthermore, the findings are in

accordance to Mella's (1994) study, which found spirituality undoubtedly was a method of survival and reduced the stress of being a refugee.

This thesis argues that the spiritual needs for Syrian women may be different from Syrian men, and here I draw on the concept of Mana Wahine that the needs of women are equal to, but different from those of men (Pere, 1982; Smith, 1990). For example, many participants commented that it is not compulsory for women to pray at the mosque while it is necessary for men go to the mosque at least every Friday. Such differences in gender roles and expectations mean that Syrian women often stay at home rather than attend the service, meaning that Syrian women are not able to engage with the community as much as men.

In addition, for Syrian women who had been accustomed to hearing the call to prayer from their home, the sense of distance from the mosque may have added to their sense of isolation and cultural disconnection.

The solo mothers in the group discussions felt they were raising their children the same way as when they were in Syria; however, sometimes they feel a lack of support in raising them in accordance to their spiritual beliefs without the presence of men in the family.

### **6.3.2. Maintaining culture**

This thesis reveals that participants in the focus groups believed maintaining and connecting with their ethnic culture helps to facilitate successful integration. This finding supports that of DeSouza (2012), who similarly found that refugee women in New Zealand value living in a multi-cultural society and appreciated being able to maintain their culture. It is also supported by the Mana Wahine framework, which recognises the importance of culture to well-being. As Pere (1982) states, that if a person's culture is respected the person thrives and if a person's culture is disrespected the person withers. In this study participants found that retaining Syrian culture has positive benefits for their children and families.

The findings are also consistent with the UNSECO Convention on Cultural Diversity in recognising the importance of maintaining cultural identity (UNESCO, 2005). The ability to maintain cultural identity is an important

component of refugee resettlement because it has positive impacts on refugees' integration process. Assistance from the Government can create supportive conditions for the maintenance of refugees' cultural identity (UDHR, 1948; ICCPR, 1966).

Although all participants considered that maintaining culture was one of the main factors in successful resettlement, the research findings provided us with an opportunity to understand the variation in individuals' orientation to the host culture. The different gender norms were very apparent in the Syrian community in their resettlement. For married couples; for example, it is common for the husbands to make decisions for the family, including their wives, and the concept of mutual decisions made between husband and wife was considered unusual, although it is very common in New Zealand. This also showed that what is considered as normal in New Zealand may not be normal to this group, including what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to be done by Syrian women and men. Another example is that it is not appropriate for many Syrian men and women to shake hands or sit next to each other if they are not family related, but it is very common for people in New Zealand to shake hands regardless of their gender and it is also common for women and men in New Zealand to sit next to each other in public places. Therefore I suggest ongoing cultural orientation, both with Syrian refugees and New Zealand society, is needed to help the process of integration, as argued by much of the literature (Gray & Elliot, 2001; Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Mugadza, 2012) that emphasises the shared responsibility between refugees and host society for integration.

From my observation in working with this ethnic group since the first Syrian refugee intake arrived in New Zealand, an intensive cultural orientation programme is much needed to assist with their integration. Many times, when I delivered orientation programmes at Red Cross to Syrian refugees and showed them some pictures of women driving a bus or a truck and pictures of men sitting in front of computers, I asked them what their thoughts were. They came up with many ideas that it should be the other way around and that women should not drive a bus or a truck and that women should be the ones working in front of computers. The fact is that it is very common in New Zealand to see women and men doing comparable jobs. Similarly, when I showed them

pictures of gay or lesbian couples, many of them considered it as not normal to see same sex marriage, and when I said it is legal here in New Zealand, many of them were shocked. These findings show that different cultural orientation exists in the resettlement of Syrian former refugees. It is uncommon for Syrian women to drive trucks and for same sex couples to be publicly accepted.

Participants in this research study found that maintaining ethnic culture alone was not enough; they acknowledged the importance of learning the new way of life. This finding is supported by literature which argues that preserving ethnic culture and learning the host culture can facilitate successful adaptation (Suarez-Oroco et al., 2009).

The arguments mentioned above support the notion that orientation programmes and ongoing education are very important for newly arrived refugees in resettling well in New Zealand. Participants believed maintaining culture helps them resettle well in New Zealand. At times, participants recognised, were grateful for and acknowledged the support of other former refugee women who demonstrated a better understanding of their circumstances, and they found peace in each other's company. Many of them considered the other refugee women as their own family.

### **6.3.3. Language in resettlement**

The participants viewed language as the greatest factor in resettlement, and they strongly believe that maintaining their Arabic language was as important as learning the local language. Participants viewed Arabic not only as a language they speak but also as part of their cultural identity in being Syrians. This argument is supported within a Mana Wahine framework (Pere, 1982; Higgins et al., 2014; Te Whāiti et al., 1997) that language expresses not only values and beliefs but also the culture of people in a powerful way, which was described as a window to one's soul. All participants use Arabic to communicate at home with their family members. They also use Arabic for their prayers and in reading the Qur'an. They wish to retain Arabic for themselves and for the generations to come.

The battle to retain Arabic and learn English has caused some concerns among some participants, particularly for participants who have been living in New Zealand longer, because their children speak more English than Arabic. They

learn English through school and their interactions with friends. The opposite goes with newly arrived participants; the concerns are mainly focused on their children who have limited English and wanted their children to learn more English. The mosques offer support in maintaining Arabic through prayer meetings and gatherings to learn the Qur'an.

All participants in this study learn English through English classes and home tutors, and they were being engaged with service providers through NZ Red Cross. Although challenging, learning English was considered very important as it can open many opportunities. This approach is supported by the literature, which makes it clear that for refugees, learning the host country's language provides opportunities to successful integration, particularly in understanding social functions better (Erden, 2016; Olliff & Couch, 2005). Participants explained that learning English has had an impact on every aspect of their lives, such as the ability to navigate their local areas, their ability to socialise, and to gain employment. Participants hoped that the more they learned English the more fluent they would be. English fluency was considered as a major factor affecting the participants' degree of self-confidence because the different degrees of ability in English could affect the participants' everyday lives and wellbeing.

The language ability of participants, however, was found to relate to their previous education, the length of living in New Zealand, and the areas where they originally came from. Their previous level of education, however, seemed to be the major factor in English ability. Participants who did not have previous education found more difficulties learning English and more challenges in navigating the local areas and building their self-confidence. This is consistent with Gray and Elliot's (2001) findings that lack of English proficiency may lead to great difficulties for refugees when they resettle in the third country. Similarly, Fangen (2006) and Debski (2008) found refugee women's language barriers could potentially worsen their adaptation because they are unable to communicate their needs.

I presented this discussion, including the findings of this research study on the importance of learning English in refugee resettlement, to the teachers and staff evening at English Language Partners in Porirua in October 2016. The teachers and staff concurred with the positive impacts of learning English on refugees

resettling in New Zealand. Some of the teachers added that learning English can lead to employment, building confidence and ability to communicate with the wider community in general, and many literatures support this argument, such as Portes and Bach (1980), Chiswick and Miller (2002), Olliff and Couch (2005) and Dustmann (1994).

#### **6.3.4. Whanaungatanga/relationships in the family**

The theme of family was central to the narratives of many participants. The Syrian women extended the context of family to their wider community networks and New Zealand society. This result is consistent with Pere's (1982) concept of whanau for Māori and the practices that can bind and strengthen the kinship ties of a whanau/family. In the case of Syrian refugees in New Zealand, the new community becomes their extended family, particularly for participants who do not have family living in New Zealand, and their community can become their support system. This statement shares similarities with the idea of whanaungatanga as a form of social capital way described by Robinson and Williams (2001). Participants may gain social capital through their networks and relationships in the community, which can be seen, to an extent, as their extended families.

This research has demonstrated that participants indicated eagerness to engage with New Zealand society as an extension of their families. Some participants did cooking shows to European New Zealanders and exchanged cultural knowledge at the events. Although participants did not speak English well, they did not consider communication barriers as major issues.

NZ Red Cross conducts regular public awareness about refugees and their culture through workshops, advertising and campaigns. The possibility to educate the host society could potentially enable New Zealanders to become more welcoming and accommodating to refugees. Knowledge of the refugee situations by the host community would reduce hostility, and this would enhance collective actions of service providers and the refugee women as outlined in the HRBA's principles of accountability and participation (Therien & Joly, 2014). Furthermore, refugee services for Syrian women need to be discussed through the lenses of their strengths and challenges. Both are interconnected and reciprocal in maintaining good relationships in the family and community, i.e. a

change in any one of them could constructively change the resettlement outcome.

Participants found that family is one of the most important factors of their satisfaction in resettling in New Zealand, and family reunification was a major component in refugee resettlement, with refugees feeling disempowered by worry about the welfare of their relatives in their countries of origin. These results are consistent with other research studies by Debski (2008), Gray and Elliot (2001), and Pittaway (2004), who found former refugee women frequently experience guilt concerning family and friends who have been left behind. Essentially, high quality resettlement services that include community connection strategies can mediate the impacts of these challenges. In New Zealand, the Community Law Centre can assist former refugee women with understanding family reunification processes and expectations.

This thesis has demonstrated that the resettlement and integration of Syrian women involve a range of factors and processes that occur across their resettlement journey. The successfulness of their integration is the result of the ongoing balanced coordination of practising spirituality, maintaining the practices of their native culture, learning English, maintaining Arabic, and having good family support/whanaungatanga. There may be considerable challenges for women in achieving this balance, partly because of the different gender roles recognised in the Syrian community. Therefore, a successful integration service needs to listen to the voices of the women (Pere, 1982), understand their experiences and support their own initiatives to develop their community as part of integration. This will be discussed in the next section.

#### **6.4. Community development for Syrian women**

This study aimed to review the current resettlement experiences of Syrian women in New Zealand in order to find out what other supports are needed to empower Syrian refugee women. Building on the concept of HRBA, it considers how to empower refugee women and promote participation focused on rights rather than needs (Ussar, 2010). The findings of this study suggest that there is no support specifically for women and the resettlement programme is mostly targeted at basic physiological rights such as financial needs, housing, food,

healthcare, clothing and safety. Much work, therefore, still needs to be done to enable resettled refugees to attain higher levels of cultural rights, and it can partly be achieved, through community development.

In my observations while working with Syrian community and during the discussions I had with participants, it became apparent that the support from the local community and ethnic community has a significant impact on the resettlement of Syrian former refugees, which affected both their views of satisfactions and resettlement. As we explored the conversations during our focus group discussions, participants identified themselves as newcomers to New Zealand. The participants' daily lives are filled with a large degree of awareness of their situation and questions about the possibility to earn income, a chance to go back to Syria, and the opportunity to build support systems. The ability to meet with other community members and enjoy ongoing education enables Syrian women to build support networks while also educating them in understanding the New Zealand system. Community development programmes, may provide Syrian women with realistic, relevant and practical steps in which to effectively resettle and integrate.

Participants demonstrated that they are active in the resettlement process and determined about improving their lives. The eagerness to develop their community invites resettlement service providers to acknowledge their voices. In this respect, this thesis agrees with Pittaway (2004) and DeSouza (2012), who argue that the support the community can provide is as crucial as settlement and specialist services. This research also concurs with Boscan (2013) and Mugadza (2012) in that social ties among the community can be a huge help to refugees in their resettlement. Moreover, this thesis invites funders to reflect on the current community development projects in light of the ideas initiated by former refugees themselves. For instance, knowing how the participants want to develop their community, such as through cooking groups, sewing or gardening clubs, could have us think more about the importance of listening to their voices and question the necessity of the existing programmes that the refugee women do not actually want to participate in.

Engaging in community development and networking has been argued to facilitate successful adaptation (Gibson, 1988; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). In light of this, I organised a meeting to present the initial findings of this research



study, with NZ Red Cross Community Development Workers and ChangeMakers Refugee Forum. Refugee Trauma Recovery and MCLaSS were also invited. However, they sent their apologies, saying they would like to have a summary of the findings, and invited me to give another presentation of the initial findings at another time. People who attended were pleased to hear that the majority of participants were satisfied with their resettlement in New Zealand. They were informed about the types of activities the participants were interested or not interested in being involved in. Some of the attendees suggested some names of agencies that have been running programmes such as sewing groups and gardening, and they said they would bring the information back to their team and see if they could use them to engage with the Syrian women in different ways. Another presentation of this research finding was held in April 2017 at the Red Cross client services team leaders national hui in Auckland.

An understanding of community development as a process of listening to the women's voices can make a contribution to the ways in which community development staff and funders attend to it. By taking into account the initiatives from the community, community development projects could not only be organised more efficiently but also more coherently. In fact, this study has shown that there is a disconnection between the decisions made in terms of the types of activities run by service providers for developing the community and the actual initiatives developed endogenously by the community. For instance, some community development projects such as badminton and table tennis, which have very little to no attendance from the community, were a waste of resources while there were other known ideas about what the community wanted to do. I argue that community development workers need to mediate between the needs of refugees and the needs of staff to deliver the projects.

It is hoped that this thesis has raised significant questions regarding the ideas to be considered in the community development projects. It is believed that this thesis has shown that there are significant reasons to re-evaluate the types of community development activities/programmes for the Syrian women.

Through community development programmes, participants hope to have the opportunity to develop their initiatives to improve their health and wellbeing. The benefits of these initiatives manifest in both the short-term and long-term

outcomes, such as a sense of belonging to the community, as the participants showed during discussions. They can foster identity and pride and also build support systems, while the long-term effects of participating in such programmes may contribute to the establishment of a generation that is committed to maintaining their culture and integrating well in New Zealand society.

The Syrian women saw great value in services initiated by other refugees for the support of their own people and called for the collaboration of service providers to ensure more effective delivery of services to the Syrian community. Social support such as women's groups, community gatherings, mother's networks or single parents groups could potentially help to promote agency among individuals to reflect on their situation and develop a plan to achieve their goals. Such groups could become part of the refugee women's extended family and the support from each other could build social capital.

Currently refugee men and women are treated the same during the resettlement and integration process, which has maintained social inequities. I argue that adequate social support has not been provided for Syrian women, which makes the development of a support system or sense of belonging especially difficult. The women have not had the opportunity to participate or feel they can take part in the local community to the level they desire, so they have not been able to develop a strong sense of belonging. If they were given the necessary tools during the resettlement and integration process, they could gain cultural and social capital in order to integrate more successfully. Having a New Zealand permanent residency alone does not necessarily facilitate employment, proper education, or integration (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998) in the society.

Korac (2003) argued that a lack of formal assistance meant that refugees would be motivated to initiate their own networks both within their ethnic communities and with the host community. Far from supporting this theory, the women all stressed the importance of a support person, whether it is a Red Cross social worker, volunteer, development worker or English teacher, in all aspects of their resettlement.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that there were a number of interconnected factors that determined the satisfaction in resettlement of Syrian women and that these women needed additional support to achieve a successful longer-term integration. All participants received financial support from Work and Income, engaged with English language service providers, received subsidies for their healthcare, and lived in houses arranged by Immigration New Zealand. This implies that New Zealand has provided their basic physical rights according to HRBA. However, refugee women's resettlement needs are different to those of men, and former refugees also have cultural rights. Participants identified cultural rights such as having access to spirituality/wairua, rights to maintain culture, language, and good relationship/whanaungatanga in the family as necessary for their resettlement in New Zealand.

Building from the concept of whanaungatanga, where family networks are extended from whanau (family), hapu (clan) and iwi (tribe), social capital can be built among refugees, and with service providers and wider community to develop their community. In developing the community, it is very important to consider the gender norms that exist in the Syrian community. These findings can be usefully understood using the Mana Wahine framework, which suggests former refugee women need a different type of support from former refugee men in order to integrate well in New Zealand, and which stresses the integration of spirituality, culture, language and family, and which privileges the participation of women's voices in decisions that affect their lives. This thesis argues that Mana Wahine offers a conceptual framework that allows service providers to develop appropriate support for the women.



# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter highlights the key aspects of the Syrian women's resettlement together with the findings of this research. It discusses recommendations on how resettlement programmes could be developed and implemented to accommodate the needs of refugee women and areas for future research.

## **Key aspects of Syrian women's resettlement**

Syrian women experienced torture and trauma in their refugee journey and although their refugee status changed when they arrived in New Zealand, their challenges did not stop. Sansonetti (2016) recognises the challenges faced by refugee women in adjusting to the new way of life. Part of the challenge is due to the fact that these women have lost the support they used to receive from other family members in Syria. Casimiro et al. (2007) argue that the difficulties are common to refugee women, in particular Muslim women, who face isolation resulting from aspects of their cultural practices, and that their isolation had become worse after they resettled in the third country.

This thesis has focused on capturing the women's experience with resettling in New Zealand and examined the types of activities they wanted to be involved in or develop. Research participants openly shared their experiences and expressed their eagerness to participate in their community. However they found it difficult to access many forms of community connection that may facilitate their resettlement and integration. Lamb (1996) argues that refugee women have far less participation in the community than refugee men, due to their main role in caring for their children and spending much time on housework. Casimiro et al. (2007), in a study on Muslim refugees in Australia, found that Muslim men were the watch-people of information, resources and connections, and restricted women's access, which can lead to isolation. Spitzer (2006) argues that preventing isolation is proven to have a relevant positive impact on these refugee women's resettlement and integration.

## Summary of findings

This research involved the participation of forty-five Syrian former refugee women in the survey and twenty-three in three focus groups. Most of the participants were very satisfied with their resettlement in New Zealand, although many of them said they would never resettle and they wanted to go back to Syria. They indicated New Zealand has provided them with a safe environment and basic human rights but the financial assistance did not meet their expectations.

The participants considered the ability to maintain their culture helps them to resettle well in New Zealand – they recognised the importance of spirituality, culture, language and family as the main aspects in their resettlement. The resettlement support from New Zealand Red Cross staff and volunteers played a central role in linking the refugees with various services, such as English courses, local community, mosques, Work and Income, Citizens Advice Bureau, medical centres, schools and mental health services. These agencies also played a major role in providing practical services to refugees; for example, teaching refugees how to use public transport, make appointments, understand the New Zealand system, orientate to the local areas, and engage with their ethnic community. The participants of this study have provided abundant and vibrant narratives about their resettlement experiences. However, it was clear that available services were not specialised to meet refugee women's needs and that further support for refugee women would be beneficial.

The study revealed that different gender roles showed in the Syrian community but many agencies delivered their services the same way to refugee men and women (e.g. assessment, access to health care, education and employment) when agencies working with refugees should recognise the differences between services needed for refugee women and men in order to provide the extra support former refugee women need. This is necessary to prevent discrimination, increase participation for the women, and provide better opportunities to access the available resources. The Mana Wahine framework helps to recognise the different support needed for the Syrian refugee women. Unfortunately, many agencies follow a gender-neutral system, hence more assistance is needed for women, especially women who are single, divorced, or widowed, like one of the participants, Jullanar, who needed child care

assistance in order to be able to allocate more time to learning English and finding secure employment. Providing extra support for women would allow them to become more empowered in general and achieve more in many specific aspects such as the opportunity to enrol in formal educational institutions, have the chance to actively participate in their communities, and potentially become role models for the younger refugees. Being a role model can develop self-esteem for the women, and being an active participant in the community strengthens a sense of belonging among refugees. Developing self-esteem and a sense of place and belonging is crucial in order for refugees to feel secure and, furthermore, have a better quality of life.

The research process was not without challenges. A key limitation of this study was the limited available literature on Syrian refugees in New Zealand, and one challenge was the experimental application of Mana Wahine framework to an ethnic group other than Māori.

## **Recommendations**

Current agencies that provide services to Syrian refugees in New Zealand could address some of the issues raised here by analysing how services are currently being delivered to refugees, and in particular identifying gaps in services for refugee women. Community development workers need to consider and listen to what former refugee women say about what they need and would like to happen to in order to develop their community. Otherwise the isolation and lack of support that exists for female refugees could become worse, and unless agencies identify this issue, the women will continue to experience marginalisation. Former refugee women will have more difficulties with resettlement and integration, yet many agencies treat all former refugees the same regardless of gender.

The New Zealand Red Cross, New Zealand Immigration and ChangeMakers Refugee Forum could address these issues with the female former refugees they currently provide services for, as their collective mission is to connect refugees with resources in the community in order to achieve successful integration. Agencies such as Work and Income, health centres that provide services to refugees, social service providers, Plunket and Pathways to

Employment could have discussions with each other about what works well and what needs to be improved for refugee women, and strategise for the best outcomes for the refugee women. Programmes could be expanded, modified, or created to promote more inclusion of Syrian women to support them in reaching their goals.

Discussions could also take place in the refugee community involving former refugee women discussing participation in their resettlement process and how they could be supported in order to develop a sense of belonging. Community development workers could facilitate such dialogue. Syrian women could also be supported in the participation of group activities that preserve their culture. The refugee women's desire to learn more about New Zealand culture, and the English language is also important to note. Cultural celebrations or local activities should be facilitated where Syrian women could be given the opportunity to share their ideas. Such support is empowering and also an important aspect in developing a sense of belonging.

Syrian former refugees in New Zealand currently resettle only in two locations: Wellington region and Dunedin. Settlement for Syrian refugees demands more effective collaboration between service providers, past refugees and local host communities in order to deliver positive settlement outcomes for incoming refugees. A better collaboration of service providers with support from the refugee community could see the responsibility of resettling refugees falling on a wider range of organisations, with the incoming refugees being actively involved as well.

## **Areas for future research**

The focus of this study was on the experience of former refugee women from Syria in their resettlement, and activities that could develop their community, and their sense of participation and belonging. More research is required to understand the local needs of former refugee women and coordinate the experiences of professionals providing resettlement services. Such research would need to collect observational and interview data on the work performed by those who manage refugee resettlement in collaboration with different local agencies providing services to former refugees.



Another important limitation of this thesis is the fact that all participants were female. As suggested in the previous chapters, the roles of gender strongly exist in the Syrian community. It is presumably the case that this division of roles according to gender translates into a gendered division of community development that could not be addressed in this thesis. In fact, more research is needed on the impact of gender in the unfolding of resettlement for Syrian former refugees. For instance, during this research I encountered the emphasis on the concept of 'head of the family' in relation to who makes the decision on whether the women were able to participate in the research study.

On the completion of this research, I participated in two further research studies: the first was around health and the second was culture in the area of Syrian refugee resettlement conducted by Master's degree students at Massey University. However, since refugee resettlement for Syrians has been understudied and this research study is currently the only one of its kind in New Zealand. More topics in this area could be explored. In fact, more should be known about the refugee resettlement experience of former refugee women in New Zealand and the situations under which they are being integrated into New Zealand society so that New Zealand can better fulfil its humanitarian objectives and women can celebrate their Mana Wahine.



# Appendices

## Appendix A. Information sheet

### Information sheet in English



#### THE EXPERIENCE OF FORMER REFUGEE MUSLIM WOMEN FROM SYRIA RESETTLING IN AOTEAORA NEW ZEALAND FOCUS GROUP-INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald, Victoria University of Wellington.

I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The project I am undertaking is analysing the experience of former refugee Muslim women from Syria resettling in New Zealand. This will fill the knowledge gap and provide information to the extent of which and what other support is needed. The University requires that ethic approval be obtained for research involving human participants.

I am inviting Syrian former refugee Muslim women to participate in this study. Participants will be asked to take part in two focus groups consist of eight people in each focus group. Participants will share their experience resettling in New Zealand, their feelings, their satisfaction, their strengths, and challenges as Muslims and women resettling in a new environment. Refreshment and \$20 Pak N Save voucher will be provided for every participant in the focus groups.

There will be a professional Arabic speaking interpreter to assist participants who have limited English. Should any participants feel the need to withdraw from the project, they may do so without question at any time before the start of focus groups. Please call or email me.

If you agree, I would like to tape record the discussions at the focus groups. Responses collected will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report. Your name will not be used in the report. The tape recording of discussions will be electronically wiped and all discussion records will be destroyed after two years. The focus group discussions are confidential and you should not disclose any information provided in the session.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Phone number: 04 4635480 / email: [susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz)

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at: **Hawa K.S. Fitzgerald**. Email: [hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz)

Or my supervisor: **Dr. Polly Stupples**. School of Geography, Environment, and Earth Science at Victoria University of Wellington, PO BOX 600, Wellington. Phone number: 04 463 6793 / email: [polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz)

If the research raises issues that upset you may contact your key worker at Red Cross, if you do not know their contact details you may contact Client Services Team Leader: Lucy Anderson.  
Phone number: 04 8050312. Email: [Lucy.Anderson@redcross.org.nz](mailto:Lucy.Anderson@redcross.org.nz)

Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'H.K.S. Fitzgerald', written over a horizontal line.

## Information sheet in Arabic



### تجربة نساء مسلمات لاجئات سابقات من سوريا في الاستقرار في نيوزيلندا صفحة معلومات

الباحثة : هاوا ك. س. فيتزجيرالد، جامعة فيكتوريا في ولنتون.

أنا طالبة ماجستير في دراسات التنمية في جامعة فيكتوريا في ولنتون. كجزء من أطروحتي لنيل درجة الماجستير اقوم بهذه المشروع . المشروع الذي اقوم به هو تحليل لتجربة لاجئات سابقات من النساء السوريات المسلمات خلال رحلة توطينهم واستقرارهم في ولنتون. هذا البحث لملء الفجوة المعرفية وتوفير المعلومات عن احتياجات هذه الفئة خلال رحلة توطينهم ومعرفة مايمكن ان يلزمهم من دعم اكثر. تطلب الجامعة الحصول على موافقة أدبية للأبحاث التي تنطوي على مشاركة عنصر بشري.

أنا ادعو السوريات المسلمات ممن كن لاجئات للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. وسيطلب من المشاركات ان يكن جزءا من مجموعة استطلاع للرأي (25 مشاركة) ولاحقا جزء من مجموعتي تركيز (8 مشاركات) ستبادل المشاركات ضمن المجموعة خبراتهن في إعادة التوطين ضمن منطقة ولنتون، سيتشاركن مشاعرهن ، رضاهن، اسباب قوتهن، والتحديات كمسلمات و نساء خلال رحلة التوطين في بيئة جديدة. سيتم توفير ضيافة خفيفة كما ستعطى كل مشاركة في مجموعات التركيز قسيمة شراء من (باك ان سيف) بقيمة \$ 20

سيكون هناك مترجم معتمد يتحدث العربية لمساعدة المشاركات اذا كانت لغتهم الإنجليزية محدودة. ان شعرت أيّة من المشاركات بالرغبة بالانسحاب من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة فبإمكانها فعل ذلك في اي وقت قبل بدء مجموعات التركيز لجمع البيانات وقبل ٢٥ حزيران ٢٠١٦.

بعد موافقتك ، فإنني اود تسجيل المناقشات التي ستدور في مجموعات التركيز. فالردود التي سيتم جمعها ستشكل الأساس لمشروعي البحثي وسيتم طرحه في تقرير مكتوب. لن يتم استخدام اسمك ابدأ في التقرير. سوف يتم محي التسجيل الصوتي الالكتروني للنقاش بعد سنتين.

إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة حول المضمون الادبي لهذا المشروع، يرجى الاتصال ب جامعة فيكتوريا :  
(Victoria University HEC Convener)

أستاذ مساعد: سوزان كوربت

رقم الهاتف: 04 463 5480

البريد الإلكتروني: [susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz)

إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة أو ترغبين في الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات حول هذا المشروع، يرجى الاتصال بي على العنوان التالي:

هاوا ك. س. فيتزجيرالد

رقم الهاتف: 02108162666

البريد الإلكتروني: [hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz)

أو المشرفة:

الدكتور بولي ستيوبلز. كلية الجغرافيا والبيئة وعلوم الأرض في جامعة فيكتوريا في ويلينغتون،

PO BOX 600

رقم الهاتف: 044636793

البريد الإلكتروني: [polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz)

إذا كان هذا الاسد تطلاع قد يثير بعض القضايا التي تداخل بك، يمكنك الاتصال بمسؤول مدلك في  
المدىب الاحمر و اذا كنت لا تعرف

ر : لوسيت فاصيل الاتصال بأمكانك ال تواصل مع مسؤولة فريق ال تطوعين في ال صليب الاحم  
اندرسونز رقم الهاتف ف: 213050840 او  
لucy.anderson@redcross.org.nz ال بريد الال ك تروني

Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald

Signed:



## Appendix B. Consent form

### Consent form in English



#### THE EXPERIENCE OF FORMER REFUGEE MUSLIM WOMEN FROM SYRIA RESETTLING IN AOTEAORA NEW ZEALAND

##### CONSENT FORM

- I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, the supervisor, the interpreter and the person who transcribes the tape recordings of our focus group discussions.
- The published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.
- I understand that the tape recording of discussions will be electronically wiped and all of the discussion records will be destroyed after two years.
- The focus group discussions are confidential and I will not disclose any information provided in the session.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

## Consent form in Arabic



تجربة نساء مسلمات لاجئات سابقات من سوريا في الاستقرار في نيوزيلندا

### ورقة الموافقة

- لقد أعطيت تفسيراً وافياً وقد الممت بشرح هذا المشروع البحثي. كما أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة، وتلقيت إجابات كافية ومرضية بالنسبة لي .
- أنا أفهم أن أي من المعلومات التي أقدمها ستبقى سرية ولن يعلم بها سوى الباحث، والمشرّف، والمترجم الذي عمل على تفرّغ محتوى شريط التسجيل لمناقشات مجموعات التركيز التي اشتركت بها.
- إن النتائج المنشورة لن تستخدم اسمي، ولن تتم الإشارة إلى أي من آرائي التي شاركت بها بشكل يمكن الربط بينها وبين شخصي.
- أفهم أن التسجيل الصوتي لهذه الجلسات سيتم إزالته إلكترونياً وتدمير كافة سجلات النقاش بعد عامين من إجراء الدراسة.
- إن مناقشات مجموعات التركيز سرية وأنا لن أكشف عن أي من المعلومات المقدمة في الدورة

التوقيع:

الاسم:

التاريخ:



## Appendix C. Survey questionnaire

### Survey questionnaire in English

#### The Experience of Former Refugee Muslim Women Resettling in the Wellington Region

##### Survey-Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the survey. Apart from question number 1, you can circle more than one answers.

1. How satisfied are you with your resettlement in the Wellington region?
  - a. Not satisfied
  - b. Somewhat satisfied
  - c. Very satisfied
  
2. What are the strengths you bring to your resettlement?
  - a. Language
  - b. Culture
  - c. Education
  - d. Skill
  - e. Experience
  - f. Religion/spirituality
  - g. Family
  - h. Other: .....
  
3. What are the challenges you face resettling in the Wellington region?
  - a. Language
  - b. Parenting
  - c. Practising religion/spirituality
  - d. Understanding new system
  - e. Maintaining my culture
  - f. Financial constraint
  - g. Relationship within family
  - h. Other: .....
  
4. What are the most important thing(s) in your resettlement? Please put in order if you can.

(....) Family	(....) Safety
(....) Practising religion/spirituality	(....) Learning English
(....) Connected with the Syrian community	(....) House
(....) Maintaining Arabic language	(....) Financial assistance
(....) Maintaining culture	(....) .....
(....) Health care	(....) .....
  
5. If your community is to have a women's group, what would you like to happen in the women's group?
  - a. Childcare provided
  - b. Arabic speaking interpreter
  - c. Transport reimbursed
  - d. Cooking session
  - e. Sewing session
  - f. Parenting session
  - g. Understanding NZ system session
  - h. Experience sharing session
  - i. Art and Craft session
  - j. I don't think women's group is a good idea
  - k. Culturally appropriate sessions
  - l. Other:.....

## Survey questionnaire in Arabic

### تجربة نساء مسلمات لاجئات سابقات من سوريا في الاستقرار في نيوزيلندا

#### أسئلة الإستفتاء

شكراً على مشاركتك في هذا الاستفتاء. يمكنك اختيار أكثر من اجابة للأسئلة ما عدا السؤال الاول.

١. ما مدى رضاك عن استقرارك في منطقة ولنتكون ؟

أ. غير راضية. ب. راضية نوعاً ما. ج. راضية جداً.

٢. ما هي نقاط القوة التي تجلبها في مرحلة إعادة الاستقرار ؟

أ. اللغة. ب. العادات والتقاليد. ج. التعليم. د. المهارات.  
هـ. الخبرة. و. الدين / الروحانيات. ز. العائلة. خ. أشياء أخرى .....

٣. ما هي التحديات التي تواجهها في مرحلة الاستقرار في ولنتكون ؟

أ. اللغة. ب. تربية الأطفال. ج. ممارسة الدين / الروحانيات. د. استيعاب النظام الجديد.  
هـ. المحافظة على العادات و التقاليد. و. القبول المالية. ز. العلاقات الأسرية. خ. أشياء أخرى .....

٤. ماهي الأشياء الأكثر أهمية في مرحلة الاستقرار ؟ الرجاء وضع الرقم التسلسلي حسب الأهمية.

(....) العائلة	(....) الأمان
(....) ممارسة الدين / الروحانيات	(....) تعلم اللغة الانكليزية
(....) التواصل مع الجالية السورية	(....) البيت
(....) المحافظة على اللغة العربية	(....) المساعدة المالية
(....) الرعاية الصحية	(....) .....
(....) المحافظة على العادات و التقاليد	(....) .....

٥. اذا وجدت في جاليتك مجموعة خاصة للنساء، ما هي الأشياء التي تودين ان تقوم بها هذه المجموعة ؟

أ. رعاية الأطفال. ب. مترجم باللغة العربية. ج. جلسات النقل. د. جلسات طبخ. هـ. جلسات خياطة. ز. جلسات لاستيعاب النظام في نيوزيلندا. ط. جلسات لتعليم الفنون و الحرف. ك. جلسات حسب العادات و التقاليد.  
ب. مترجم باللغة العربية. ج. جلسات النقل. د. جلسات طبخ. هـ. جلسات خياطة. ز. جلسات لاستيعاب النظام في نيوزيلندا. ط. جلسات لتعليم الفنون و الحرف. ك. جلسات حسب العادات و التقاليد.  
و. جلسات توجيهية لتربية الأطفال. خ. جلسات لتبادل الخبرات. ي. لا اعتقد بان المجموعات النسوية هي فكرة جيدة. ل. أشياء أخرى .....

## Appendix D. Confidentiality agreement for interpreters



### THE EXPERIENCE OF FORMER REFUGEE MUSLIM WOMEN FROM SYRIA RESETTLING IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

#### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR INTERPRETER

Name :

Company/organisation :

Position :

Postal address :

The above named person certifies that:

1. They are bound to maintain and aid in maintaining the confidentiality of all restricted information that comes to their knowledge relating to:
  - The details of the research participants
  - The information given by the research participants
  - The discussions between the researcher and the research participants
  - The content of data analysis.

2. They shall not at any time communicate the information to any person other than the researcher:

Hawa K.S. Fitzgerald. Phone number: 02108162666/email: [hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz)  
and her supervisor:

Dr. Polly Stupples. School of Geography, Environment, and Earth Science at Victoria University of Wellington, PO BOX 600, Wellington. Phone number: 04 463 6793 / email: [polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:polly.stupples@vuw.ac.nz)

Signature:

Date:

## **Appendix F. Focus group guide**

### **The Experience of Former Refugee Muslim Women Resettling in Aotearoa New Zealand**

#### **FOCUS GROUP-GUIDE**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Greetings/Assalamu alaikum,

Thank you for talking with me again about your resettlement in the Wellington region. My name is Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald, I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. You will remember we spoke at the Syrian community gathering held at Thistle Inn hall in May 2016.

The discussions today will again help me gather information to understand your experience resettling in the Wellington region. I am very keen in hearing about the strengths and challenges you have living in the new environment. The information you give could help determine the extent of which and what other support is needed for your community group.

An Arabic speaking interpreter will be available for you throughout the discussions. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. Your name will not be used and you will not be identified through anything you say.

With your agreement, I would like to tape record our discussions. The recording will only be listened by my supervisor Dr. Polly Stupples and myself. I will store the recording on a secure computer and I will destroy the recording after two years.

We will have the discussions between one and one a half hours. Please feel free to take a break or help yourself with drink and biscuits. Lunch will be provided at 12.30pm.

Do you have any questions?

Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald

Phone number: 021 081 62 666

Email: [hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hawa.fitzgerald@vuw.ac.nz)

1. How are you feeling about resettling in the Wellington region?

Probe:

- How satisfied are you in your resettlement?
- How happy are you with your house?
- How happy are you with the financial assistance you get from Work and Income?
- How satisfied are you with the support provided in your resettlement?
- Feeling safe-how are you feeling in terms of safety compare to when you just arrived in New Zealand?

2. Can you please tell me what have been happening since you resettled in the Wellington region?

Probe:

- Being out and about-how confident are you being out and about by yourself and using public transport?
- Receiving support-are you receiving support from your community and different agencies? Can you please name them?
- Have you engaged with medical centre, English classes, and mosque?
- What other agencies have you engaged with?
- How do you find the services they provide?

3. How confident are you engaging with the community?

Probe:

- How often you meet with other community members?
- How well do you know about what's happening in the community?
- Who do you contact for community gathering?

4. What are your thoughts on challenges in resettlement?

Probe:

- How challenging you think resettling in a new environment?
- What are the challenges you may have?
- Thinking about the time you have in Wellington, have you ever felt being discriminated for any reasons?

5. What are your thoughts on practising your religion in Wellington?

Probe:

- How easy is it for you to practise your religion in Wellington?
  - How would you like the mosque to assist you with?
  - What would you like to see more in the community?
6. How confident are you communication with other people in English?

Probe:

- How often do you speak English with other people?
  - How do you learn English?
  - How easy or difficult you find learning English?
7. What are your thoughts on parenting in New Zealand?

Probe:

- What is your opinion on parenting?
  - How different is parenting in New Zealand and in Syria?
  - How involved do you think parents should be in their children's schooling and other activities? Why do you say this?
8. What are your aspirations in resettlement?

Probe:

- How improved is your English? How motivated are you learning English?
  - What would you like to see in the future?
  - Would you like to be more involved in the community?
9. What other support you think would be good to have for Syrian former refugee Muslim women to resettle well?

Probe:

- Have you ever heard of women's group? If yes, when and where?
- What do you think an ideal women's group should have?
- What topics would you like to hear from women's group?

10. Is there anything you would like to add or ask?

## **CLOSE**

Thank you very much for your participation today. I would like to remind you that your name will not be used and you will not be identified by anything you have said. Let me know if you would like to have a summary of our discussions today. If there is anything from our discussions that you found upsetting, please do not hesitate to talk to me.

Please accept this \$20 Pak N Save shopping voucher as my thank you for your time and effort to participate in today's focus groups. You may spend this as you wish at any Pak N Save supermarket.

Kind regards,  
Hawa K. S. Fitzgerald

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