



# UPDATE

Working together to support asylum seekers

## Contents

CEO Update	2
Global trends for refugees 2012	3
Teaching for the future	4
Hope after heartache	5
'Restoring Hope' Refugee Week 2013	6
Mary meets Mohammed	6
Inaugural Vulnerability Report released	7
A place for 'Women's Wisdom'	8
Riding high	8
Fundamental Principles	9
A sign of things to come	10
Update on resources	11
We welcome your feedback	11

[redcross.org.au](http://redcross.org.au)

the  
**power**of  
humanity



# CEO Update

As you would be aware, Red Cross provides humanitarian assistance and advocates for the most vulnerable people in the Australian community, including asylum seekers and refugees. Refugee Week, from Sunday 16 June to Saturday 22 June, is a time to promote understanding of refugees and celebrate their many contributions to Australian society.

The theme of Refugee Week this year is "Restoring Hope". Refugees and asylum seekers hope for a safer life and seek opportunities to achieve their potential. They bring skills, experience and resilience that provide valuable contributions to their new communities.

Despite the many hardships they have experienced, refugees and asylum seekers generally retain the strength and skills they need to re-establish their lives. This is more likely where they have been provided with support and have access to the services they need during the process of refugee determination so they are able to make informed decisions about the future for themselves and their families. Red Cross is proud to work in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure those supports are available for people seeking asylum in Australia.

In this issue of Update you can read about some of the fantastic initiatives that are being developed across Australia by Red Cross teams and our partner agencies alike. In these pages you will also find some useful information designed to inform your work and support asylum seekers by building on their resilience and restoring hope.

**Robert Tickner**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Global trends for refugees 2012

Released on 19 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Trends report provides an overall snapshot of the state of forced displacement in 2012. A look at the countries that took in most of the world's refugees puts Australia's intake into a global perspective.

According the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), displacement created the highest number of refugees and internally displaced people in two decades, with the Syrian crisis having emerged as a major cause.

Of the 9.9 million refugees that were registered last year, only 30,000 were in Australia, or 0.3 per cent. In contrast, Pakistan hosted 1.6 million refugees, or 17 per cent of the world's refugee population. Iran received 868,200 refugees, which was about half the number of refugees received by Pakistan. Together, Pakistan and Iran accounted for a quarter of the world's refugee intake.

The other major refugee hosting countries for 2012 included Germany (589,700), Kenya (564,900), Ethiopia (376,400) and Chad (373,700).

Jordan (302,700) and China (301,000) each hosted around ten times as many refugees as Australia.

In an ever-widening gap between richer and poorer host countries, developing countries accounted for more than 80 per cent of all refugees. Half were received by countries that have a per capita GDP of less than US\$5000.

Nearly half of the world's refugees (46 per cent) were children under the age of 18. Over 21,000 asylum applications submitted in 2012 were from children who were unaccompanied or had been separated from their parents—the highest number of unaccompanied or separated children ever to have been recorded by UNHCR.

Each day in 2012, around 23,000 people were forced to flee their homes, which equates to more refugees per day than the total number of people seeking asylum in Australia for the whole year.

This highlights the fact that the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia remains relatively low by global standards.

---

The new report can be downloaded at  
[www.unhcr.org/globaltrendsjune2013](http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrendsjune2013)

---



“Life was very difficult. There was no safety and no freedom.”



Photo: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

## Teaching for the future

For Khalid and Hayfa, living in Iraq was not an option. Like many teachers in their homeland, they became the targets of kidnap, torture and death threats. They came to Australia in search of safety and have made it their new home, with the help of Red Cross.

Khalid, an academic, and his wife Hayfa, a teacher, were dedicated to teaching the future generations of Iraq. But in 2004 their homeland became a very different place. After the 2003 Iraq war ended, academics across the country became targets of persecution by religious conservative groups and schools were looted, burnt and destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

“Life was very difficult. There was no safety and no freedom,” recalls Khalid. “Every day there was bombing and killing.”

In 2006, their son was kidnapped, tortured and lost the use of one of his fingers. “He still feels very traumatised,” says Khalid. “We feel the same.” Their other sons also received kidnapping and death threats.

Because of this dangerous situation, Khalid, Hayfa and their second son were forced to flee Iraq. They flew to Australia in 2010 and requested asylum on arrival. The family anxiously waited a year for an outcome on their protection visa application. It was during this difficult time that they contacted Red Cross.

“When we came here we had spent all of our money,” says Khalid. A friend suggested Red Cross could help. Red Cross provided the family with vital financial assistance and access to health care through the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS). The program, funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and delivered by Red Cross, helped meet the family’s basic needs while they waited for an outcome on their visa application.

“They supported us with money but they also gave us much more love and support,” says Khalid. “If we lost our family, we found another family in Red Cross,” he says.

“Rachel is a very good woman,” says Hayfa of her Red Cross caseworker, who introduced Hayfa and Khalid to the community and helped them with other practical support such as filling in forms. “She’s our daughter. When we talk with her we feel like she is one of our family.”

In November 2011, they were formally recognised as refugees and granted protection. Since then, Khalid has been looking for work. “If you stay for a long time without a job you feel upset. It’s very difficult,” he says. “I try. But unfortunately I fail.” He is determined to keep trying until he succeeds. He currently volunteers 30 hours a week working with children who have parents in prison and children living with disability.

Khalid and Hayfa both hope things will change in Iraq. They miss their son, daughter and grandchildren terribly. They hope one day they will be reunited in Australia. “We are waiting,” says Khalid. “We hope. We don’t forget hope.”

<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2005), The current status and future prospects for the transformation and reconstruction of the Higher Education system in Iraq.

For many asylum seekers the refugee determination process can be complex and lengthy.

Photo: Australian Red Cross/Joe Cropp



## Hope after heartache

Haider will never forget his first day in the Community Detention program that helped him find a safe home and meet new friends.

Haider is a Hazara, one of the ethnic minority groups in Afghanistan that has been persecuted by the Taliban. Although the Taliban government brought security to the country, they also incited violence against the Hazara minority.<sup>1</sup>

"It was very difficult to live there because of the Taliban targeting Hazaras," says Haider. His parents, fearing for the safety of Haider and his five siblings, were forced to consider their options to protect their children. They decided to send their older son to Europe. That was the last time Haider heard of this brother. "Many of our people have been lost, they've been killed, they just sink in the ocean and no one knows about them."

Haider's parents made the heart-wrenching decision to save Haider by sending him to Australia.

"It was disgusting, it was terrible," says Haider of the next six months travelling from Pakistan to Thailand to Malaysia on boats, planes and buses.

"We were told that we'd be transferred to a bigger boat, but we weren't. They lied. We could have been killed; the water was jumping very high, 6 meters high. We were lucky we survived."

Haider arrived at the Christmas Island detention facility and began the long wait for his visa application. For many asylum seekers the refugee determination process can be complex and lengthy. People struggle to cope with the isolation of living in a detention facility, not being able to work, knowing little English and being without the comfort of family and friends.

Haider will not forget the day, after a seven month wait, that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship decided to move him from a detention facility and into the care of the Red Cross Community Detention program in the town of Ballarat, Victoria.

As a minor who came to Australia without family, Haider received 24 hour care from Life Without Barriers, a Red Cross partner organisation.

Red Cross caseworkers, Peter and Melissa, put Haider in touch with English teachers and the local community. Haider particularly appreciated being able to join the local soccer team. "I didn't know anyone, but they say I can play with them. Every week we play. We came home [from soccer], cooked our own food and enjoyed it." It was Haider's first home-cooked meal in over a year.

After Haider received his visa in January 2011, the local soccer team organiser, Rich, helped Haider enrol in University of Ballarat TAFE course to become a mechanic. Haider is rebuilding his life with community support. He aims to work as a mechanic in Ballarat and looks forward to giving back to the community.

"Some people (Hazaras) are really having a really hard time now and need your help. But the world is round, you know? Now you help us. Tomorrow we help you."

<sup>1</sup> International Committee of Red Cross, International Review of Red Cross: Conflict in Afghanistan, December 2010, Volume 92, Number 880.

## 'Restoring Hope'

### Refugee Week June 16-22

Refugee Week is a time to promote understanding of refugees and asylum seekers, and to celebrate their achievements and their contribution to Australian society.

'Restoring Hope', the theme of Refugee Week 2013, is a theme that runs through Kahlid and Hayfa's story on page 4, and also through the words of Haider on page 5.

Refugees and asylum seekers have a legitimate claim to hope, and to opportunities to achieve their potential. Their skills, experience and resilience can be a valuable contribution to their new communities.

Refugee Week has been celebrated in Australia since 1986 and is coordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

### How did you celebrate refugee week with your clients?

Send your story to Update at  
[asylumseekersectorupdate@redcross.org.au](mailto:asylumseekersectorupdate@redcross.org.au)

## Mary meets Mohammed

In late March, Red Cross Migration Support program Tasmania was privileged to have the first showing of the new documentary, 'Mary Meets Mohammed' by local Tasmanian filmmaker Heather Kirkpatrick. The film follows the opening of Tasmania's first detention centre through the eyes of local woman and knitting club member Mary and detained Afghan Hazara asylum seeker Mohammad, as they connect through the gift of a knitted beanie.

The Bridgewater Community Engagement team has supported the Pontville Knitting Group and Red Cross Migration Support program staff have supported people detained at Pontville so this topic has resonance with our work at many levels.

'Mary Meets Mohammad' was selected as one of four finalists in the national F4 Award for Outstanding Documentary Talent 2013.

The documentary premiered in Adelaide as part of the Australian International Documentary Conference [AIDC] and will be touring Australia in 2013. Visit 'Mary meets Mohammed' on facebook for details.

You can see a trailer for this movie on YouTube at  
[www.youtube/YBxXvXLOwSU](http://www.youtube/YBxXvXLOwSU)



Photo: Waratah Films



# Inaugural Vulnerability Report released

## Inside the process of seeking asylum

After extensive research based on interviews with asylum seekers and a range of service providers, Red Cross has released its findings in a new report on the vulnerability of asylum seekers across Australia.

This is the first of what is to be an annual research contribution on key matters of social concern, to provide a platform for further debate about ways to bring about humanitarian outcomes for vulnerable people in Australia through dialogue with the sector and with government.

This first report is called, 'Inside the process of seeking asylum', and focuses on the nature and extent of vulnerability from the perspective of people seeking asylum.

The research findings are drawn from lengthy, in-depth interviews with 33 people seeking asylum in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

Their personal testimony is supplemented by interviews with 26 key informants from ethnic associations, humanitarian, advocacy and health services who work to support asylum seekers in Australia.

Some of the key findings are that while a community-based model avoids the worst effects of immigration detention, as others have observed, community detention is not without its difficulties. Living in a protracted and painful state of uncertainty, often for several years, is exacerbated by a feeling of powerlessness, particularly in relation to legal processes which were experienced as confusing, inconsistent and demeaning.

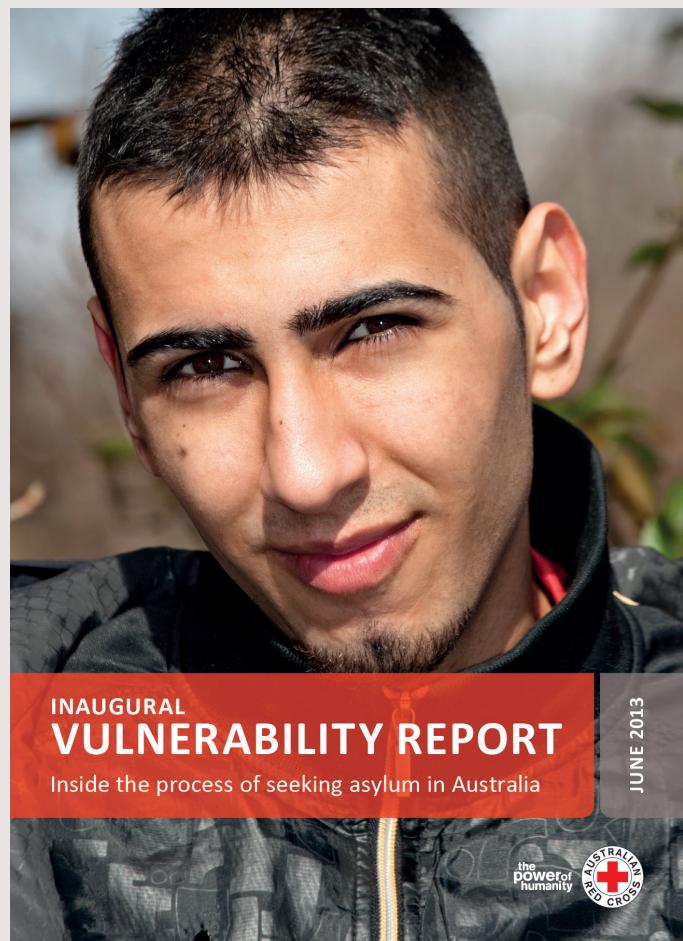
Shame and stigma at arriving as an asylum seeker are amplified by suspicion and fear, and can cause people seeking asylum to isolate themselves from their own cultural communities. There is also a daunting array of difficulties across the basic aspects of daily life—finding secure and affordable housing, food and (where eligible) employment.

Asylum seekers retain a sense of drive and hope in the face of these challenges, often though the support of people who are strangers to them.

From the Red Cross perspective, this research helps us to understand the impact of current policy settings and to look for ways to ensure that, whether people return to their country of origin or are settled in Australia, they are not harmed further during the time their application for asylum is processed.

Red Cross launches the inaugural Vulnerability Report in Canberra and Melbourne in late June 2013.

Copies of the Vulnerability Report are available from the Red Cross website at [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) or email [research@redcross.org.au](mailto:research@redcross.org.au) for more information.



## A place for 'Women's Wisdom'

When the Stakeholder Development team for Red Cross Migration Support programs in ACT conducted an audit of client-identified meaningful engagement activities earlier this year, they were surprised to find that a number of women had identified English classes as something they would like to participate in.

This feedback was unexpected given that Red Cross volunteers had been running free English classes three times a week in a central location for over a year. When asked however, the volunteers confirmed that the majority of attendees were male. Caseworkers then sought additional feedback from the women respondents and found that women did not feel comfortable attending classes with men that they did not know.

Within a month, the Stakeholder Development team had sourced a venue, recruited volunteers with experience in teaching English as a Second Language and developed the 'Women's Wisdom' group. The group has created a welcoming space for women, where they can share stories and build relationships with other women in the community while increasing their English proficiency.

A volunteer who has been screened to work with children is always at the classes to engage with any children who accompany the participants, and to provide a fun and caring environment.

This means that the women are able to participate in the class while their children build their own networks within a supervised environment.

Volunteers play a significant role and have helped to translate the group flyer into Arabic, Farsi and Tamil. Volunteers are engaged and very supportive of the classes, with one volunteer saying, "It is really nice to provide a safe space for women where they can relax and learn English together. Being able to bring their children is a great benefit."

The group runs weekly and has received positive feedback so far. As one participant said, "I will come back and I think more women should come—it is good to talk to other women and get better at English." 'Women's Wisdom' is a wonderful example of how the wisdom of our clients can guide us toward more meaningful engagement.

## Riding high

In April, two young people from the Hill House in Rutherford, New South Wales, commenced volunteer work with Riding for the Disabled.

The young people volunteer for a three hour shift once a fortnight. This has provided a great opportunity for these young people to gain skills while engaging with members of the community.

Dylan Thompsett, Manager, Unaccompanied Minor Program, Marist Youth Care, received the following email from Riding for the Disabled:

**Hey Dylan,**

**Firstly this month, two young people from Hill house started volunteer work with Riding for the Disabled.**

**They are planning on attending once a fortnight, for around 3 hours.**

**During their first shift, they were responsible for putting the bridles on the horses, leading them from their stable, walking, brushing [the horses], and cleaning their hooves. They each then led their horse whilst the clients were riding.**

**They performed all of these tasks very capably and as their experience increases so too will their responsibilities.**

While the young volunteers learn new skills, they will also benefit from the therapeutic effects of making a meaningful difference to others and working with these beautiful, well-tempered animals.



Photo: iStockphoto/moldokhanibrain

# Fundamental Principles

As a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and along with the millions of members, volunteers around the world, we live and breathe our 7 Fundamental Principles every day, in all that we do.

## **Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace among all people.

## **Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## **Neutrality**

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## **Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## **Voluntary Service**

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## **Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## **Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.





## A sign of things to come

When Red Cross Community Detention Caseworker in Queensland, Catherine Cranston first met with Pumudu (not her real name) from Sri Lanka in February 2013, she knew she would need to develop some new communication skills.

Pumudu, a cheerful and talented mother of four, has been deaf from a very young age. She communicates with her children and husband through lip reading and by using a very basic form of sign language that has been created within the family. Pumudu is a very talented seamstress and makes her children's clothes. She also paints and loves to cook.

When Catherine started working with Pumudu she was excited about the challenge of learning how to communicate but was also aware of the many obstacles she would face in trying to provide Pumudu with the support services she required.

Pumudu is unable to communicate with anyone outside her family and relies on her husband to interpret for her.

As a newly arrived person from a CALD background with hearing and literacy issues, Pumudu has had very little social integration within the Australian community, leaving her highly vulnerable and isolated.

In Sri Lanka, Pumudu lived in a very small village and had support from the small community around her but now, in Australia, she has very few social links and cannot access support services independently.

By linking her with Deaf Services Queensland, Catherine was able to advocate for Pumudu to attend a one-on-one Auslan Sign Language class that was tailored to meet her needs.

The first session proved to be promising with both Pumudu and the teacher communicating with each other by using some international signs.

"I could see the delight on Pumudu's face at being able to communicate with another deaf person. She was very excited about learning new signs as well," says Catherine.

"Pumudu was a very fast learner and after the first half hour session she had learnt most letters of the alphabet and some other common forms of sign. Her children and husband were with her during the lesson and were also able to participate in signing. Everyone had lots of fun."

Pumudu now attends regular Auslan Sign Language classes and is also involved in some of the activities at Deaf Sports and Recreation Qld. Catherine has also enrolled in Auslan classes in order to better communicate with Pumudu.

"As her Caseworker I need to provide continuing support in every way possible. Being able to communicate with my client in such a unique way feels so special.

I feel she is not so isolated anymore and that learning the Auslan sign language has opened up a world of opportunity for her," says Catherine.

**Catherine Cranston**  
Caseworker, QLD

## Update on resources

Red Cross Migration Support programs produces a range of information products to support the work of caseworkers, volunteers and people working with asylum seekers in Australia.

The latest addition to our range of titles is a Welcome Pack for asylum seekers moving out of Immigration Detention and into the Community Detention program. The pack includes a general guidebook to life in the program titled, 'Community Detention: What you need to know when you move into the community' along with other useful information such as a Red Cross Client Service brochure and feedback form..

The Welcome Pack presentation folder allows for other documents to be inserted, making it easy for clients to keep their Community Detention information together in one place.

The first guidebook is specially designed for families and adults, and is written in plain English. Translated versions in Tamil, Farsi, Dari and Arabic (Standard) will follow shortly.

Next off the press will be a Community Detention Welcome Pack for Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs), which will focus on information more particular to the needs of this client group.

You can download most titles from our website at [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au). To enquire about print copies, please contact the Red Cross office in your state or territory.

### Current resources

#### Welcome Packs

Community Detention Welcome Pack for families and adults with:  
Plain English guidebook (English)  
Client Service Charter (English, Tamil, Arabic)  
Feedback forms (English, Tamil, Arabic)

#### Brochures

Migration Support Programs  
Brochure: Supporting vulnerable people awaiting a visa outcome

#### Fact sheets

Community Detention  
Community Assistance Support  
Transitional Community Assistance Support  
Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme

#### Case Studies

Community Detention: Just like me  
Community Detention: Hope after heartache (see also story on page 5)



## We welcome your feedback

If you would like to provide your feedback on this issue of Update sector newsletter, please email us at

[asylumseekersectorupdate@redcross.org.au](mailto:asylumseekersectorupdate@redcross.org.au)

---

## JUNE 2013

### NATIONAL OFFICE

155 Pelham St  
Carlton VIC 3053  
T +61 3 9345 1800  
T +61 3 9348 2513

### SUPPORTER SERVICES CENTRE

GPO Box 2957  
Melbourne VIC 8060  
T 1800 811 700  
F 1800 855 240  
E [donorinfo@redcross.org.au](mailto:donorinfo@redcross.org.au)

#### ACT

Red Cross House  
3 Dann Cl  
Garran ACT 2605  
T 02 6234 7600  
F 02 6234 7650

#### SA

207-217 Wakefield St  
Adelaide SA 5000

#### T 08 8100 4500

#### F 08 8100 4501

#### TAS

40 Melville St  
Hobart TAS 7000

#### T 03 6235 6077

#### F 03 6235 1250

#### NSW

St Andrews House  
Level 4, 464 Kent St  
Sydney NSW 2000  
T 02 9229 4111  
F 02 9229 4244

#### VIC

23-47 Villiers St  
North Melbourne  
VIC 3051

#### T 03 8327 7700

#### F 03 8327 7711

#### NT

Cnr Lambell Tce  
and Schultze St  
Larrakeyah NT 0820  
T 08 8924 3900  
F 08 8924 3909

#### WA

110 Goderich St  
East Perth WA 6004

#### T 08 9225 8888

#### F 08 9225 5112

#### QLD

49 Park Rd  
Milton QLD 4064  
T 07 3367 7222  
F 07 3367 7444