

Documentation and Evaluation of Service Provision at Singleton Haven Centre - From The Point Of View Of Service Providers

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Background

In response to a request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on 6 April 1999, the Australian Government announced that Australia would provide safe haven for up to 4000 Kosovars from refugee camps in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM). Kosovars were to be given three-month visas to stay in Australia, with the possibility of extension as the circumstances required (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), 1999a; Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), 1999; Ruddock, 1999, MPS 66/99).

DIMA was nominated the lead agency cooperating with a number of Federal and State Government Departments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). A team of Australian immigration officials and medical personnel flew to the FYRM to select the Kosovars who wanted to be evacuated to Australia. The selection was based on the fitness to travel, voluntary acceptance of their Visa conditions, and keeping extended family units together. QANTAS provided charter flights from Rome to Sydney. The accommodation and logistical support were provided by the Department of Defence (DoD) (DIMA, 1999a).

Kosovars were first accommodated at the East Hills Defence base where they underwent health screening by the NSW Department of Health, were issued identity cards and new clothing and received more detailed information about Australia. After approximately four days they were transported to the longer-term accommodation. Haven Centres were established at the DoD bases at Puckapunyal (Victoria), Bandiana (Vic.), Portsea (Vic.), Singleton (NSW), Hampstead (SA), Brighton (Tas.), and Leeuwin (WA), with East Hills also becoming a Haven Centre for the last group. Services provided at the Haven Centres included: food, health care, education for the children, survival English language training for adults, recreation facilities, small weekly allowance, family tracing service (Red Cross Tracing Service), and professional counselling (DIMA, 1999a; DIMA, 1999c).

Aims of the study

This study aimed to document and evaluate service provision at the Singleton Haven Centre (SHC). From the outset of the Safe Haven project, the SHC had the poorest physical and accommodation facilities of all Haven Centres. It was also a focus of a significant amount of negative media attention, and consequent public dissatisfaction, following a bus sit-in by a Kosovar family between 14/06/99 and 17/06/99. However, two months after the bus sit-in, Singleton Haven Centre was referred to as a "cream of the crop" by workers involved in the Safe Haven project on the national level. Moreover, according to participant observation and a survey conducted by DIMA, Kosovars expressed general satisfaction with the SHC.

Consequently, the study aims to identify some of the components of this change in public and Kosovar perceptions. The study will focus on the issue of relationships, which was identified by the participants as the most positive aspect of service provision at Singleton Haven Centre. Finally, the study aims to provide practical recommendations about improvements in service provision which Australian Government may be able to utilise if a similar operation is attempted in the future.

Literature search

Despite extensive literatures search a small amount of directly relevant research material was located. In terms of evaluation of services in refugee camps, significant amount of evaluation was conducted on specific aspects of service provision, often focusing on food (Christensen, 1983; Christensen, 1984), health (Chowdhury & Meads, 1994; Biellik, 1983) and infrastructure provision (Borton et al, 1996; Armstrong, 1987; Ellis, 1996). The camps which were evaluated were mainly in Africa (eg. Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda), Indo-China (eg. Hong Kong and Thailand), and Pakistan (camps for Afghani refugees). However, the context in which they were conducted was very different from the Singleton Haven Centre context. The refugee camps were of a long-term nature with more people, and they were village-like settlements. There was much less physical security and UNHCR was the primary service provider (Harrell-Bond, 1986).

There was also material which included general accounts of life in refugee camps (Long, 1993; Black, 1998; Bowles, 1998; Einfeld, 1992), and opinions of the authors about service provision, particularly focusing on the issues of freedom of movement and control and lack of it, refugees had over their lives. In terms of services in Australia, United States and Europe, evaluation was conducted in the areas of settlement services and processes (eg. Plant, 1988; Downing et al, 1988; Field, 1985; Dalglish, 1989; Jupp, 1994; DIEA, 1982). The aspect of these evaluations that was most relevant to this study was evaluation of transit centres. However, such evaluation was rarely in-depth and systematic (Dalglish, 1989; Field, 1985; Joly, 1994). Furthermore, the objectives of transit centres were completely different from the objectives of the Haven Centres in Australia. Transit centres usually aimed at preparing the residents for the integration in the host society, while Haven Centres were based on the premise of residents returning to their country of origin (Dalglish, 1989; DIEA, 1982).

There were a number of studies about the impact of a prolonged stay in refugee camps (Kibreab, 1993; Pacheco, 1989; Kjaerum, Brunn and Blocher, 1989; Chan & Loveridge; Voutire & Harrell-Bond, 1995; Feith, 1988; Jablensky et al, 1994). The authors emphasised the issues of boredom, lack of productive activities and dependency in the cases of long term life in refugee camps. This occurred particularly in the camps which were considered long-term but temporary, rather than using the model of developing permanent and sustainable village-like settlements.

The most similar context to the one of Australian Haven Centres is the one of the temporary refugee centres in Europe, particularly in Denmark and Scandinavian countries. One study was conducted on the relationships between Bosnian refugees and workers in a refugee centre in Denmark (Mackrill, 1996), and there was a study on a Bosnian refugee sit-in protest in Norway (Lavik, Christie, Solberg & Varvin, 1996). Furthermore, an initial report was produced on service provision in Safe Havens in the United Kingdom (Bloch, 1999).

However, it appears that European refugee centres did not receive the amount of attention and evaluation, as did humanitarian operations in Africa and Asia (Escalona & Black, 1995). It can be speculated that if the evaluations were conducted, they might have been internal to a particular government agency. Furthermore, some material has been published but it is in languages other than English (eg. Danish and German), and not readily accessible in Australia.

Methodology and methods

Qualitative methodology was used with an emphasis on the participatory research process. This methodology was considered better suited for this study for a number of reasons. First, the research question is complex and multifaceted and it requires a holistic approach of the qualitative methodology (Sarantakos, 1997). Secondly, as indicated by the literature search there have not been many previous studies addressing this research question. Furthermore, qualitative methodology allows for flexibility in exploring the differences in meaning of the research question itself, and the questions to be asked during the interviews (Sarantakos, 1997; Patton, 1990).

Second, due to the complex and fluid nature of the process of humanitarian aid provision, AusAid suggests that evaluation of such projects should be based in the construction of a narrative about the event and understanding of individual participants' views on its meaning. Clearly, this is the basis of qualitative research methodology (Anthonpe & Nevile, 1998).

Finally, this project was of an exploratory nature (Sarantakos, 1997; de Vijver & Leung, 1997) thus making the qualitative methodology appropriate. Qualitative methodology research is also congruent with the critical paradigm (Sarantakos, 1997), where the participants are encouraged to reflect on their environment and social conditions. Furthermore, qualitative methodology leaves space for participatory methods, and places a high value on the participant's own ways of knowing and expressing that knowledge (Freire, 1982; Maguire, 1987; Sarantakos, 1997; Owen, 1993).

Sampling/selection of participants

For the purpose of conducting interviews, purposive sampling procedure was used (Sarantakos, 1997). The participants were employees of the following agencies: DIMA, Adult Migrant English Service (AMES), STARTTS, Hunter Area Health Service, Samaritans, Department of Defence, Spotless (contractor agency providing catering and cleaning), Singleton Shire Council, and Translating and Interpreting Service. The participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge of and an involvement with the Singleton Haven Centre project. In total 22 interviews were conducted between 10/10/99 and 30/11/99.

Data collection

Triangulation, or combination of different methods (Sarantakos, 1997) was used in this study. The first method were semi-structured interviews centred around the following themes:

- Reasons the participants were working at Singleton Haven Centre and their perceptions of this opportunity.
- Achievements of individual agencies
- Achievements of the Singleton Haven Centre as a whole
- Setbacks
- Components that contributed to the change in perceptions of Singleton Haven Centre and lead to the overall improvements
- Future improvements in service provision

The above themes were determined in consultation with participants through interagency meetings as well as individual meetings with some of the participants. During the interviews, participants' ideas on how the study was to proceed were also incorporated. In the course of interviews, themes emerged outside of the ones formulated above. Each interview lasted from 1 hour to 2.5 hours. Written notes were taken due to the reluctance some of the participants

expressed about being taped. Participants were offered the copy of the transcript of their interviews and some took up the offer.

The interviews' purpose and format were based on Freire's (1970) concept of dialogue. The participants were encouraged to reflect on their and their agency's practice and identify achievements and areas for improvement. The process itself was empowering and affirming for the participants (Maguire, 1987). The author did not see or present herself as an expert but as another participant in the Safe Haven project and the study (Maguire, 1987) who was seeking to extend her knowledge with the aim of providing improved services in the future.

The second method was two interagency organisational debriefings conducted on the 05/08/99 and 20/10/99, facilitated by DIMA and centred around the following themes:

- Achievements
- Setbacks
- Future improvements in service provision

During these debriefings participants were divided in three smaller groups while they worked on the themes and they reported back to the big group after that.

The third method was participant observation. As stated above, the author was employed as the STARTTS Team Leader from the planning stages of the Safe Haven operation. Notes were taken during significant events relevant to the aims of the study, and during the interagency meetings, Residents' Committee and Heads of Families (HOF) meetings. Finally, widely circulated reports, minutes, fact sheets and press releases were used as sources of data.

Results

A high level of coherency between interagency debriefings results and interview results was found. Consequently, these results were presented together because separate presentation was likely to result in an unnecessary repetition. This presentation also allows for an easier comparison and contrasting of the results.

Under each of the broad themes which defined the structures of the interviews and debriefings, a number of more specific themes and sub-themes emerged. However, only the strongest sub-themes (relationships, safety, recovery) will be explored in the context of this paper. In the area of improvements to service provision, all themes will be explored.

Achievements of the Singleton Haven Centre (SHC)

Range of services and the manner of service provision, safety and relationship with Kosovars
This theme has emerged strongly in each interview. Eleven participants believed that the major achievement was the provision of the objective of the Safe Haven project. Various metaphors were used by participants to describe this objective including: "We provided safe environment, and time out for Kosovars", or "SHC was a place to relax and space to think. It was a place of rest and recuperation". More poetically one participant stated that SHC was "a breath of air before jumping back into water." It was also mentioned that SHC provided Kosovars with normality and structure (6 participants) and allowed for a high degree of self-management (10 participants). The theme of safety (12 participants) and "time-out" seems to be strongly associated with the objectives of SHC.

The manner in which the services were provided has been described as highly significant by all participants. Flexibility and responsiveness have been identified as two crucial aspects of

service provision at SHC (11 participants). Also, trust, respect, friendships and safety (12 participants) have been mentioned in this context. As one participant put it: "We valued Kosovars as human beings and empathised with them". Stemming from that came comments on "open doors" policy majority of service providers adopted, though Health, DIMA and STARTTS were most often mentioned in this context. "Open doors" policy meant that there was little formality in accessing the services, and that Kosovars were able to access the services, as they required them.

Similarly to the results from individual interviews, the participants of the interagency debriefings agreed that the objective of Safe Haven was provided. The objective was defined as "providing security and safety for a limited period of time". Second achievement was seen in providing a "whole range of high quality services", while the third was in services being "personalised", "delivered with respect" and "achieving normalisation and trust".

Relationship among services

This was also a strong theme as it was present in all interviews. As above, there were a variety of ways the participants described the relationship among services. Most commonly services were described as working as a "team" or "integrated team". There was an emphasis on "co-operation, reliance, and mutual respect". One participant commented that "agencies at SHC achieved the ability to focus on their task and do it to the best of their ability while supporting other agencies". As a consequence of these relationships five participants believed that little "turf wars" and "power games" emerged and there was perception by twenty participants that "all the information was shared openly". Connected to that has been the DIMA management style. It has been described by fifteen participants as "democratic" and "emphasising team approach and honesty in information dissemination". According to the participants this led to perceptions of equality and partnership among services.

This theme was identified by all groups in both debriefings. Participants spoke about "good interagency co-operation", "cohesive organisational structure", and "being able to overcome differences in organisational cultures and management styles". DIMA "democratic leadership style" was identified as "essential in developing an interagency team approach".

Relationship with Singleton community

The positive relationship with the Singleton community has been emphasised in two areas by 20 of 22 participants. First, the working relationship with service providers was assessed through a significant amount of donations from local businesses and individuals, as well as the numbers of local volunteers working with Red Cross, Samaritans and St. Vincent de Paul. Second, relationship between Singleton people and Kosovars was seen by the participants as a significant achievement particularly taking into account the press representations of Kosovars as ungrateful and unreasonably demanding following the bus sit-in. Friendships were developed between Kosovars and Singleton people, and interaction was occurring on a daily basis. One participant commented that this was useful for Kosovars' recovery from trauma as "they had ordinary people acknowledge their suffering". According to another participant, all these relationships "increased multicultural awareness, sensitivity and tolerance in the Hunter Valley region as a whole." This was mentioned by ten other participants.

This theme was equally strong in both interagency debriefings (2 groups identified it as important in each). It was described as "high community support", "improved cross-cultural awareness for both Kosovars and Singleton people", "mutual giving" and "Singleton people

embracing Kosovars". During the first debriefing it was emphasised that this achievement had a high significance particularly in the light of the media attention surrounding the bus sit-in.

Psychosocial elements and community development

There was a perception among ten participants that Kosovar physical and psychological health has improved during their stay at SHC, and this was identified as a major achievement of service provision. The achievement of safety and development of a community of Kosovars and service providers were also mentioned as significant psychosocial achievements by twelve and seven participants respectively. One participant described the process as "We have transformed a 50 year old Army Base into a little, vibrant and active community". This comment was repeated in various forms in most interviews. Also, three participants believed that SHC has given the people of Hunter Valley an opportunity to contribute to a worthy, humanitarian cause. One participant commented that "through our caring and commitment we helped Kosovars re-affirm a positive view of humanity".

This theme was emphasised in the second debriefing while it was not as prominent in the first (1 group out of 3 mentioned it). It consisted of comments on being "able to develop a consultative and representative structure with Kosovars" (HOF meetings and Residents' Committee), and "working within a community development framework". Also sense of safety was emphasised as well as an improvement in Kosovars' physical and psychological health. Finally, friendships and "overall good relationships between staff and Kosovars" were seen as achievements.

Setbacks

Kosovar behaviours and associated psychosocial issues

In this area, all participants identified the bus sit-in as a major setback. It was a setback in the areas of staff moral and public relations. It also caused difficulties for some staff in their communities, family and friendship circles, as they felt they had to "justify what we were doing" and "take Kosovars' side".

Connected to the bus sit-in and physical environment, was the formation of the first Residents' Committee which was described as "formed around complaints", "unwilling to compromise", and "unrepresentative" (mentioned by four participants). Three participants also believed that living in an oppressive regime for a prolonged period of time resulted in Kosovars being mistrustful towards authority.

Four participants mentioned that incidents of violence, threats, theft and vandalism were also setbacks. Finally, boredom and lack of productive activities for Kosovars particularly after the first three months were identified as setbacks and contributing to violence and threats as well as creation of dependency (four participants). One participant commented that "you can only be in a holiday mode for a limited period of time". Similar comments came from the majority of participants.

In both debriefings, bus sit-in has been identified as a setback. In addition to the bus sit-in, vandalism, threats and theft were mentioned but not by all groups (2 groups in the 1st debriefing and 1 group in the 2nd).

Policy/government issues

This area has been identified as the most significant setback by 20 participants. It included a number of issues. First, there was a perception that information was changing frequently and

that some relevant information was withheld from both Kosovars and service providers (all 20 participants commented on that). Second, government policies and procedures on the national level were considered inconsistent and there was a perception that they were constantly changing (20 comments). The examples given were: work rights; constant changes in flight times for return to Kosovo; decision to close Singleton and relocate Kosovars to East Hills was changed within a week and Kosovars were then to be separated and sent to three other Haven Centres; and there was never a clear information as to how long Kosovar Visa was going to be extended for.

One participant mentioned that "government policies were cruel due to constantly shifting signposts". Another commented that "there was an insensitivity to the emotional impact of policies". Even stronger comment was that "political leaders were motivated by political and economic interests rather than genuine humanitarian concern".

All these changes and inconsistencies were identified as stressful to both staff and Kosovars. According to twenty participants, organisationally they impacted on service planning and implementation. According to six participants, they affected relationships between Kosovars and agency staff by undermining trust and staff integrity. Seventeen participants commented that for Kosovars constant changes resulted in further lack of control and undermining of fragile sense of safety they have achieved. Consequently, it appeared that such Government actions confirmed beliefs some Kosovars held of Governments. During the last two months of SHC, a number of Kosovars commented that "Australian Government is behaving exactly like Serbian Government", and that "we are being treated the same way as Serbs were treating us".

Inconsistencies in Government decision making regarding refugees and consequent lack of certainty and security, impact on the sense of safety as well as other psychosocial consequences have been documented by two European studies (Lavik et al, 1996; Mackrill, 1996). The first study was conducted in Norway where a group of Bosnian refugees protested against the conditions in their refugee centre. In the context of psychosocial consequences for survivors of organised violence, the authors commented that "Refugees with this type of trauma continue to be psychologically vulnerable to stress, especially if the situation in exile is dominated by passivity social isolation, inadequate communication with the authorities in the host country and insufficient opportunities for self-organization" (Liken et al, 1996: p. 86) .

Liken et al (1996) argue that actions of the host government can have a significant impact on refugees' sense of safety and consequent re-emergence of Post Traumatic Stress symptoms. Mackrill (1996) further comments that secrecy and lack of clear indication of the length of stay in Denmark impacted on the Bosnian refugees in one of the Danish Red Cross Refugee Centres, as well as on their relationships with the Centre workers. According to Mackrill (1996) the relationships were marked by mistrust, stereotyping, lack of clarity, disempowerment (for both, workers and refugees), dependency and distancing. There was also lack of trust among refugees themselves as well as passivity and perception of lack of control over their own lives.

This theme has been significantly stronger in the second debriefing (all groups in second vs. one in the first debriefing). It included "uncertainty for both Kosovars and agency staff about the future of SHC", "ambiguous statements from higher government levels", and "shifting of goal posts by the Minister". Procrastination, indecision and delays on the higher levels of bureaucracy were also mentioned. Furthermore, short notice and initial underestimation of

resources were seen as setbacks, as well as confusion over the work rights and “inflexibility of the mainstream Health services”.

Future improvements in service provision

Interestingly, even though the participants expressed an overall satisfaction with the SHC project, and have identified significant achievements, they have also identified a number of areas which required improvements. Only the second debriefing included a section on improvements in service provision.

Structure and systems within SHC

Majority of comments relevant to the structures and systems within the SHC related to planning and preparation for the project. All participants agreed that it would have been better if there was more time for planning next time while they also acknowledged that this might not be possible. The same issue emerged in the UK review of the Safe Haven project where the author commented that “...the lack of decision making on the part of the Home Office left very little time to set up centres and to organise staffing and support services.” (Bloch, 1999)

Nine participants also argued for early clarification of leadership and each agencies’ roles and responsibilities. It was suggested by two participants that this should be put in writing through “Memoranda of Understanding”, and that “Standard Operating Procedures should have been in place from the beginning.” It was also suggested by four participants that an interagency team building should have been organised prior to the arrival of Kosovars. According to the participants, early clarification could have prevented initial confusion over roles and processes.

In this area there were also suggestions by 6 participants for an improvement of communication systems. These suggestions included: adequate noticeboards (2 participants), information to be provided to Kosovars in a more consistent manner (3 participants), the inclusion of DoD contractors and interpreters in the interagency meetings and debriefings (3 participants), and agency leaders sharing information better with their staff (3 participants). Bloch (1999) believed that “...refugees need to be supplied with much more information to help them make informed choices”.

Debriefing participants also emphasised the need for more thorough planning process (all 3 groups), clarity regarding various agencies’ roles (1 group) and early clarification of relevant policies, procedures and budgets (2 groups). Two groups argued for a planned effort towards interagency cohesion through regular team and mission building meetings, and attempting to understand different organisational cultures and work with them. Furthermore, one group suggested that the attendance of interagency meetings should be compulsory for all agencies. Finally, one group suggested that skills training contract between DIMA and AMES should have been put in place early instead of few weeks prior to the SHC closure.

Distribution

This was a very strong theme identified by all participants as an area for change. Furthermore, all participants had suggestions on the possible improvements in the distribution of aid. Firstly, it was suggested by 3 participants that there should be less reliance on donations and second-hand clothing because distribution should be guided by needs not by supply (15 participants), particularly as changing public attitudes easily affected supply.

Three participants agreed that there should be a full-time paid distribution co-ordinator in addition to unpaid Samaritans and St. Vincent de Paul volunteers. One participant stated that

“a paid full-time co-ordinator could provide continuity and improve efficiency of aid delivery”. Furthermore, five participants suggested that all material needs could be addressed from one place instead of some articles being provided at DoD Q-store (eg. detergent, some hygienic products), other at the Clinic (eg. pads & nappies), and St. Vincent de Paul and Samaritans store (eg. clothing and some hygienic products). It appears that this system created significant confusion for both Kosovars and service providers.

Finally, it has been argued by all participants that distribution should be based on family needs assessments rather than “first in - first served basis”. Following a rapid assessment, ten participants argued that aid should be taken to people’s barracks, while five others argued for a store concept with a counter and fitting rooms (instead an open floor). All participants also agreed that there should be a system of noting who received what. The uses of vouchers, family cards and computer database were mentioned in this context.

In the debriefing, two groups mentioned distribution as an area for improvement and one group suggested the use of a “chit/voucher system”, while the other group argued for family needs assessment guiding the distribution. One group mentioned that charitable organisations should be a part of a formal structure and this has been described as “tasking” of the charitable agencies.

Staff training and support

Eight participants argued for “quicker responsiveness to staffing needs and making sure that all team members are present from the beginning”. Five participants felt they needed a more adequate briefing and clarity of expectation. Fifteen participants argued that there was a need for a better backup in terms of staff accommodation, office space, cars, phone lines and computers. Three participants believed that Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) interpreters should have received more support and training from their employer. Finally, a need for training in community development (2 participants), dealing with angry clients (2 participants), and awareness of counselling process (2 participants) was identified as required for DIMA and some DoD staff.

In debriefings, the need for more interpreters particularly working with charities (distribution area) and contractors (Spotless) has been emphasised by two groups. Two groups argued for more resources for staff particularly more appropriate local accommodation and more resources for DIMA.

Health

The strongest theme in this area was a need for an ongoing and comprehensive dental service (7 participants). At SHC, dental services were provided on-site only in the beginning. After that, Clinic staff stated that they “experienced significant difficulties accessing mainstream dental services even though dental problems are common in refugee populations”.

Following from that, six participants argued that access to mainstream health services in general should be easier, and that Kosovars should not have been placed on the usual waiting lists as they were in Hunter region only for a short period of time (3 participants). These problems were a result of lack of clarity on higher levels of Health system and DIMA. All participants who commented on the health service provision (as well as many Kosovars) argued that this should not occur in the future.

Three participants argued that more health promotion activities should be conducted (eg. sexual and reproductive health, women's health, men's health), and that health service providers should be involved in the issues of environmental health (eg. water and sanitation) and dietary requirements (4 participants). In this context one participant stated that "health should have been more assertive in relation to the environmental health issues. Health had a significant role to play in this area".

Additional services

Even though a significant range of services was provided there were some areas where additional services were required. First, eight participants identified the need for a Youth Work service catering for "psychological and recreational needs of young people and addressing health promotion issues as well." STARTTS and Samaritans were the two agencies at SHC with Youth Work experience. Consequently, they were suggested as logical choices for this service (5 participants suggested STARTTS and 3 suggested Samaritans). In terms of recreation, it has been suggested that recreation room should be better organised from the beginning (4 participants), and that there should be more recreation activities on site (4 participants), as well as recreation activities specifically targeting the elderly population (2 participants).

There was also an argument by two participants for more specialist backup services for Mental Health including a neurologist and a child psychiatrist. However, as one participant stated "these services are scarce in the areas of rural Australia such as Singleton, even when it comes to mainstream population".

Finally, eleven participants stated that there should be more meaningful activities including income generating schemes (3 participants), individualised skill analysis and assistance with job seeking efforts (5 participants). These activities could have reduced the boredom and dependency which started developing at SHC. One participant stated that "...after the initial three months they needed something meaningful to do. It is also a matter of self-esteem and male roles...". The problems with boredom, lack of meaningful activities and development of dependency have been identified by numerous authors writing about the long-term effects of living in a refugee camp (Kibreab, 1993; Pacheco, 1989; Kjaerum, Brunn and Blocher, 1989; Chan & Loveridge; Voutire & Harrell-Bond, 1995; Feith, 1988; Jablensky et al, 1994). In the debriefing, one group argued for an agency to be allocated the youth work role, and for recreation to be more structured and planned including an early introduction of family holidays and respite.

Emphasis on the community development model

Seven participants stated that there should have been more emphasis on the community development model (Ife, 1996). One participant illustrated the need for such framework

We should have had a clear framework from the beginning. Community Development appears to be the most appropriate framework for the circumstances.

While another stated that

Kosovars were a highly fragmented community. Actually, they were not a community at all and we expected they were going to be. Extended family was the primary structure.

This sentiment was echoed in a number of other interviews as well as the interagency debriefings where the participants commented that “we were surprised with lack of empathy Kosovars had for each other”.

However, in this area, the strongest theme was that representative and consultative structures should be established from the beginning (13 participants). This includes regular Heads of Families meetings, and well-organised wide elections for the Residents’ Committee. In order to consult with groups other than adult males, it has been suggested by two participants that a sub-committee structure could be developed (including women’s and youth sub-committees). In terms of working with the Residents’ Committee it was suggested that the “Committee should be given clear responsibilities, support and training from the beginning”, and that “...a Committee member should be present at Interagency meetings” (3 participants agreed with this). The issues of appropriate representation for refugees in camps as well as difficulties with achieving this have been identified by Harrell-Bond (1986) and Christensen (1983, 1984).

It appeared to seven participants that there was not enough trust in Kosovars’ ability for self-management. It was emphasised by these participants as highly important that Kosovars should have had more influence on decisions affecting their lives (eg. return to Kosova, relocation to another Safe Haven). Two participants believed that Kosovars should have been encouraged to cook and clean the SHC instead of DoD contractors.

In the debriefing, two groups identified the need for more emphasis on community development framework including providing assistance and education to Residents’ Committee from the beginning, and earlier introduction of HOF meetings.

Physical environment

Fourteen participants agreed that a Haven Centre should be fully prepared for arrival of residents in advance, and that preparations should be based on needs of families rather than Army Reserve soldiers. Second, five participants believed that residents should be allowed to cook for themselves and eat in their accommodation thus retaining significant family roles and structures. According to one participant “...this would also allow for culturally appropriate food and addressing the dietary needs of children and toddlers.”

In terms of rooms, three participants believed that they should be bigger and have better partitioning thus allowing for more privacy and dignity. The toilets should be more accessible (3 participants) and more effort should be put in keeping them clean (5 participants). Finally, three participants believed that a Haven Centre “should be closer to a major centre, work opportunities and the appropriate ethnic community.”

In the debriefing, one group identified the need for Kosovars to cook for themselves, and have accommodation suitable for families. One group suggested that climate should be taken into account when selecting a location for Haven Centre, as Singleton was very cold during the winter.

Policy/government

Ten participants agreed that Kosovars should have been given clearer indication of the length of their stay in Australia. This would include providing good interpreters in Macedonia (3 participants). Connected to that is the need not to change government directions too frequently or quickly (10 participants).

Three participants believed that there should have been space for an assessment of individual circumstances and allowing Kosovars to apply for Protection Visas if they decided to do so. Participants who suggested this course of action also commented that they understood the negative implications of such policy as well (eg. perception of Kosovars as “queue jumpers”, Australian government not wanting to assist ethnic cleansing by removing Kosovars from Kosova).

There were four participants who argued that UNHCR should have had a greater role in the Safe Haven project in the sense of providing up to date information about the situation in the country of origin. Consequently, UNHCR should have been involved from the beginning and more frequently. In addition, two participants agreed and one commented that

“UNHCR should be neutral rather than provide information to Kosovars with the aim of supporting the Australian government’s position about the return to Kosova by 30/10/99.”

Finally, in terms of work rights, three participants argued that these should have been available from the beginning and that Kosovars should have received individualised and structured assistance with job search (3 participants).

In this area, only one group contributed in the debriefing by suggesting that a Federal plan should be in place if a similar situation arises in the future.

Alternatives

It has been suggested by three participants that instead of having Haven Centres in Australia, funding and services should be provided in a 1st country of asylum. Another more frequent suggestion has been that Kosovars should have been accommodated in the community (5 participants) and given access to necessary social and health services in this context. Finally, the most common theme (8 participants) in the area of alternatives was that a Safe Haven should not be organised in an active training military facility due to the possibility of Kosovars being re-traumatised by being exposed to cues such as military uniforms and sounds and sights of military activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Most recommendations for the Australian Government and service provision have been outlined in the Results section. However, it is important to re-emphasise two areas. Firstly, funding should be easily available to refugee communities’ organisations for community development projects. Without underestimating the importance of casework, the author argues for an understanding of the significance of community development interventions for refugee communities as the effects of torture and refugee trauma have a significant impact on the level of refugee communities. Furthermore, the understanding of the effects of trauma on communities might assist Australian Government in promoting inter-ethnic harmony as well as reconciliation with Aboriginal people.

Second, the importance of safety, predicability and security for refugees recovering from trauma in the context of conflict and organised violence, have been emphasised by this study. Consequently, the author believes that temporary refugee solutions and secondary displacement of refugee should be avoided where possible. This has been recognised in the past by the Australian Government by providing permanent resettlement solutions for refugees and humanitarian arrivals since the WWII (DIMA, 1999d). Permanent refugee solutions are also supported by UNHCR (DIMA, 1999d). Safe Haven project has been generous and provided

holistic services to Kosovars, but many of its achievements seem to have been undermined by its temporary nature, accompanying uncertainty, and the lack of control Kosovars had over the decisions which had significant influence over their lives.

Third, findings of this study have implications for management of other temporary refugee solutions such as Immigration Detention Centres. The emphasis on relationships and safety as well as management based on transparency, flexibility and responsiveness are clear recommendations for Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) and DIMA. Some of the difficulties encountered in Immigration Detention Centres as identified in the recent Ombudsmen's reports (2001) could be addressed through changes in attitudes and management of the centres, and models of service provision following the suggestions outlined above. However, these changes can not replace release in the community as the preferred alternative to detention.

Additionally, TPV regime as a temporary refugee solution has a potential to create setbacks similar to the ones encountered during the Operation Safe Haven, such as negative impact on refugees' mental health and consequent destructive reactions as well as cynicism and burn-out in service providers.

Finally, based on the difficulties with locating relevant literature, the author argues for structured evaluation of temporary refugee solutions in Australia and Europe and easy access to the results of these studies as well as intra-governmental collaboration on sharing the results and information on successful models.

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