REFUGEE TRANSITIONS

A Publication of the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors



REFUGEE TRANSITIONS

Refugee Transitions exists to report on a wide range of refugee and human rights issues of relevance to the work of STARTTS; to focus attention on the impact of organised violence and human rights abuses on health; to provide ideas on intervention models that address the health and social needs of refugees, to debate and campaign for changes necessary to assist refugee communities in their settlement process and ultimately bring together a vehicle for personal expression.

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CEO's Message



Welcome to the 29th Issue of Refugee Transitions,

The background to this issue of RT is that of a world that is

witnessing numbers of displaced people not seen since the post-World War II era, and where torture and trauma services around the world struggle to cope with unprecedented level of demand for their services. Sadly, while many gains have been made in the fight against torture in many places around the world, a lot of ground has also been lost in the context of armed conflict and civil strife in many other regions. While the Middle East epitomizes this trend, it is not the only place where human rights are under extreme pressure at the moment.

While dealing with the emergency needs of the escalating number of victims of violence and people displaced by these conflicts is the priority, as is the prevention of new victims, it is also important to consider the longer term prevention of this cycle of suffering and violence. In this pursuit, the two main tools at the disposal of global civic society, and by far the most effective, are the development and implementation of judicial processes to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice and victims compensated, but also the rehabilitation of torture victims, both at an individual and community level. Unless this is achieved, we leave the seeds for the next cycle of violence and torture to take place.

This issue of RT tackles some of these complex issues, examining the situation of refugees fleeing from the worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria, and taking a look at the difficult process involved in building peace and civic society after a war as bloody as that waged in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We also look at some of the advances made in the field of torture and trauma rehabilitation, with interviews with Dr John Arden and Dr Boris Drozdek in the context of their respective visits to Sydney to present at STARTTS Clinical Seminars. Last but certainly not least, this issue covers STARTTS' 25th Anniversary celebration, and

the round table discussion held in conjunction with Amnesty International at UN Day honouring survivors of torture, as well as a number of other interesting topics.

On a sad note, the last few months have seen the death of two of Australia's torture and trauma movement pioneers; Dr Ruth Tarn, STARTTS' first Director and Clinical Director, and Martin Chittleborough, STTARS (South Australia) founder and first Director. Our respective services owe much to their foresight and dedication, and their contribution is honoured in the pages of this issue of Refugee Transitions. STARTTS certainly might not be here today without Ruth's leadership and dedication in its early days, and the same could be said of Martin in the case of STTARS in South Australia.

Another recent sad loss at the international level has been that of Helen Bamber OBE. Helen was an icon of the torture and trauma rehabilitation movement, with 70 years of uninterrupted service to this cause, having begun her career at nineteen as a nurse looking after survivors of torture from Nazi concentration camps and continuing to pursue this vocation until her recent death at 89. She was the founder and first Director of the London Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture (now called Freedom from Torture), and she later founded the Helen Bamber Foundation to continue her work.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Refugee Transitions.

Jorge Aroche

Chief Executive Officer / STARTTS



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Last year's peace accord could put an end to a cycle of violence which has afflicted Congo for two decades. But many challenges stand in the way of lasting peace. OLGA YOLDI writes.

Peace For Peace

ast October the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) became a world turned on its head. The Congolese army, with the support of the UN peace mission, defeated the rebel movement.

Challenging the traditional tenets of peacekeeping, the UN Forward Intervention Brigade used attack helicopters and ordered its soldiers to use deadly force against the rebels, while providing logistical support to Congolese troops.

"These operations marked a welcome shift to the UN's approach to protecting civilians. For the first time peacekeepers were allowed to take the fight to the armed groups threatening the population," wrote Congo expert Jason Stearns.

The M23 guerrillas had taken up arms in eastern Congo in April 2012, accusing the government of failing to honour previous peace accords and marginalising the Congolese ethnic Tutsi minority.

Now the government's challenge is to ensure the demobilisation and disarmament of hundreds of combatants, and their reintegration into the national army and civilian life. But achieving lasting peace will not be easy. There are currently another 40 smaller rebel groups still operating in the east.

For almost two decades, Congo has been the scene of a series of bloody, prolonged and protracted conflicts in which armed groups, foreign and national armies, battled for political, military and economic control of Congo's land and resources.

Unlike other conflicts, this was an invisible and



A picture dated September 1998 shows Democratic Republic of Congo then chief of staff Joseph Kabila in Matadi, eastern DRC. Kabila inherited the war-torn chaos of this huge African country a day after his murdered father and predecessor was laid to rest. AFP PHOTO ISSOUF SANOGO

inaccessible war waged mostly against civilians, driving millions of people into malaria infested jungles and cutting them off from desperately needed aid. It has caused an estimated 5.4 million deaths (mostly from hunger and disease); massive population displacements, widespread sexual violence and a humanitarian disaster.

This conflict had no one cause and wasn't fought for ideological or religious reason. "The war isn't about competing visions of the country's future or about the fate of nations or ideas," wrote journalist Armin Rosen. "There is no Sunnis fighting Shiites, or Kurds fighting Turks; no philosophical, religious destinies in clash. Violence isn't a means to a higher end, but the expression of a deeper social, political rot," she wrote. "Here, it is possible to witness how war can become systemic and normal ... how a region can become trapped in violent tension and mistrust."

rouble in Congo started even before the country became a colony of Belgium.

In 1878 the Belgium King, Leopold II laid personal claim to the largest uncharted Congo Free State (almost the size of Western Europe) of African rainforest, which held a vast fortune in ivory and rubber plantations, a commodity in high demand due to the spread of the automobile in 19th century Europe.

King Leopold established his own company and became its single shareholder. He claimed he would protect natives from Arab slavers and open the territory to missionaries. Instead, he unleashed new horrors, turning the Congo Free State into a massive forced labour camp. Using a mercenary force, rubber gatherers were tortured, their hands cut off, or flogged to death, if they did not meet rubber collection quotas, contributing to the death of an estimated 10 million Congolese due to exploitation and disease.

This became the most infamous international scandal of the 19th century. Missionary John Harris of Baringa was so shocked by what he saw that he wrote to Leopold's chief

agent saying: "I have just returned from a journey inland to the village of Insongo Mbayo. The abject misery and utter abandon is indescribable. I was moved, your excellency, by the people's stories that I took the liberty of promising them that in the future they would only kill them for the crimes they commit."

While he never set foot in the Congo Free State, King Leopold extracted a fortune that helped build Belgium's cities and infrastructure, but in the meantime he inflicted a wound so deep in the heart of Africa that Congonever recovered.

which Congo's rulers have governed ever since. As BBC journalist Mark Dummett wrote, "Congo's soldiers have never moved away from the role allocated to them by Leopold – as a force to coerce, torment and rape an unarmed civilian population."

The Congo Free State became a colony of Belgium. But the Belgians continued extracting resources, and did little to encourage development and when the country won its independence in 1960 they had set a new nation up to fail.

Patrice Lumumba became the first prime minister. Congolese people dreamed of peace, prosperity and

dignity. Lumumba, a visionary leader, said: "We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom and we are going to make of Congo the centre of the sun's radiance for all of Africa ... We are going to keep watch over lands of our country so that they truly profit her children."

But the new state was soon destabilised. The lack of governing experience and internal power struggles worked against emancipation. Soon after Lumumba took over the government, the provinces of Katanga and South Kasai engaged in secessionist struggles against the new leadership. As soon as Lumumba turned to the USSR for assistance, the US sent weapons and CIA personnel to Congo.

With assistance from the US, Colonel Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko overthrew the government and seized control of the country, declaring himself president and renaming the country Zaire.

Mobutu governed for 31 years, allowing western companies to exploit the mineral reserves, while neglecting the country's infrastructure and services. He became notorious for nepotism and corruption and for running government institutions into the ground, and maintained power with the support of mercenaries and his cold war allies. During his time, GDP decreased 65 percent. He embezzled \$5 billion, equivalent to the country's foreign debt at the time, causing widespread poverty and a total lack of development.

In the early 1990s Mobutu's time was up. He was dying of cancer and had not only lost his grip on his country, but his territory had become a rare base for guerrilla groups of neighbouring countries, threatening the stability of the region.

he first Congo war started in 1996 triggered by the collapse of the state and the 1994 Rwandan civil war. According to Paris University historian and author, Gerard Prunier, everything conspired to turn Zaire into a kill zone: a dying dictator, the end of the cold war, Western guilt and a tough, suspicious, post-genocide Rwandan government.

During the Rwandan civil war, when Hutu death squads massacred 800,000 people (mostly Tutsies) and

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Huffington Post

a Tutsi-dominated rebel group seized power, two million Hutus (a third of the Rwanda's population) fled to Congo's eastern Kivu region, bringing with them the rivalries from home.

From the refugee camps, with support of Congolese Mai Mai militias, Hutu refugees launched attacks against Rwanda. Arguing it needed to protect its borders, the new Tutsi-dominated Rwandan government sent troops into Congo and attacked Hutu refugees, slaughtering at least 400,000 people in vicious revenge attacks.

The Rwandan government then established a coalition between local Congolese Tutsi minorities, a new rebel group fighting Mobutu under the leadership of Laurent Desire Kabila, and the governments of Burundi, Angola, Uganda and Southern Sudanese rebels. Within a year the coalition overthrew Mobutu, and Laurent Kabila, a former gold and coffee smuggler, declared himself

the new head of the state, renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Any hopes of a fresh start soon evaporated as Kabila, Rwanda's puppet, refused to do as he was told and soon fell out with his former Rwandan and Ugandan allies, triggering one of the bloodiest, most chaotic wars in history and the deadliest since WWII.

According to Prunier, it was the collapse of the Mobutu regime and an erratic Kabila that created a power vacuum that drew other countries into an extended chaotic war.

Indeed, dozens of Congolese militias, the Congolese national army and ten African countries were sucked

"Legalised robbery enforced by violence" as the King's reign was described, remained the template by

TIME FOR PEACE REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29

into the conflict, battling one another for a confusing number of reasons. Some armies (the Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian) were allied with rebel groups to oust Kabila, others (the Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwan) to protect him, and for others the reasons were not entirely clear, particularly since alliances continuously shifted, militias fractured, and factions fought one another over access to resources, leadership and the spoils of war.

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Caitlin Dearing

peacekeeping missions in history it failed to protect civilians and bring an end to the conflict. With time, rebel groups and invading armies expanded their reach to half of Congo's vast expanse. The country was fragmented into at least five different parts, each one run by an armed group with a foreign backer. The conflict raged inconclusively for years. A UN panel said the belligerents were deliberately prolonging the conflict to plunder gold, diamonds and other minerals from Congo.

Kabila managed to contain Rwanda and its allies for several years, with the support of local Mai Mai guerrillas, Rwandan Hutu militias and troops from Angola and Zimbabwe. He was assassinated in 2001. His son Joseph Kabila joined a transitional government.

In 2002 a peace agreement was negotiated with the support of South Africa and Belgium. "The magic that these talks had to accomplish was to make each belligerent believe that he would benefit from putting down its arms

and joining a transitional government," wrote Jason Stearns in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. "Even though the transition which ended in elections in 2006, would by its very nature produce losers as well as winners."

The international community put pressure on Rwanda and Uganda to withdraw from eastern Congo but both countries continued their influence through proxy armies and developed lucrative networks for trafficking minerals.

Joseph Kabila won office in the 2006 elections, the first in 46 years. All rebel groups joined the government

and integrated their troops into the national army. It looked as if peace had arrived. It hadn't.

The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) that fared poorly in the elections triggered a new rebellion, the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), this time led by a renegade Tutsi general, Laurent Nkunda, and backed by the Rwandan government and Congolese Tutsi rebels.

Nkunda claimed to be defending the interests of the Tutsi minority in eastern Congo who were subjected

to attacks by Hutus. According to author Severine Autesserre, Nkunda's popularity was due to the Tutsi minority's renewed fears of an ethnic cleansing campaign against them and he was seen as a de facto protector.

Nkunda became Congo's most notorious warlord, whose record of violence included mass atrocities, pillaging and destroying villages, recruiting child soldiers and committing mass rapes, causing some 200,000 people to flee.

In 2009, the Rwandan and Congolese government struck a deal to arrest Nkunda and integrate his CNDP militias into the Congolese army. The arrest took place after the release of the UN report documenting Rwanda's close ties to the warlord and concluding he was being used to advance Rwanda's economic interests in Congo.

A new peace deal with CNDP rebel sallowed them to stay in the Kivu area and maintain a parallel chain of command with the Congolese army. While the Congolese government was hoping to integrate

ex-combatants in the army, the plan failed as rebels, under a new leader, Bosco Ntaganda, grew richer and more influential. Kabila also agreed to allow Rwandan forces to conduct a five-week joint military operation against Hutu rebels, but attacks against civilians increased.

The peace deal failed in 2012 when Ntaganda launched a mutiny, named March 23, taking many of the former CNDP militias with him. The March 23 Movement, which was defeated last year, was backed by the Rwandan government. Two million people died since the official end of the war.

asting peace will not be achieved if the root causes of the conflict are left unaddressed. Ethnic conflicts and land disputes, coupled with widespread poverty, and unemployment have stymied previous efforts to bring peace.

Since colonial days, large waves of Rwandan migrants, including Hutus and Tutsis, have settled in eastern Congo. According to Autesserre, Congolese people of Rwandan descent especially Tutsis own most of the land that other ethnic groups claim as their own.

"Many Tutsis in the region fled persecution several times over the past decade, abandoning their plots or selling them at a discount and claiming them back on their return again, sometimes by force," she wrote in *Foreign Affairs* magazine.

Since the war uprooted communities, there are no traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms or state authority to solve local disputes. To make matters worse, the government has also imposed on-and-off restrictions on citizenship, a key element in their divide and rule strategies.

People of Rwandan descent are considered immigrants, even though many of them have lived in Congo for generations. This has repercussions for land tenure and precludes them from political representation, contributing to the feeling of alienation.

For peace to prevail, these grievances need attention and resolution at a local grass-root level. A new approach to peace building that includes both, bottom up as well as top down approaches, is needed.

A dialogue with local chiefs is fundamental to resolve land disputes and start rebuilding communities. The government needs to impose the rule of law in the eastern provinces, reform the army, the police and justice systems, build institutions, decentralise revenues and power, and have a more inclusive government.

The propensity for rebel groups to emerge may not be truly overcome until poverty is addressed. High unemployment, lack of development and



Congolese children at a refugee camp in Bunia run by Congolese woman Justine Kerovin, Thursday, Sept. 4, 2003. Over 410 families have taken shelter in the refugee camp after they escaped fighting and killings in Fataki, some 88 km (55 miles) north of Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo. Bunia is the capital of Democratic Republic of Congo's northeastern Iture province, the scene of bitter inter-ethnic fighting that has claimed tens of thousands of lives in the fast four years. (AP Photo/Sayyid Azim)

opportunities will leave no option to young people but to join rebel groups.

Nation building is then a high priority. Two decades of armed conflict has taken a toll on the economy, devastating the farming sector, damaging the infrastructure and exacerbating its food security situation. While Congo is potentially one of the richest countries in the world, it rates as one of the lowest on the *UN Human Development Index*.

Congo, according to the *Huffington Post*, has enough arable land to feed one third of the world's population. Its immense mineral reserves are currently valued by some estimates at more than \$24 trillion, and include

30 percent of the world's diamond reserves, 70 percent of the world's coltan, used in electronic devices. It is the second biggest copper producer and it is Africa's larger producer of tin ore. It is also an important producer of zinc, uranium, nickel, tungstentantalum and gold and has large reserves of oil, natural gas and plentiful water.

There is no doubt that the biggest challenge for the government will be the regulation of its mineral trade. Despite UN sanctions and international law

prohibitions, the pattern of illegalresource extraction has remained prevalent during the war and after peace deals were brokered.

According to a report by the UN Group of Experts, gold, diamonds and other minerals were purchased, trafficked and funnelled into unregulated global markets at huge profit, nothing went to government coffers.

"Conflict trade in Congo has run through a complex web of local and regional networks that include states, private armies, businessmen, elites, organised criminal groups and multinational corporations," Caitlin Dearing, from George Washington University wrote in the *International Affairs Review*. "International companies and global markets are deeply complicit in perpetuating war economies."

She attributes this to international competition for scarce resources, the effects of globalisation, market liberalisation and the deregulation of international financial markets.

All these factors have facilitated he rise in the trade of conflict goods, pa

the rise in the trade of conflict goods, particularly natural resources. The sale of minerals enabled rebel groups and armies to purchase weapons and supplies and sustain the war for such a long time.

Several companies and states such as Belgium, China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the UK and US all received substantial amounts of minerals from Congo. Conflict trade is not only a manifestation of the ugly side of globalisation but it also highlights the amoral side of unchecked global capitalism.

Few Congolese have profited from their natural resources except the political and economic elites with ties to the central government. They used their connections and their stakes in private companies to reap millions from resource extraction. As Jason Stearns writes, "everything flows from political office, the best business deals, influence and status. For those outside power there is scant opportunity to prosper."

The government has lost billions in revenue over the last 20 years. A May 2013 report by a panel led by

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former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan showed that Congo had lost at least \$1.36 billion in revenue since 2010 in five deals, in which state mining assets were sold at prices well below market value to a friend of Kabila, the Israeli businessman Dan Gertler.

Attempts at enforcing international regulations (through the introduction of supply chain traceability procedures and certification mechanisms) have not been successful.

A 2013 report by Crisis Group said that sanctions did not reduce illicit trade, on the contrary, they promoted over militarisation of mining zones. "The UN attempt to police this international trade foundered on the lack of cooperation by the countries providing a base for the black marketeers and the absence of a legal corpus that is binding on the importing companies."

According to the report, the US and EU also made attempts to regulate the trade. The Dobb-Frank Act obliged companies to disclose the origin of their minerals but the

Congolese government lacked the administration capacity to ensure compliance.

The report attributed the failure to corruption and a clientelism system of governing. "The lack of administration capacity and resources to ensure compliance of sanctions means the problem of smuggling remains," the report said.

Compliance depends on the integrity of the administration as well as those working for it, but when unpaid soldiers had the responsibility to enforce regulations, it became an impossible task.

Prosecution of international companies for the crime

of pillage and related financial crimes is being advocated by the Conflict Awareness Project, a non-government organisation that conducted an investigation on gold trafficking in Congo.

"A successful pillage prosecution of corporate actors would serve as a powerful deterrent and would modify the behaviour of companies trading in conflict commodities," Kathi Lynn Austin wrote in the project's Interim Report.

"This in turn could help transform the way armed conflicts are financed and would lead to the closure of legal loopholes that have allowed this black market trade to flourish ... Such prosecutions would go a long way towards restoring faith in the international justice system."

There is no doubt that the elites who have benefited from war have now little incentive to work for peace, and may hinder or disrupt the peace process.

Only firm leadership and governance based on the rule of law will ensure sustainable peace. But so far Kabila has proved inept at creating a functioning society and the government lacks the rudimentary security and administration infrastructure to ensure law and order. While he is not an authoritarian leader and has started to address corruption and abuse in the army, Kabila has been accused of focusing his efforts on staying in power rather than on creating an accountable and transparent political system.

"Congo's government is not only extremely weak," writes Jason Stearns, "but it is beholden to a political logic of patronage that undermines the reform of its own state and encourages the creation of competing armed groups."

Peace cannot be achieved without development. Mining must contribute tostate reconstruction, economic and human development. Congo and all countries in the region, stand to benefit from a clean, certified and regulated mineral trade, which can transform the whole region. The resulting tax revenues would aid recovery and nation building and contribute to democratisation and national reconciliation.

Kabila promised to promote national dialogue and reconciliation. Congolese people have experienced trauma on a massive scale and deserve to know the truth of what happened during the war and be able to hold accountable those responsible.

Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia have all had tribunals to deal with the past. Yet this might be difficult in Congo as many perpetrators are still in power. Many members of government, the armed forces and police are complicit in human-rights abuses and sexual crimes. So far only

Bosco Ntaganda and Laurent Nkunda have been indicted by the International Criminal Court.

The recent amnesty law grants amnesty for the act of insurrection to those who give up rebellion. The law however does not grant amnesty for crimes against humanity, sexual violence, the recruitment of child soldiers and other human-rights abuses. This prevents impunity which has in the past sown the seeds for future rebellions.

ccording to press reports, the proliferation of armed groups still remains an obstacle to peace. There are still about 40 armed rebel groups (many without a unified command structure) that need to be disarmed and demobilised, so the Congolese armed forces are now busy negotiating with these militias across the Kivus.

Under the multilateral framework agreement signed under the UN and African Union, there are provisions for disarming rebels, transferring them to demobilisation centres and protecting them from other armed groups.

Kabila's government is also committed to a far reaching reform program, designed to address the root causes of instability and rebellion. The agreement also includes a pledge on national reconciliation and democratisation. The government promised to overhaul its security forces, consolidate state authority in the east and prevent armed groups from destabilising neighbouring countries.

Most observers say any foreign aid must be conditional on these political reforms. Kabila will not be able to implement the agreement without a firm commitment from neighbouring governments to stop meddling in Congo's affairs.

He will also need assistance from the international community, which has often been accused of lacking imagination to find solutions to Congo's conflict. Without the Cold War to keep the continent relevant, Africa has been largely forgotten by the West. While it spent \$1 billion a year in peacekeeping alone, it has provided a piecemeal response, disengaging while the peace process was still fragile. It is time it has a more honest and appropriate engagement with Congo.

A peaceful democratic transition will be a first for Congo and could help it reach its potential. It's past time for the suffering to end. The international community and Congolese government must seize this opportunity to ensure Congo changes the course of its history and works hard towards sustainable peace, only then the wound in the heart of Africa can start to heal. R

11

Two years ago Syrian families began arriving at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. What started as a few tents has now grown into a city.

ANGELA NICKERSON and RICHARD BRYANT travelled there.

AFTER PERSECUTION – ZAATARI REFUGEE CAMP



e are driving through the Jordanian desert. It is mid-morning, and the sun is blinding as it ricochets off the endless expanse of sand. We have travelled an hour and a half from our base in Amman.

As we travel further from the city, the number of stores and dwellings dwindles, until the sole signs of life are camels and their handlers by the side of the road. We draw closer to the gates, and people appear as if from nowhere. Vehicles line up to enter the camp, vendors hawk their wares from the side of the road, and children push through the throngs, imploring visitors for food and money. Stark wire fences lie ahead of us, dominated by a large white sign that welcomes us, in Arabic and English, to Zaatari Refugee Camp.

Zaatari is the second largest refugee camp in the world, home to a multitude of Syrians who have fled their home country. The swell in numbers in the past two years (from hundreds to over 144,000) has made it Jordan's fourth largest city.

It is located only 40 kilometres from Dara'a where the Syrian uprising began in 2011. Shortly after the uprising, refugees began to pour into Jordan, often crossing the border on foot, desperate to escape the persecution and violence in Syria.

At this time, Jordan was already host to nearly 30,000 Iraqi refugees. The tide of Syrian refugees compelled the UNHCR to construct the Zaatari refugee camp, which opened in July of 2012.



It is estimated, however, that three-quarters of the Syrian refugees in Jordan are still living in non-camp settings, predominantly in the north of Jordan. The ongoing influx of Syrian refugees is threatening to overwhelm the country's resources, and presents a formidable challenge to the provision of shelter, food, and safety to these vulnerable individuals.

After entering the camp, we travel on foot down the main thoroughfare, which is on the western side of Zaatari. This bitumen road is lined with a ramshackle collection of shelters and stalls, peddling everything from rotisserie chickens to hardware to clothing.

There is even a rumour that this street (known to the Syrians and the aid workers as the Champs-Élysées) hosts a store that deals solely in wedding dresses. People gather in small groups, purchasing food, trading goods, and catching up on the day's events. There is a sense of community here, punctuated by "Free Syria" flags that appear at regular intervals along the boulevard.

Dwellings can be seen down each of the laneways that extend like spokes out from the main road. These are shanty buildings made from fibro board and corrugated iron. We are told that this used to be a tent city, but after a brutally cold winter in which 30 children perished, buildings have been erected to provide shelter from Jordan's hostile winter.

Life in Jordan is difficult for Syrian refugees, while stories of death, loss, torture and rape in Syria abound. The refugees' own experiences shadow

Syrian refugees reflected in the window of a shop on the main street through camp. April 3, 2014. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi.

"...these findings tell us what many Syrian refugees already know - that the pain does not stop when a refugee is safe from persecution."

"...along these dirt laneways, in amongst the crowded shelters, underneath the wire fences, there are glimmers of hope...determination to move forward, to build a new life, to overcome a recent history of violence and terror. And these signs of resilience are everywhere, once you know where to look."

their days. In Jordan, people struggle to find shelter for their families, adequate food, laundry and bathing facilities.

The UNHRC, NGOs and the Jordanian government are working around the clock to assist the refugees – but there are simply not enough resources to go around. Many Syrians yearn for home, for their friends and loved ones, for comfort and safety. The stress of the resettlement environment is unrelenting.

Families live in close quarters. Tensions rise. One mental health worker tells us that the most commonly reported difficulty is not, as one might expect, symptoms of traumatic stress or depression; but rather conflicts with others in the camp – both within and beyond their own families.

The pressure of stretching scarce resources causes tempers to fray, and fights break out. It is also not a safe place. Stories of physical and sexual abuse reveal a setting in which there is no formal law and order, and gangs have compounded the fear felt by many who have fled the civil war.

The refugees seek out information about the state of events in Syria. There are endless debates about the prospect of returning home. However, right now there is no possibility of reprieve.

The experience of the Syrian refugees in Jordan is mirrored by research that has been conducted by academics around the world. These studies have considered the impact of trauma in the home country, and the post-migration environment on refugee mental health. As expected, research has consistently found that exposure to traumatic events like witnessing the death of a loved one, rape, or torture, are strong predictors of mental health problems like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and suicidality.

There is also a growing body of evidence suggesting that the post-migration environment is critical to refugee mental health. In western resettlement countries, stressors like unemployment, inability to speak the language of the host country, discrimination, and difficulties with attaining refugee status are strongly associated with symptoms of PTSD and depression.

In a survey of Tamil asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, researchers from the University of New South Wales found that post-migration living difficulties impacted on mental health to a similar extent as premigration trauma.

In a study we conducted with Iraqi refugees, we found that fears for family members remaining in Iraq contributed strongly to mental health problems, even after controlling for the effects of trauma experiences and other resettlement stressors.

Taken together, these findings tell us what many Syrian refugees already know – that the pain does not stop when a refugee is safe from persecution. Even in politically stable western countries, refugees and asylum seekers encounter stressors that have a debilitating effect on their mental health. This is especially pertinent in the current international climate, where policies of deterrence in relation to seeking asylum are the norm.

Research conducted at the University of New South Wales, for example, has highlighted the devastating psychological impact of prolonged immigration detention on refugee mental health. Our research has also demonstrated that the negative effects of temporary visas on psychological wellbeing are mediated by living difficulties in the post-migration environment.



Given what we know about the mental health effects of stressors in relatively safe western resettlement countries, it is difficult to comprehend the potential impact on the psychological wellbeing of these refugees of life in a refugee camp – or worse, remaining in the country of origin.

But in Zaatari, along these dirt laneways, in amongst the crowded shelters, underneath the wire fences, there are glimmers of hope. These can be seen in the faces of the refugees who volunteer at the health clinics on a daily basis; in the women who come together in informal support groups; in the children who play in the grimy alleyways. These remarkable signs of resilience are a testament to the strength and indestructible nature of the Syrian people. They speak to their determination to move forward, to build a new life, to overcome a recent history of violence and terror. And these signs of resilience are everywhere, once you know where to look.

As we leave Zaatari behind, the camp-city stretching out behind us in the Jordanian desert sunset, the words of one Syrian torture survivor ring in our ears. He said, "If I do not laugh, if I do not smile, I will die from sorrow."

These Syrian refugees have experienced boundless sorrow. We must now provide them with a safe environment in which their psychological and physical wounds can heal. $\,\mathbb{R}\,$

Syrian boys swim in a water resevoir on the edge of the Zaatari refugee camp. April 6, 2014. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi.

Dr Angela Nickerson and Prof Richard Bryant work at the Refugee Trauma and Recovery Program & and the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales

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REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29 AFTER PERSECUTION – ZA'ATARI REFUGEE CAMP



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ot since the horror of World War II has the planet seen a forced migration the size of the Syrian diaspora that began three years ago when seemingly innocuous government protests escalated into a bloody civil war. The subsequent implosion has left 9 million Syrians displaced, 3 million of whom have fled across borders into neighboring countries as refugees.

The Kingdom of Jordan has taken in over 600,000 Syrians since the fighting began, struggling to house the unanticipated numbers of new arrivals in refugee camps whose resources have been pushed well beyond their limits. An estimated 80 percent of the Syrians in Jordan have hunkered down outside camps, fending for

themselves to avoid the poor conditions and detainment associated with camp life. The trade off: Outside the camps Syrians have less access to the aid on offer and are more susceptible to the unsavory forces attracted to those in positions of desperate need.

Wherever Syrians have found themselves, in addition to having lost their homes and their livelihoods, they are saddled with the emotional traumas inflicted by witnessing their communities destroyed and families and friends senselessly murdered. While proving challenging beyond all initial estimates, the difficulty of providing logistical solutions to their influx will pale in comparison to the greater long-term task of healing these deep wounds.

David Maurice Smith / Oculi



Soud Hazza was a sheep herder in Syria before fleeing to Jordan as a refugee when fighting found its way to his home village of Maqsar Hisan. Everything he left behind is confirmed to be destroyed and now as a refugee he is forced to sit idle, legally prohibited from working. (March 30, 2014. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi.)



Inside the central mosque in Azraq, Jordan. For many of the male Syrian refugees now calling Azraq home the mosque has provided a needed feeling of connection and stability. (March 31, 2014. David Maurice Smith/Oculi.)

REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29 SYRIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN URBAN AREAS OF JORDAN



Faten Khdairi feeds the youngest of her six children in the temporary shelter that they have erected on a plot of land they rent in Azraq, Jordan. (April 4, 2014. David Maurice Smith/Oculi.)

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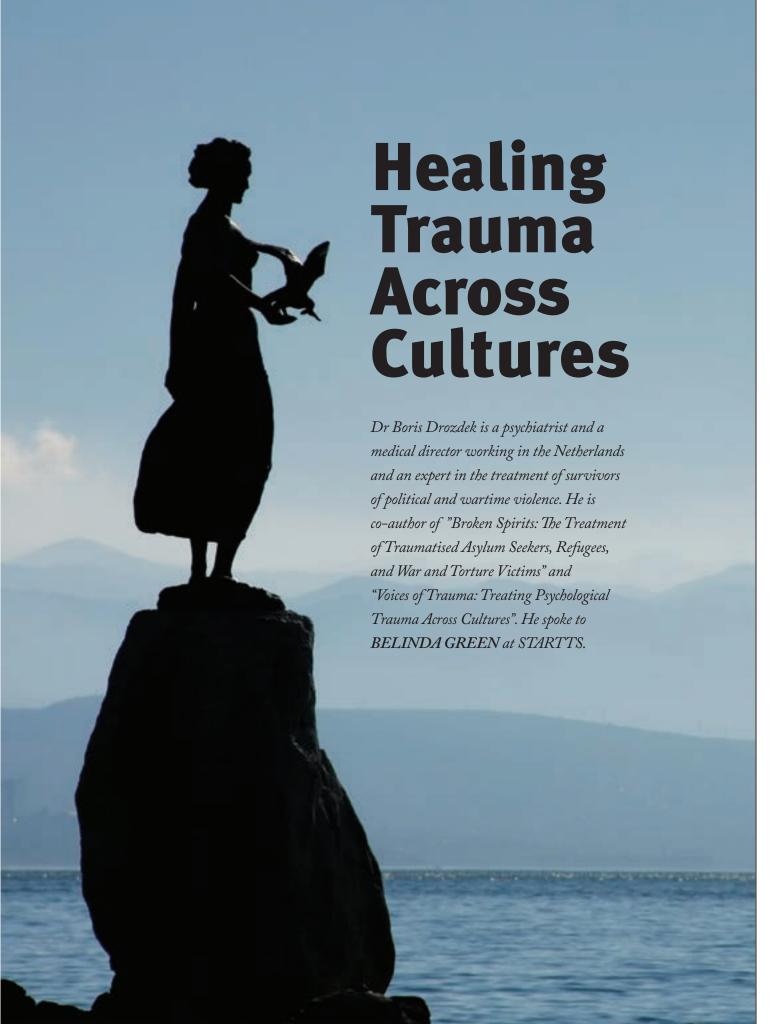


An elderly Syrian woman, face marked with traditional tattoos looks out the widow of a rented house in Azraq, Jordan. (March 29, 2014. David Maurice Smith/Oculi.)

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You were born in Croatia and lived through the Balkan War. Tell us about your background.

Yes I was about to finish my residency as a psychiatrist when the war erupted in 1991. At the time the teaching of trauma treatment was not part of the psychiatric curriculum in Croatia and I guess it was the same elsewhere in Europe. But when the war started I was suddenly confronted by the overwhelming presence of violence and imminent danger.

I started assisting war prisoners, but the workload increased as a result of the influx of refugees.

We screened thousands of people for psychological assistance. I read many books in an attempt to find out how I could better help them because I felt I didn't have adequate knowledge. In the 1990s you could only find literature that had been written in the 1980s mostly it was about Vietnam War veterans in the US and the Holocaust survivors. I soon realised that what we could learn from those papers could not be indiscriminately applied to the type of clients we were working with. The question was: What was the point of differentiation between the two groups of clients? The Vietnam veterans and the victims of the Balkan War. The prevailing philosophy at the time was that you couldn't really treat a traumatised client while the trauma was still going on. Also, it was believed that survivors had to have enough basic safety to undergo trauma. But 'basic safety' as a concept was not well defined.

So many clients came to us for assistance and they talked to us a lot. They felt an urge to share their experiences. Then we realised that nothing happened to them if we allowed them to talk. We learned that sometimes we had to limit how much they talked and shared.

Later I was invited to the Netherlands to work at a number of asylum-seeker centres assisting refugees from the former Yugoslavia. I provided psychotherapy. Since I had no clearly defined parameters of what I had to do, I had the freedom to explore options and use my creativity.

At the time in the 1990s we were much more medically oriented and less culturally sensitive than we are now. But we developed treatment models. We started to become more aware of the role that culture plays in patients, and started to understand more as time went by.

In 2004, I met John Wilson and a few doors opened for me. This is how the Contextual Development Model was created and started to take shape. Wilson is a trauma guru and one of the founders of the Vietnam War Veteran Services in the US. He was enthusiastic about our work and came up with the idea of writing a book. The act of writing helped me to process my knowledge, and be precise in my descriptions as you are pushed to

find the right words.

The Contextual Development Model that we created is similar to the STARTTS model in the sense that it also originates from a systemic tradition and it is not reductionist.

Let's talk about the systemic idea behind this notion, of the ecological environment in assisting refugees.

It is based on the idea that trauma happens in a certain environment and so does the healing. I believe that everyone is nestled in their own web of relationships and networks, and the longer I do this work the more aware I become of how important these relationships are for everyone. If change occurs in people's lives it will have a ripple effect on them because change transforms lives. Through my work I try to make people aware of the nuances that change brings to life.

What are these nuances that determine people's behaviours when change happens? Could you expand on that?

To illustrate this I will tell you about the work of psychologist Bronfenbrenner. He uses circles to represent what we call "the ecological environment". So he draws an inner circle that represents the inter-psychic dimension of the client, the next circle represents his primary relationships. The next circle is about his participation in society, etc. This is a complex model that includes the client's culture, subculture, religious beliefs, etc.

We then add to these components the developmental perspective, in which the therapist must analyse how the changes transform a client at the different levels of the ecological environment throughout someone's life span, and find out what the causes of stress are and where they source resilience.

What we see in a client at a particular moment in time is just a snapshot of his life. You can focus on the snapshot but you need to see the client over time in order to understand his life and put it in a broader context.

I believe the developmental perspective is important. As a therapist, you always ask yourself: "What protected this client before the trauma happened and problems developed?" I used to see refugees who were clearly uncomfortable and appeared to suffer from classical borderline personality disorder, then after a while and once their lives were stabilised their symptoms clearly disappeared.

There is always a search for a balance between damage and resilience and that means that one can become unbalanced and present symptoms in the snapshot that are something else other than a diagnosis of a mental illness. The key to understand what keeps people balanced or unbalanced is in the developmental perspective which is added to the ecological environment I just described.

So what you are saying is that there is a danger in over-pathologising people and that this may be problematic?

Indeed. If you define this in a simple way you can see how sustainable those results are, why people do it, how useful it is to diagnose. I personally would not like to be diagnosed with something that comes from the medical technology and it is imposed on me. I would prefer to understand why I feel the way I feel.

So what do you do with clients is look at resilience and steer away from pathologising?

I also think this approach generates hope because there is something in you that keeps you balanced and in fact has kept you balanced for a long time. This something is always present. When you are unbalanced you feel the pain. But there is a source of resilience that may be empowered in order to deal with the pain.

What would you do if someone is displaying symptoms of psychosis?

A colleague of mine in Holland has done a PhD on what he calls "Posttraumatic Psychotic States". People can be misdiagnosed with psychosis. They are then stigmatised and become chronic patients with an "incurable" illness.

Of course that is not to say that everyone we see can be cured. In some cases people's wounds cannot be healed, but for the majority of clients it is possible to heal themselves, even though they present the same psychotic features that usually stem from trauma. In these cases clients experience similar psychotic phenomena such as hallucinations that have something to do with the past and with the traumatic exposure.

At a certain point traumatic experiences' pressure on the ego is so strong that boundaries become very permeable and then something that used to be experienced as a nightmare becomes a hallucination. What you do then is prescribe antipsychotic medication, but only to lower the anxiety levels, to glue the ego and then work on the traumas that have caused this posttraumatic psychotic state. If you treat that well, symptoms tend to progressively disappear. It is not incurable.

Can we talk about the notion of cultural assessment that you mentioned in the seminar? You spoke about a continuum, about the relational aspects of the

survivor, and the incorporation of cultural aspects, etc. What are some of these components and how far should a therapist go to understand the cultural nuances of their clients?

Part of the therapeutical relationship with your client is to encourage him or her to be your cultural informer and offer that knowledge to you. But how far should therapists go to understand those nuances of culture is an interesting question.

It is important to be culturally sensitive from the moment you feel that the therapeutical process doesn't unfold the way you are used to, one then needs to ask oneself, what is preventing my efforts to help this client? Then you realise culture could be interfering. However, it would be rather preposterous to prescribe that you should over emphasise culture, since there are also universal aspects to being a survivor of trauma and torture that are common to everyone.

You tend to improve cross-cultural skills the longer you work in this field. The idea that talking helps people is a Western concept. It is not common to all cultures. If you realise that, you may negotiate differently the terms of the therapy with your client.

The fact that clients are silent may be due to many reasons. In some cultures when someone has been raped, the reparation manual within that culture may consist of killing the victim, or killing the perpetrator, expelling the victim from the community, or even scapegoating her.

If this is the reparation manual, if these are the solutions to these problems for that society whose member we are dealing with, the client will not open up to his therapist. He will keep certain things to himself.

In the Netherlands and in Australia we say talking about experiences does help recovery. These clients may say: "Convince me of that and protect me from all the risks I expect to encounter when sharing my experiences and feelings".

How do you go about convincing a client? You explain to them that there are certain therapeutic interventions available to them and this is one of the options available for their rehabilitation.

The key to deal with such clients is to be respectful to them. You as a therapist already have some knowledge of the reasons that are preventing your client from verbalising and sharing experiences and feelings. As far as I know, in some cultures the actual sharing of the experiences people have endured is very different from how it is done during the therapeutic process.

For example, if you are treating a survivor of sexual violence with the reparation environment we mentioned earlier, which is rooted in their culture, you will need to negotiate with the client about how to share this

"You have to examine those things being said by the client that do not match your expectations. That is where the clues lie. They normally open the door to another level of understanding."

experience during therapy and also how to protect the client and make him or her feel safe, and ensure confidentiality.

There is also a stigma attached to going to therapy among some refugee communities where individuals tend to watch one another. They know who is going to see the psychiatrist, who is going where, and many don't like the idea of being perceived by others as needing psychological assistance.

In these cases a process of negotiation is needed rather than normalisation. In other words, I know what I have to offer and try to convince my clients that I may be of help to them. Sometimes I succeed, other times I fail. But most of the times I do succeed in convincing them.

What do you say to them in order to motivate them?

I listen to their priorities. They want to be acknowledged, validated and they want to reveal their lives' experiences and you play on that card much more than on the diagnosing of symptoms or the disorder. What I ask is: "What do you want from your life? Let's see how I can help you."

I normally deal with the practical issues. I remember one client that finished his therapy and had to leave the Netherlands, he said to me. "I am still living illegally in this country and I am sleeping in a church, but I have learned to take care of myself and this is what I am taking with me." If you can achieve this as a therapist, it is great.

Could you comment more on the nuances of working with asylum seekers particularly about working with men and the loss they experience associated with their understanding of masculinity and then a more general appraisal of the subtleties involved in your therapeutic relationship with clients.

I say to my male clients that by coming into a new country their position in society and their position within the family, has changed. Their loss of identity, their loss of their role as head of their families is something that needs to be dealt with. Normally men tend to complain that their wives don't listen to them anymore and don't like their children associating with other children outside their culture. Men tend to lose control of their milieu.

In terms of your other question, I believe that as a therapist when you see that you are not making progress, there is something that you have missed. It could be secrets a client won't reveal, or something you have overlooked. Your intuition will tell you where you need to search for it. There is always a door that will open if you listen to everything being said by the client.

I particularly pay attention, take notice and react to those things that I am being told that are not logical, that don't make sense.

You have to examine those things being said by the client that do not match your expectations. That is where the clues lie. They normally open the door to another level of understanding.

Trust between therapist and client is crucial. Sometimes it can be difficult to engage with them. The fact is that when clients have been persecuted and terrorised the likelihood that they will seek assistance is small. In that case, how can one encourage them to put their trust in a public institution?

You have talked about culturally-informed understandings of trauma. What is your view on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the prevalence of universal aspects of trauma?

The PTSD symptoms are more or less universal: having nightmares, being irritable, having aggressive outbursts, etc. PTSD is defined in terms of symptoms but the definition does not capture the human complexity, and culture does come into the picture, when you are searching for explanatory models.

People have different explanations about why they suffer, be it from PTSD symptoms or from other causes. Some people refuse to talk about what happened to them because they believe that when they talk it triggers the ancient spirits to become awake and angry. That can happen with some African clients. So what would you say to a client that has concerns about ancestors and ghosts?

I normally introduce the idea that this is our culture, that therapy is the way we look and treat problems. I say: "I can help you with this and that. Maybe we can combine some other ancient ritual to the therapy. Is there a ritual in your culture that may help you to keep the evil spirits away and the souls of the deceased at peace? If it does not work you can always come back to me." Then most clients will say: "if you think so let's give it a go."

Therapy is about respect and building an alliance at a very human level. It is about the therapist and the client believing in what they are doing. Then you come back to the universal values. R

REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29 HEALING TRAUMA ACROSS CULTURES

Difficult things happen: Why are governments justifying torture in our name?

'No Impunity' is this year's global theme that marked the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. To mark the day, a panel discussion was organised by STARTTS and Amnesty International. Moderated by journalist and lawyer RICHARD ACKLAND, the panel included lawyer and Sydney University researcher DR KIRAN GREWAL, Public Interest Advocacy Centre CEO EDWARD SANTOW, STARTTS CEO JORGE AROCHE and STARTTS project worker MOHAMED DUKULY.

Richard Ackland: "Difficult things happen: why are governments justifying torture in our name?" is the title of tonight's event. And "difficult things happen" was the immortal remark of Tony Abbott in Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference when he'd just met the Sri Lankan president, who I think universally is recognised for leading a fairly ghastly regime. But nonetheless, I think it's a very fitting hook on which to hang the discussion tonight. Kiran, what really is the accepted international understanding and definition of "torture"?

Kiran Grewal: When defining torture there's the lawyer in me that wants to take you to the Convention Against Torture, but most people are not familiar with that definition. So then there is the Amnesty side of me which says well, torture is actually a very powerful word to name and shame.

Recently, I've been working with the Sri Lankan and Nepali police and armed forces and I now have a slightly schizophrenic relationship with the word "torture" because in Sri Lanka it's the T word that is never spoken about, partly because of defensiveness. The minute you say the word "torture" to police and army officers, they all agree torture is wrong. They believe slapping a guy who's not telling the truth is not torture. They say "it's all very well for you to come in and accuse us. You have the luxury of being an international lawyer coming from a nice developed country. You haven't actually had to deal with these terrorists who are blowing up our people." And certainly in Sri Lanka, you have 40 years of political violence. It's very hard from an outside perspective to come in and say, "What you're doing is torture" when they will say, "Yes, but look at what you do to your asylum seekers. Is that torture? Why don't you call that torture?" So the politicisation of the term also means that now I steer clear of it.

Richard Ackland: Yes, so there's a sense that because of the insurgency and civil war in Sri Lanka sometimes the authorities think it's justified?

Kiran Grewal: Certainly, individual military and police officers will say, "Oh absolutely, torture is wrong". It's very interesting the ways in which people at an abstract moral level say, "Absolutely, torture is wrong" but then there are ways in which they make sense of their involvement in it. It's almost as if they become martyrs, "Well, it's easy for you to say that this is wrong, but we had to save these people and then that means that we have to do – as Tony Abbott said – difficult things".

Richard Ackland: Yes. I think Dick Cheney's phrase was "Waterboarding is a no-brainer" in order to extract information. Ed, is there any occasion that you think torture could be justified?



Edward Santow: No. International and domestic law couldn't be clearer on this, torture is always illegal. To use the technical legal term, it's a non-derogable right. There are no circumstances in which torture is ever permitted. I think when we start making justifications we get into trouble. I'm not saying that conflicts ever make this easy. But I'm a big fan of the former Israeli Supreme Court Chief Justice who said that in a democracy you have to fight with one arm tied behind your back. And that is not just a self-denying statement; but one of enlightened self-interest. The reason we are so clear about torture in international and domestic law is because it is always in our own interests to prohibit it.

Some of our own work has shown how it is possible to make the line about what is permissible and what isn't greyer. It can come back to bite the military because you open the door to a far more brutal behaviour on both sides of the conflict.

Richard Ackland: That's interesting. A while ago, after 9/11 the American government came up with a new definition of torture, I think they called it "enhanced interrogation". But was that still really torture?

Edward Santow: Absolutely it was. And you'd be hardpressed to find any sane international lawyer who would take a different view.

Richard Ackland: Because it was lawyers that wrote and approved of and certified "enhanced interrogation" as being quite permissible and legitimate.

Edward Santow: It was a very small number of lawyers. The fact is that 99 percent of lawyers, with any track record in this area are absolutely clear, that those so-called enhanced interrogation techniques, such as waterboarding, constitute torture. And you're always going to be able to find someone, if you pay them enough or if they're ideologically inclined who will say the contrary. But it's stretching the legal elastic to say, "Well, there are these two legitimate views here and you have to choose one or the other". There aren't. There's one legitimate view and then there's another view that is held by a very small number of lawyers and on this one I'd go with the consensus.

Jorge Aroche: If you look at it from the point of view of the individual that is affected by that treatment, and we know that torture affects the body and brain, there's really no difference between waterboarding and other kinds of cruel treatment. From the legal point view you might argue it never poses a threat to actual life, although even that is wrong. What is damaging is the actual sensation of terror, the impact of those emotions on the limbic system and the brain, and the emotional scars that endure after. And there's no difference between somebody who

is in utter terror because they think they're drowning and somebody who is actually drowning.

Richard Ackland: I'm interested, in your experience in working with torture survivors. Have there been occasions where the torturer has actually extracted the information they needed and wanted, as opposed to just being told anything in order for the torture to stop?

Jorge Aroche: Look, luckily I'm not an expert on that side of the equation. But if you were an interrogator, how on earth would you know when it is the truth coming out of someone being tortured and when it's just anything a person says just to get out of that awful situation? And that's what makes whatever is said during torture completely irrelevant, and that's why the ticking bomb scenario is something that makes no logical sense.

Richard Ackland: Okay, we've heard from Jorge, we've heard from two lawyers; Mohamed, can you tell us about your experience of working with torture survivors and the challenges that they face?

Mohamed Dukuly: I will pick up from where Jorge left off. How many people are you going to torture before you can get one fact?

This is the exact question I gathered from one of our clients who wanted his story told here. He was part of a group of people running away from the war to another country to seek refuge. At the

checkpoint they were all caught. He resembled someone who was working in the government. For that reason, the captors thought he must have known what the government was doing, where the armed forces were, etc. They beat him up. They tortured him. But nothing came out of him.

The biggest threat to his recovery is the fact that his torturers are still going about their normal business. One can see the pain in him. So there's no justification. Nothing better comes out of torture except the destruction of human life.

Unfortunately some of the people who watched him being tortured ended up becoming torturers in another militant group who fought back for liberation. It all started with good intentions. "They've killed our people," they said, "we're going to come back and fight for our people". But they came back and did exactly what others had done to them. Torture keeps going around.

Richard Ackland: Normally in a traditional legal system, evidence procured through torture is not admissible. But it's different in Guantanamo Bay at the Military Commissions. Have there been cases where evidence obtained under torture is admissible?

Edward Santow: It's been incredibly ineffective. The Khalid Sheikh Mohammed case is trotted out as the one where he was waterboarded and probably subjected to other forms of torture as well. He's still not been put to trial after so many years being held prisoner.

Richard Ackland: Because of the torture?

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endure after."

Edward Santow: That's certainly one of the main reasons. And secondly, for the reason that Jorge gave before, it is

so difficult to discern what is correct information and what's incorrect when someone is revealing information under torture or other forms of serious duress.

Kiran Grewal: My colleague has done interviews with former CIA people who resisted using torture because they knew it wasn't the best way to get information. So the moral argument was to one side. And, in fact, I spoke to a retired Sri Lankan senior army officer who went on a rant about Zero Dark Thirty and said he had been dragged along to see this film and was absolutely disgusted by it. And obviously for moral reasons, but also because he said, "It just conveys a completely wrong image,

that you get reliable information through torture". And he was the head of interrogations at one stage in his career.

The other thing that has come out in our research is that there's an assumption that people torture to get truth or information. Often when you speak to police or army officers, that's what they'll say. But when you dig a little deeper it has nothing to do with them having any particularly useful information.

I think we need to unpack why torture happens. There's actually a lot of diversity in why people use torture or use violence, whether or not they define it as torture. Unless we do that we're not going to get any closer to preventing it.

Richard Ackland: If you put people in inhumane conditions, in God-forsaken places, and subject them to mental, psychological, emotional and physical stress as a deterrent, I just wonder if under the formal definitions

at least, it gets pretty close to torture?

Jorge Aroche: It's important to look at torture as what it really is and Ignacio Martín-Baró coined the term some 30-something years ago, before he was killed in El Salvador, torture is essentially a tool of social control. You torture so you can frighten the rest of the population into continuing to accept minor violations of human rights, which are tied up to maintaining the privileges of different groups.

Placing people in detention centres was introduced as a deterrent and it's using the same strategy. It's saying this is bad, and we want you to take this pathway instead of the other one. The other side of that argument is that we also need to be careful about what we call torture because we could end up calling any human-rights violation torture. And the problem with that is that there are a lot of violations of human rights which are wrong but they don't constitute torture. But if we call everything torture then we have nothing to use as a label for those sorts of things which are the very thought-out, intentional damaging of people that constitutes torture.

Kiran Grewal: The project I'm working on is in torture prevention. Torture is the continuum of all of those little violations that make it possible in extreme situations to perpetrate these extreme acts. So it's because it has become normalised that police will give a street kid a few slaps. Then you can increase the violence, when this kid is associated with an insurgent movement, well, then you can do something worse to him.

Looking at Sri Lanka, it's easy to focus on the extreme cases of torture associated with the ethnic conflict. What nobody else is paying attention to is two teenage boys being beaten up to the point where their internal organs fail because they stole a bunch of bananas. Those everyday cases are what make it possible for a government regime to sanction white vans with secret police.

Jorge Aroche: The fact that people can be beaten and tortured, are the things that instil fear in the population that then enables people to accept the couple of slaps and all of the other human-rights violations that then keep a political system that is uneven in place and in power.

Richard Ackland: Kiran, are you saying that it's really hard to address issues around prevention because there's no clear understanding of what torture is or where the parameters are?

Kiran Grewal: I would say yes. There may be agreement amongst lawyers, but there isn't agreement amongst other

people about where that line is. I haven't yet come across a person who says, "Oh yeah, I think torture's fine". Everybody will say, "Absolutely, torture is wrong" it's just where they put particular acts on that spectrum. That is it. However we want to make it very clear and black and white. Nobody in Sri Lanka's told me that they thought waterboarding was okay, but there are a lot of very blurry things on the spectrum. For us to be able to prevent torture we need to first have the conversation and build consensus with people about why those violent acts that they don't necessarily classify as torture are also wrong.

Richard Ackland: Do you think that's possible Jorge, to build that sort of consensus in very damaged and dysfunctional sorts of societies?

Jorge Aroche: I think it's part of the process of society-building. I think it's circular, because these things support each other in a sense. I don't know whether it's possible. It's heartening to see that in Latin America where torture used to be part of the system it is not longer as prevalent. There's no institutionalised torture as was the case 30 years ago. But there are still human-rights violations in jails. And the fact that torture is wrong, and is probably at the extreme end of what's wrong in terms of violations of human rights, it doesn't make other lesser violations right. And this is where the issue about the definition of torture comes in.

The other aspect of this, which is at the heart of this, is impunity and the importance of ensuring justice prevails and that torture and other human-rights violations are both acknowledged, and also prosecuted.

Richard Ackland: One of the things we least expect out of all of this is that so-called civilised, advanced western societies also engage in torture. And we're waiting for the release of the American Senate Intelligence Committee's findings about the CIA's record of torture in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and black-hole prisons and so on. So it is amazing that very advanced, sophisticated societies indulge in this and maybe even including Australia which, of course, stood by and watched torture officially being conducted against detainees that had been sent to Egypt and then subsequently one of them sent to Guantanamo Bay.

So does that surprise, amaze you?

Edward Santow: Yes it does. In the UN in Geneva or New York, it is easy to reach agreement on what is permissible and not, especially in armed conflict. It's much harder when you're actually in a conflict. While Australia was part of a coalition with the United States in the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan it took a different legal view on what was permissible in relation

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to the treatment of detainees than the US did. It led to what was a whole range of terrible outcomes. Australia had a relatively senior military officer in Cell Block 1a of Abu Ghraib, the most notorious part of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. He was advising the US and the Australian militaries on "enhanced interrogation" techniques that were later found to be torture. He was party to keeping secret from the International Committee of the Red Cross certain detainees on Cell Block 1a. These were activities that we would never say are part of the Australian ethos.

We, as a country, committed to a conflict and to being part of an alliance in that conflict, as a result we were confronted with difficult, ethical and legal

problems. And I would say - and this is just my personal view – that at times we didn't live up to our values. And that is one of the biggest challenges in war to live up to our ethical and legal principles when we're under the greatest stress.

Richard Ackland: So what happened to this military officer? Was there any subsequent follow-up on him?

Edward Santow: Yes, he was investigated and promoted.

Richard Ackland: There's been a very big debate in America following the war in Iraq particularly about how this has affected traditional American values. The values of freedom and fairness are all dramatically undermined by tearing up the rule book on the law of war. So to some extent there's been that discussion in America, but I

suspect not so much here because maybe we weren't so much part of it.

Edward Santow: And we haven't had an investigation as in the US and the UK. What I would concede is this: that at some level we, as humans, are willing to engage in a quite bizarre paradox. Some horrific forms of torture are considered to be completely unlawful. And yet, shooting someone on the battlefield in the head is lawful. In fact it could get you a whole series of medals and accolades and so on. I recognise it is a very strange paradox that we are willing to accept, and we have to think about how did we get ourselves in that position.

There have been many such conflicts since humankind began, but particularly the Second World War and the true horrors of that conflict made us, as a civilisation, stop, think and crystallise a number of the principles that many of us innately feel are important and are documented in legal documents, most particularly the Geneva Conventions. And those are not left-wing hippy documents at all. They are very much the bare minimum standards that combatants have to comply with if they're going to engage in war.

torture prevention, and what tends to work and what

Kiran Grewal: To go back to what Ed was saying, one

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different groups."

of the things that doesn't work is telling military or police officers, "You should not torture people, it's against international law". Their response is either they agree with that, but can't manage to separate torture from what they do in their day-to-day work; or they think, "Well, it's all very well, you have this luxury of talking in the abstract, and we're dealing with the real life here". Or they may say, "Fine, we shouldn't do it. What should we do then?"

And so what we've been trying

spend a lot of time lecturing on what people shouldn't do and spend a lot of time developing the skills of what they should do, so they have very strong training.

In Nepal where you have a lot of foreign donors, you have UN intervention, human-rights organisations, there is lots of training done on torture prevention based on saying, "You should not torture. Torture is wrong." They still walk out of the room saying, "Okay, what then should I have done in this particular situation?" So what we've been trying to get them to think about is, "What are things that you currently do even in difficult situations that work, where you don't resort to torture?"

And quite often they do have strategies for doing their job and still follow human-rights principles. And

Richard Ackland: I just want to ask Kiran first about tends not to work?

to work out is how do you give people the skills to do their job while abiding by human-rights principles? At the moment there's still this tension that suggests that militaries seem to have a pretty good track record on this - bearing in mind that almost all militaries at some stage or another have been implicated. But the militaries that have the best systems tend to be the ones that don't

> **Jorge Aroche:** A very important point because we are having more torture perpetrated by non-government actors, basically by powers that are not in actual

it's a very different situation.

least you can actually think.

Richard Ackland: So this is Sri Lanka?

government. And that happens within organised crime, for example in Mexico there are horrific things happening, particularly in the north of Mexico in the context of drug cartels and so on. We have situations in the context of civil war where the government is using torture, but also torture is used by the other side. I suppose we've got a lot more access to government, even though that is very restricted. And what makes this happen is the cyclical nature. By governments

what we're trying to do is get the guys who already have those strategies at an individual level, to document them

and use those as tools to teach other people,

so that those who aren't as creative can actually be trained

to do it better and not fall into that gap where they

Richard Ackland: You can approach this officially with

government agencies and authorities. Are they receptive

Kiran Grewal: They have been. I don't want to sound

completely Polyannaish. But it's been really interesting

that when we have done a session with armed forces on

torture prevention that hasn't been around international

law, we have started talking about their values, what

they think is important, what is difficult about their jobs

and, in a practical situation, how have they dealt with

that. It's amazing the things that come out of them, the

creative solutions. I also end up in crazy situations where

I have guys asking me for practical advice and I have to

say to them, "I've never actually been in a battle so I

wouldn't know what you'd do in that situation". But at

Kiran Grewal: And Nepal. If you move away from just

doing the talk about international law – and that's not

to take away the value of it, and you talk to these guys

so that they do things differently, just by lecturing them

Richard Ackland: And is it different? It seems to me

a very different situation when governments sanction

torture because you may be able to change that over

time, but when it's non-government sanctioned torture

on the Convention is not going to get you there.

to your approach on that retraining model?

Richard Ackland: That's really encouraging.

Kiran Grewal: Yes.

think, "Don't know what else to do, I'll beat him up".

condoning torture, they're also making it possible for the non-governments to use torture and they also use torture if they become governments. And we can see this spiral in a whole lot of places.

During torture what happens is dehumanisation of the victims and a polarisation. Victims are seen as different, as the enemy and as an object of terror. Therefore you need to give people skills and strategies so as to prevent it. And punishment still has a place in that context. Torture should be punished. It is a crime and it should be punishable both by domestic and international law. That plays a very important role on the other side of the equation because for people who have been victims of torture, who have survived torture. justice is crucial to their healing.

Richard Ackland: Okay, thank you everyone for the discussion. At this point we'll throw it open to everyone here if they have some questions for the panel.

Audience: I want to know the impact for the torturer? We've talked a lot about the experience of the victim, but would there be psychological impacts for the torturer as well and how would that help with prevention, addressing that impact?

Jorge Aroche: There's actually not that much research that's been done on this subject, presumably because torturers don't like to participate in research studies and confess what they have done. However, a psychiatrist in Uruguay conducted a study based on a small sample group of about 20 people who had used torture that he saw in the context of his psychiatric practice within the public health system. And what he found is that they tended to fall into two groups, one group presented mostly with depressive-type symptoms and another with paranoid-type symptoms.

The depressive group seemed to be associated with the people that had been forced into torture. If you unpack how torture happens in a regime, there are those that participate in it because they really believe in the ideas and the ideology of the regime. This group tended to present with paranoid-type symptoms and were highly anxious and paranoid. Many people that engage in torture do it because if they don't do it they may be tortured themselves. They're part of a structure that's geared around protecting those perpetrating torture and making sure that nothing leaks out of that system. And those were the people who tended to present mostly with depressive symptoms, suicide attempts and

Audience: I wonder on the definition of torture and how we relate it to state and non-state actors. The person

DIFFICULT THINGS HAPPEN REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29

who tortures at work as a military officer, surely there is some link to domestic-based violence and the violence that happens in the society? Are we siloing it to the extent that we can talk about torture because it's containable, but where does that stop and from the violence in society as well and what's condoned?

Kiran Grewal: There have been a couple of studies done of Greek torturers under the military junta, and there's also been studies of people who were involved in the Brazilian death squads. And in both they found that those who committed really horrendous acts of violence were themselves, through their training, subjected to many of those very same practices of violence. And we found the same thing in the studies done in Sri Lanka and Nepal, where torturers had quite often been subjected to many of the same dehumanisation processes. So their sensitivity to violence is completely different to my sensitivity, having never been exposed to that kind of violence. And then the fallout from that is, of course, they take that back into their homes.

So there's an organisation in Sri Lanka that does work on the rehabilitation of trauma survivors and they were saying they get incredible numbers of either military personnel or family members of military personnel contacting them for help. There are incredible levels of trauma being experienced by individual officers, but that also feeds back into domestic conflict.

Audience: Just in regards to teaching would-be torturers alternative tactics that would help them do their jobs better. In the cases where torture is a form of social control what would you recommend?

Kiran Grewal: Police officers say, "The reason that we beat people is because we don't have any other skills to conduct interrogations or do investigations". Yes, you can give them skills, but in a society where street kids or people from lower castes or particular ethnic groups are considered completely expendable, even if people have other skills, they're not going to bother to use them. You also need to change their attitudes about the value of that person.

Human rights are based on an idea of the inherent equality and dignity of every human being, but many societies don't actually believe that. People will say, "Yes, torture is wrong because it's against the dignity of people". But I've been in a workshop where the army officers said, "Well, obviously Dr Kiran couldn't be tortured because she's very dignified and that would be terrible, but a village woman, she doesn't have any dignity anyway so what difference does it make?"

So that kind of value and attitude change also needs to go alongside the skills training, and obviously regime change, but we're not really in a position to achieve that.

Audience: I would like to point out about systematic torture. Torturers need to be punished.

Jorge Aroche: Absolutely, without punishment and justice, torture continues. This was the problem, for example, with the Truth & Reconciliation Program in South Africa which actually, in many cases, damaged the survivors because victims were forced to attend a court hearing where they heard what a torturer did to their family, to people who later died or had their life destroyed, and the perpetrators just said 'sorry'. In these cases all it does is bring the trauma back and leaves you even more powerless than before and therefore can be quite destructive. At the same time, having that process in place is better than not going through any process at all.

The root of torture and all the other human-rights violations is extreme inequality. The more extreme is the inequality in a society, the harsher must be the message for the people at the top to keep that privilege. And in a sense, we will eradicate torture when we achieve equality. There are a whole lot of other rights that are also being violated (the right to health, education) in societies where torture exists, and the rights to security and safety and so on are also being violated.

Audience: I just had a question in regards to the Torture Prevention Project. Is there a program to empower the onlookers that witness incidents of torture?

Kiran Grewal: Human-rights organisations have tried to build that space by monitoring detention centres. We've been working with individual mid-level officers to look at tools they can develop for that. So, for example, the Victorian Police developed a little booklet called Words that Work which aimed at your average police officer in Victoria. The book says: "If you're faced with a situation where you see a colleague doing something illegal or engaging in corruption or whatever, what are ways in which you might be able to strategically intervene?" These organisations are quite often run on the basis that I can trust that you've got my back. So there's no incentive at all for people to speak out and, in fact, there is every pressure on them to keep quiet.

We used that booklet, adapted it and translated it into Sinhala to give to Sri Lankan police, and we're trialling that at the moment to see whether or not they find it useful and to see ways in which we can tweak it more. We will also try something similar in Nepal. But obviously things like whistle-blower protection would be another way in which you could enhance the possibility of bystanders coming forward. Unfortunately at the moment there is no protection at all for whistle-blowers

in either of the countries we're working in.

There is an Israeli psychological study about quite severe human-rights violations and what they found was that there's a sort of bell curve of people. There are the sadists on one side, who you can't do anything about. There are the really good people, who will be completely unswayed by anything, and then there are all of the others in the middle. So using that research we're not going to be able to influence those who are absolutely determined to use violence. We may not even be able to deal with those who are easily swayed towards violence. We're trying to target those who will be influenced by whatever the culture is

of that particular unit where they work. We've been thinking of doing something with the immediate command structure as well.

The police and army culture is set by the officer in charge of the group of officers. It's not set by the senior officer, or by someone sitting in headquarters; it's by the officer in charge of the particular unit or police station. And so our intervention has been very much at that level, trying to work with them to set the standards.

Audience: My question is, since you are talking about policemen and the army, what about the militia? In different countries there are militias who are also torturing the population.

Mohamed Dukuly: In our groups participants tell us that one of the challenges to their survival or healing process is impunity. People who tortured them either became government officials, pastors or work

in industry and nothing happens to them. Seeing injustice triggers more pain to survivors than the actual torture.

Audience: Just picking up on that last comment from Mohamed, the topics for tonight is how do we prevent torture? It seems like we haven't really addressed what the Australian government might do. Surely there is a role here for government to stand up?

Edward Santow: We know that in a situation of impunity you have truly horrific things that perpetuate and metastasise and get worse and worse. I've got to say that to allow a situation of impunity to perpetuate is the most sure-fire way of ensuring that that situation gets worse and worse.

It's a terrible irony. If any of us went outside, down to Broadway, now and committed an assault or, God forbid, a murder, there's a very high probability that we would eventually be arrested and charged and brought to justice. However, if you committed 1,000 assaults or 1,000 murders or 10,000 assaults or 10,000 murders, the chances are – I'm just talking statistically – you'll get away with it and you may still be the President of whatever country you come from.

Now, that's a situation that applies in Sri Lanka and many other countries, but it's allowed to continue when the international community, through a combination of

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embar-rassment and fairly base geopolitical and geo-economic concerns, decides not to stand up to regimes that carry out this sort of behaviour. What we saw in March at the UN in Geneva was the international community, by a very small margin, asking in relation to Sri Lanka: "What took place, particularly in 2008/9, does this constitute war crimes?" So there has been a formal investigation by the High Commission of Human Rights. I think that's a positive step but when you look at the international community, they were supremely divided on that and this I've got to say is pretty disappointing.

Kiran Grewal: Can I just say also, one thing in terms of what governments can do, last year there were a number of situations where senior Nepali military officers were either supposed to go on UN peace-keeping missions, doing international training, doing nice junkets overseas,

but had their visas refused. They weren't allowed to go as funding was withdrawn. And that I have to say has sent some real shockwaves through the senior ranks in Nepal, so there has been a complete reluctance at the senior levels of government and armed forces to do anything about the violations permitted during the war. No amount of international censuring makes a difference, but where it did start to hurt them was when they actually saw their own career progression and their own nice trips overseas being impacted.

So that's definitely something that we, who live in a country that people are trying to get visas to come to, can do. Let's actually start refusing the visas of the people who shouldn't be coming to our country and start giving visas to those who we should be looking after. R

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South Sudan

South Sudan is crumbling back to its dark past where war and famine ruled. Political squabbling between the two main leaders has triggered another conflict that has divided the nation along ethnic lines.

OLGA YOLDI writes.

And the making of a new nation

outh Sudan, the world's youngest country, celebrated its third birthday last July, as it faced famine and imminent catastrophe. The hope and optimism that had marked its independence from Sudan in 2011 has been lost and the dream of a better life has evaporated.

The fighting was triggered last December when president Salva Kiir and the vice-president Riek Machar of the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), fell out. What started as a political dispute, where Kiir accused Machar of an attempted coup, soon turned into a bloody civil war between the Dinka-speaking tribes and the Nuer tribes.

Since then battles between government troops, mutinous soldiers and ragtag militia forces have been raging in the capital and have spread to seven of South Sudan's 10 regions.

This was not something that was anticipated, following decades of war between the SPLM and the government of Sudan that left two million dead and 4.4 million internally displaced and destroyed South Sudan's economy and social fabric.

The Sudanese government's divide-and-rule approach throughout decades of war meant that South Sudan's major ethnic groups spent decades fighting one another. These tensions were not resolved with independence and have now emerged with full force.

It is now estimated that at least 10,000 people have been killed and 710,600 have fled their homes in search of safety, including 171,000 children.

The UN has authorised a significant increase in peace keeping troops and it is hosting peace negotiations in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. But so far these initiatives have failed to stop the violence. "In a land where unchecked weaponry is ubiquitous, youth unemployment overwhelming, military discipline fractured, this crisis has the potential to tear the fledging nation apart," writes Rebecca Hamilton from the Pulitzer Centre on Crisis Reporting.

Hamilton attributes the crisis to leadership problems, "the SPLM chaired by Kiir has had to grapple with a curse common to successful liberation causes, dictatorial leadership strategies that helped the SPLM appear united in its fight for independence are ill-suited to democratic governance," she writes. "The result is that South Sudan is a multi-party state in name only, with all meaningful positions of power held by members of the SPLM."

Expectations that life would improve after independence have not been realised. The government

has failed to provide nation building, basic services, infrastructure, education, economic development and jobs. So the South Sudanese people are now economically worse off than they were before 2011 and feel let down by their politicians.

But internationally this is a largely forgotten crisis, overshadowed by wars in other parts of the world, such as Syria, Gaza, Iraq and Ukraine, and aid agencies have said they find it difficult to raise the funds that are desperately needed for South Sudan despite the deepening crisis and imminent famine.

he region has been deeply troubled since 1956 when Sudan gained its independence from Britain. It became Africa's largest nation and perhaps one of the most ethnically diverse and complex. The south is tropical, resource rich and populated by black Africans, mostly of Christian and animist faith, while the north is primarily Muslim of mixed African and Arab blood. Aware of these complexities the British administered the two areas separately, but when they left they lumped them both together.

The new regime in Khartoum, its capital, discriminated against the south and decades of civil war followed. Sudan was locked in a conflict over ethnic and religious identity, and the south's resources: water, land and oil. This was a war waged by men wandering across the wastes of Africa, armed with spears and Kalashnikovs fighting for survival and a fundamentalist government who insisted on extending their power over a rebellious south. The conflict looked like it would never end and turned South Sudan into a disaster area.

In 1989, General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir seized power in a military coup and carried out a vicious fight against the south. Following independence from Sudan, he has continued to claim the south's resources and meddle in the independent state.

South Sudan is now a wasteland and the newlyelected government faces many challenges. Nation building will take years since it has one of the world's weakest and most underdeveloped economies, with little or no infrastructure (only 35 miles of paved roads).

The country is the size of France, with an estimated population of 8.3 million and more than half of the population living under the poverty line. It has an infant mortality rate of 10 percent and the world's highest incidence of maternal death. According to reports, most citizens live on less than \$1 a day and seven out of 10 are illiterate. The economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and oil is the main source of government revenue.

It has however great economic potential due to its natural resources. It contains deposits of iron ore, copper, chromium ore, zinc, tungsten, mica, silverand gold as well as hydropower. It also has much fertile land and the largest population of pastoralists in the world, according to the World Bank.

Oil production however is expected to reduce steadily in future years and to become negligible by 2035. Since 1999, agricultural production has declined. According to the FAO, only 4.5 percent of the available land is under cultivation. South Sudan relies on food imports from neighbouring countries, which raises the cost and contributes to food shortages.

Prior to independence, South Sudan produced 85 percent of Sudanese oil output. But after independence, the oil revenues, according to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, were to be divided equally between Sudan and South Sudan for the duration of the Agreement period.

Since South Sudan depends on the infrastructure of Sudan (pipelines and refineries and port facilities) the Agreement stated that the government in Khartoum would receive a 50 percent share of the oil revenues. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the South Sudanese government has received more than \$8 billion since the signing of the Agreement.

The potential for economic development has been deeply thwarted by corruption. Last July, Kiir sent a letter to government officials in which he calculated that \$4 billion in public funds had been misappropriated. "We fought for freedom, justice and equality," he wrote. "Yet once we got power we forgot what we fought for and began to enrich ourselves at the expense of our people."

The pipelines that carry oil north to the Red Sea for export all run through Sudan, the Sudanese government in Khartoum demanded an exorbitant transfer fee of \$36 for each barrel the south wished to pump through its territory, South Sudan offered a dollar –close to the standard international rate –and al-Bashir retaliated by seizing nearly \$1 billion worth of oil.

When South Sudan announced it was cutting off the supply, Khartoum sent war planes to bomb oil fields across the border. For some time South Sudan kept the oil supply shut off, depriving both countries of most of their revenue. Al-Bashir who had been paying subsidies to the Sudanese population, had to stop the subsidies and in June street protests arose in the capital Khartoum.

South Sudan had to implement austerity measures so all development was put on hold and poverty grew. The World Bank warned the shutdown would cause a collapse in the economy; in the end it did survive but

the government had to use some of its reserves and seek loans to cover costs.

According to press reports, China, the largest investor in South Sudan, has offered an external line of credit for several years while an alternative pipeline to the Kenyan coast is laid and an export deal is worked out with the Kenyan government.

Since independence, al-Bashir has been fighting the South Sudanese border states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, which have been subjected to ground assaults and bombardments by Sudanese government airplanes. The Sudan People's Liberation Army or (SPLA–North) is fighting the battles with little support from the South Sudanese government.

The economic co-dependency of north and south Sudan continues to be fraught with as many problems as before independence, as Carol Berger, a Canadian

anthropologist who has worked in Sudan told the New Yorker, "These two nations are locked in a deadly embrace. They had their divorce but they have to continue sharing a bed."

There is no doubt that al-Bashir wants an unstable south. According to the Small Arms Survey research report, he has been selling guns to the South Sudanese government and Sudanese intelligence has airdropped arms to non-state armed groups, Machar's rebels. "By arming both sides, Sudan continues their policy of destabilisation of the South," says Jonah Leff, director of

operations at Conflict Armament Research, an organisation that tracks weapons in conflict zones, according to VICE News.

Not only Sudan, but China has also been selling guns to the South Sudanese government, which according to VICE News spent more than \$1 billion in arms and weapons systems. "A striking figure, given that decades of war had already left South Sudan flooded with weapons."

The Small Arms Survey project has called for a UN Security Council arms embargo which would restrict all countries from transferring arms to South Sudan.

The UN Security Council has warned warring leaders that they will face sanctions and other consequences if the violence does not come to an end. "We will not tolerate violation of the cessation of hostilities and people who spoil the peace agreement," UN chief Samantha Power told reporters. "We have delivered the message here, we will deliver it to Riek Machar," she said.

So far talks have delivered little of substance. According to press reports, the rebel faction loyal to Machar has been criticised for delaying the peace talks and for numerous violations of the ceasefire agreement signed in January. They say they are unhappy that the deal brokered by regional body IGAG allows President Kiir to continue in power throughout the proposed two-and-a-half year transitional period.

A cease fire is desperately needed before a humanitarian catastrophe engulfs the whole country.

An estimated 500,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries while one million are internally displaced, living out in the open in increasingly worsening conditions as the rainy season begins. Cholera outbreaks have been confirmed in Juba and two states.

According to Unicef, if the war continues four million face food insecurity and even famine. The UN

has said that the food crisis is the worst in the world, with aid workers warning of famine within the next few weeks.

Unfortunately it is the civilians who are suffering and will continue to suffer. The fighting is damaging all aspects of life. It is creating a new generation of fighters, orphans and refugees. South Sudanese have demonstrated their capacity for survival and the ability to rise above their politicians' failures but have never experienced having a government protecting their interests and most young people have known

Salva Kiir

"Yet once we got

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nothing but war.

Building a new South Sudan will not be easy. As for the international community, if their objective is to prevent a similar crisis in the future, those with influence over South Sudan need to convince the leaders to engage in the task of ethnic reconciliation, reform the entire structure of governance, create a space for a viable multiparty democracy, inclusive of most ethnic groups and most importantly focus their attention in developing the economy. But nothing constructive can happen while the fighting goes on.

The government should perhaps have listened to the former SPLA rebel leader, John Garang who died in 2005 and dreamed of a democratic Sudan, "Let's build a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society... Let's transform the military power into political power... Let's take the towns to the people, bring representation, develop services in the rural areas where people live". The oil revenue should have achieved that. R

REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29 SOUTH SUDAN AND THE MAKING OF A NEW NATION







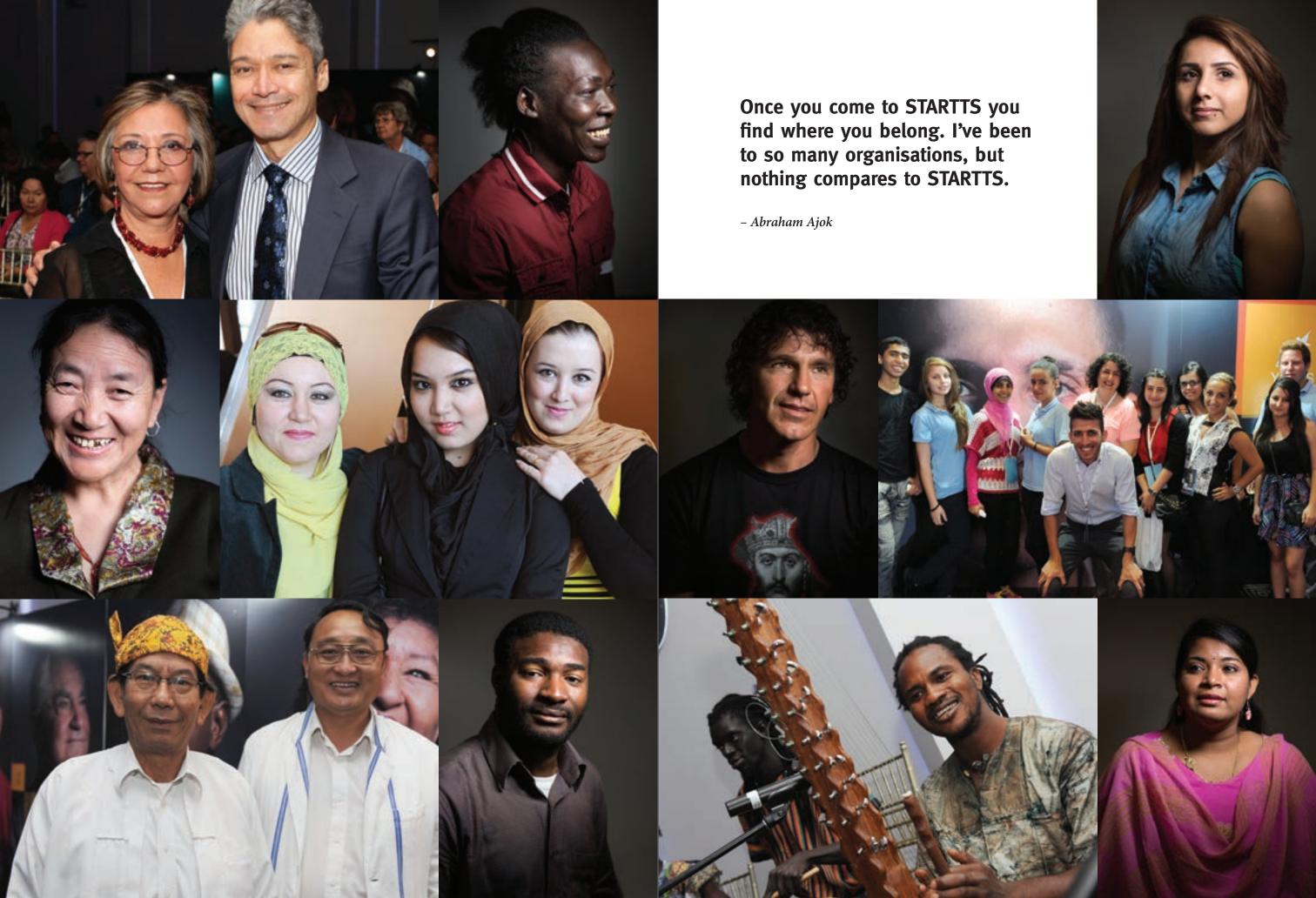
HEALTH

Reflections 25th from the 25th Anniversary

he year 2013 was a very special one for STARTTS as we celebrated 25 years of providing services to torture and trauma survivors. Over that time STARTTS has grown considerably to meet the needs of trauma survivors, with many new staff coming on board across all our Sydney and regional offices. We have continued to lead the way in new approaches to treatment of trauma and its effects on the brain, through training, community development and in many other ways. Our 25th year was so special

because it showed us how far we had come.

Almost 800 people gathered in Fairfield to celebrate our milestone on December 6 last year. Guided by our MC, SBS's Anton Enus, STARTTS staff, together with The NSW Governor Professor Marie Bashir, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, and other guests, spoke about all that we have achieved, the challenges yet to be faced and the people who inspire our work. *RICHARD WALKER* put together some of their reflections.



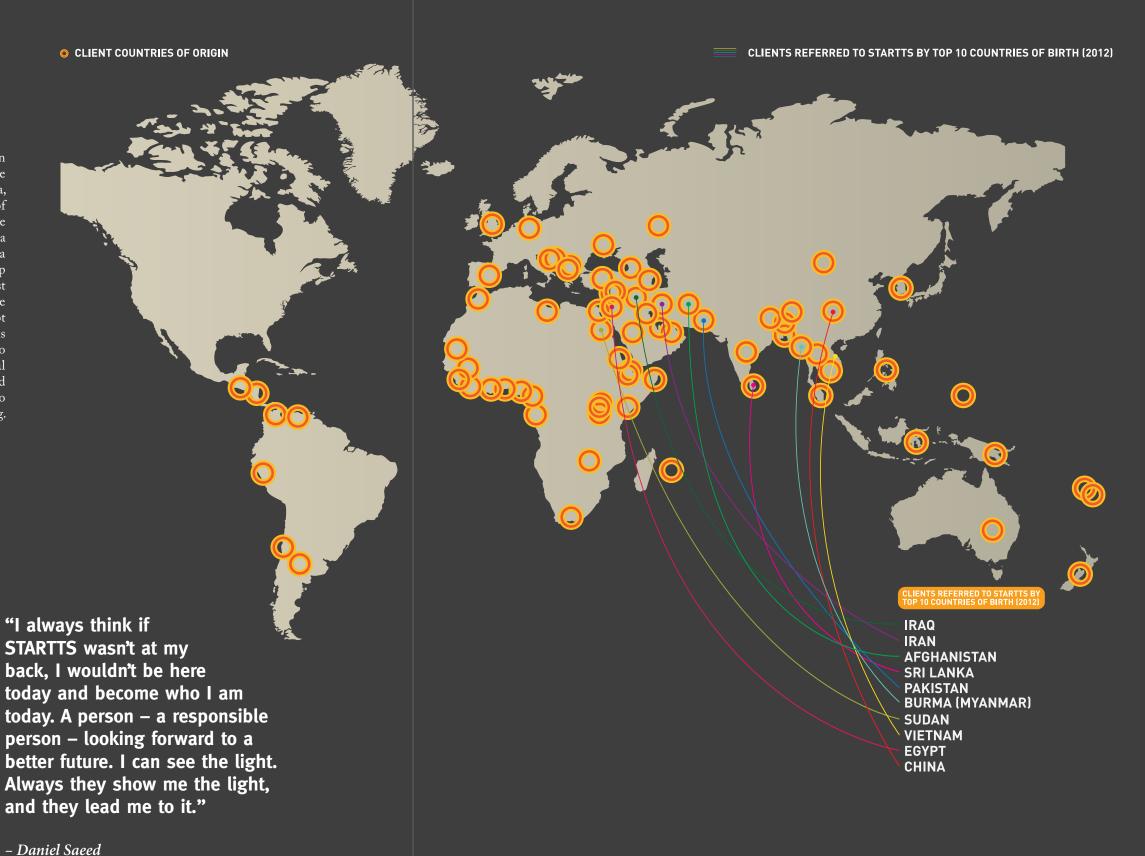
How did STARTTS come into existence?

Associate Professor Roger Gurr, Chairman of the STARTTS Board

In the 1970s and 1980s, Australia had been taking in increasing numbers of refugees, starting with people escaping right-wing military coups in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and the left-wing authoritarian regimes of Vietnam and Cambodia. As a psychiatrist and as the National President of Amnesty International in Australia at that time, I was fully aware of the torture and trauma that these people suffered and the urgent need to help with recovery. In my day job as a community psychiatrist in Blacktown, I was also aware that refugees were presenting to general health services which just did not know what to do with them, how to help them, and this was becoming a problem that management needed to solve. Professor Janice Reid, who is a medical anthropologist, wrote a report on the needs of traumatised refugees. Her persuasive report helped our campaign to get bipartisan political support and government funding.



PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY



PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi.

"You've taught us that regaining health after torture is only the beginning. That the real results of our work can be best seen in your thriving families, in the contribution you make day by day to our society, and in the certainty of a brighter future that can be seen in the faces of your children."

- Jorge Aroche

Why is STARTTS needed?

Jorge Aroche, STARTTS CEO

Our job, our mission, goes beyond helping people overcome specific symptoms; it involves empowering them to regain control of their internal resources, to reclaim their lives and their future, and to transform horror into hope.

Torture and trauma services are an essential service for a country with a refugee program, not just because rehabilitation after torture is the right and humane thing to do, or because Article 14 of the Convention says we should, but because assisting people who have been affected by torture and refugee trauma to regain their capacity to live up to their potential and contribute fully to our society represents one of the cleverest and longer sighted investments we can make in our nation.

Professor Roger Gurr

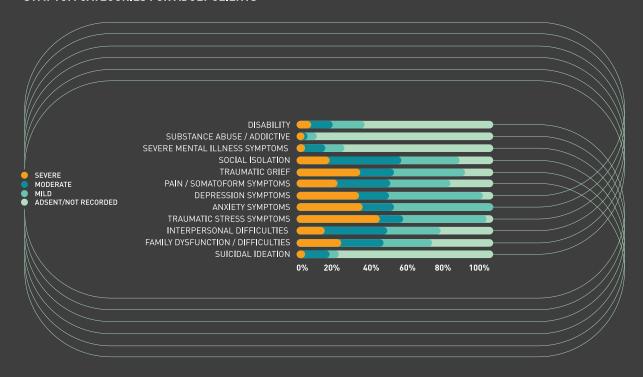
Our focus has always been on the health needs of the people who are already here, to help them to achieve recovery, to become socially included and productive citizens for current and future generations. We know that just coming to the lucky country is not enough. Having gone through multiple traumas, losses and grief, people do need assistance to settle into our environment, our culture and our social systems. We have learnt that it is usually only after the essentials, of adequate income, a stable home, and completion of education or obtaining a job, are in place that the psychological and physical scars of violent conflict, torture and other traumas rise to the surface.

Dr Jose Quiroga

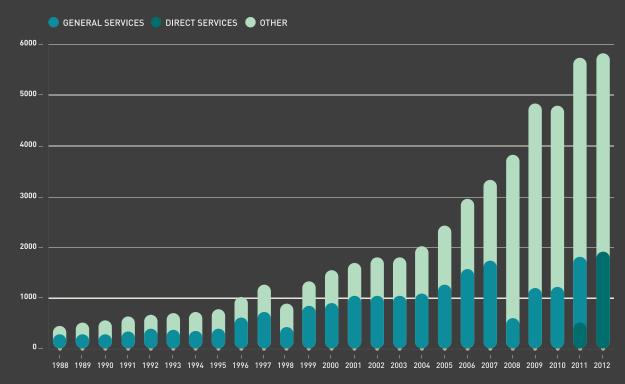
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The aim of torture rehabilitation has really been to empower torture survivors, to help them integrate terrible traumatic experience into their lives and be a productive member of society. Working with them is difficult because the principal problem that the torture survivors have, from the psychological point of view, is that they don't believe in human beings. How are they going to believe in them after this terrible experience? The work of all of us is that we are a bridge between them and the rest of the human beings, and this is the work that we have to do, integrate them in this situation.

SYMPTOM CATEGORIES FOR ADULT CLIENTS



NUMBER OF STARTTS CLIENTS BY PROGRAM AREAS



REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS 13,750-20,000 NATIONAL INTAKE, 5000-7000 NSW Per Annum

OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS STARTTS HAS HELPED 32,757 PEOPLE OVERCOME THE EFFECTS OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA.

|++++++++ 1=50

EXTREMELY DIVERSE, LINGUISTICALLY (>60 LANGUAGE GROUPS), CULTURALLY AND EXPERIENTIALLY AND CONSTANTLY CHANGING



HIGH LEVELS OF TRAUMA IN A CONTEXT OF ORGANISED VIOLENCE & WAR WITHOUT ACCESS TO JUSTICE



VULNERABLE TO ACQUIRED HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS

COMPLEX PRESENTATIONS (SIGNIFICANT LOSSES AND MULTIPLE TRAUMATIC EVENTS ARE COMMON).

What impact has STARTTS had?

John Feneley, NSW Mental Health Commissioner

STARTTS helps in the process of healing. Understanding a person's full history understanding their background, where they have come from and what they have been through is important. As is working with them to overcome and deal with those issues, and providing them with wraparound care in the community so they can live well and thrive. And of course, that's really what STARTTS is all about.

This is a wonderful example of the extraordinary power of community. It really is a tremendous example of just how rich and powerful this local community is and how much it appreciates and values the services that have been provided by STARTTS over all of these years. I would like to congratulate and recognise STARTTS because it has done a lot. It has shown leadership, it has been persistent, it has stayed with it, and it has provided the services, and of course, importantly, it has embraced and recognised the power and resilience of the community that it has around it.

Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

I recognise that organisations such as yours are particularly adept at tailoring your services to meet contemporary challenges whilst professionally managing a large case load. It is in the interests of all Australians that we work together in building a positive future for all. This future can only be achieved through mutual respect, cooperation and understanding.

"STARTTS has really been a very strong foundation for me. They helped me be me - the counselling helped me to be me, to be who I really am. Because when I came here I wasn't really myself."

- Bernadette Musu Bedell

Jorge Aroche, STARTTS CEO

When our job is done, the outcomes we see go well beyond the wellbeing of the individual we have assisted... they can be seen in the smiles and brighter future of their children, in their economic, social and cultural contribution to the community at large, and in the thousands of intangible ways in which lives well lived strengthen and vitalise the fabric of our society.

Ms Nurcan Kiyak (former client of STARTTS)

It was a wonderful group of people who had the knowledge and experience, understanding and empathy, love and care for people in difficulties. Their determination to make a positive change in my life was very obvious and then things started to be different in my life. My isolation was broken. I was not feeling lonely and lost quite as much as before. There was somebody caring for me, worrying for me, and I was feeling a sense of belonging to a group.

I started to share my painful experiences, sadness, as well as good memories and happiness. I started to share my dreams and wishes and started to make plans for the future. All this helped me build confidence, to stand up and to walk towards the future. I started to look for ways to find the light at the end of the tunnel.

"Survivors of torture and trauma do not have to be defined by their experiences. What STARTTS is about is giving hope to people who feel hopeless, who think they cannot do it. You can do it. You can keep going and achieve what you thought was unachievable."

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- Elisabeth

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Challenges and directions for the future

Jorge Aroche, STARTTS CEO

STARTTS has continued to explore new and more effective ways to address the impact of trauma at various levels, sometimes learning and adapting from work in other fields, other times developing new approaches in our own right. This creates at least two challenges; one is to develop the means to evaluate, research and document their effectiveness, and the other is to ensure that the valuable lessons learnt in this process make their way beyond STARTTS, and contribute to the work of similar services elsewhere, and even to the work in related fields of trauma both in Australia and beyond.

Another ongoing challenge is the impact of policy changes and the unfortunate political and media discourse that often goes with it. It affects people's lives and their process of recovery far more than most people realise, and it works against what Australia does really well; assisting people damaged by torture and other human-rights violations to overcome their problems and become contributing members of our society.

The last challenge I want to highlight today is one that arises out of the changes in the demographics of our client group. On the one hand, we have a younger client group, and while our services to children and young people have increased, there are still gaps, particularly in school settings which we know could make a big

difference to their ability to settle successfully and do well in life. The other is a reflection of the fact that Australia has had a refugee policy since 1977. Therefore, many people who arrived here as adults, have begun to reach an age where the impact of trauma interacts with age-related conditions, often creating complex presentations and much distress. This is a relatively uncharted area that requires more focus and resources.

The last 25 years have proven that challenges can not only be conquerable, but incredibly rewarding learning experiences. And STARTTS takes great pride in being a learning organisation.

Professor Roger Gurr

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Jorge spoke about the exciting developments in therapies and future potentials for these. The challenge is to find the resources to continue this development and to adapt them to other areas of complex trauma. We don't see ourselves just restricting what we do to torture and trauma as such; we have got lessons for the general trauma field.

A challenge for STARTTS is to resource the development of innovative training and of supervision methods and tools, because 25 years of experience has shown that health professionals find the work with traumatised refugees too difficult without extensive training, extensive supervision and personal support.

Final thoughts from our CEO

Jorge Aroche: Finally, I would like to convey a big thank you from all of us to the thousands of clients with whom we have had the privilege to work over the last 25 years, many of whom we continue to work with as friends, supporters, community leaders and volunteers. You've taught us that regaining health after torture is only the beginning. That the real results of our work can be best seen in your thriving families, in the contribution you make day by day to our society, and in the certainty of a brighter future that can be seen in the faces of your children. To help bring this about has been STARTTS' mission for the last 25 years and will continue to be so with you as our main source of inspiration.

"...assisting people who have been affected by torture and refugee trauma to regain their capacity to live up to their potential and contribute fully to our society represents one of the cleverest and longer sighted investments we can make in our nation."

– Jorge Aroche

HOW WE WORK A COMPLEX INTERACTION TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANISED VIOLENCE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT SOCIAL **BIO-PSYCHOSOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL** ENHANCE STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE **BIO-PSYCHOSOCIAL** SYSTEMIC MODEL BIO **PSYCHO SOCIAL**

RECOVERY

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY



O. Carly Ed

To help us celebrate our
Anniversary, STARTTS invited
MS NURCAN KIYAK, one of
our former clients, to speak about
her experiences. Her speech was
both moving and inspiring.

Good morning everybody. First, I want to thank STARTTS for inviting me today to speak about my experiences as a refugee. After many years it will be an opportunity to express my gratitude towards the people and services who have contributed greatly to my healing process after difficult refugee experiences.

When I was asked to do a presentation at the STARTTS 25 years celebration, I felt oh no, no. Public speaking is stressful, especially if it is about your personal experiences and in your second language. I told myself, "Nurcan, you have enough stress. Be smart and stay away from any extra burden". However, the other part of my heart said, "No, no, you should do it. You should do it to show the importance of STARTTS and other similar services for this particular group of people.

"You should do it for recognition of the importance of the contribution of service providers and you should do it to inspire people who are still suffering or are at the early stages of the healing process".

Before I begin, I would like to recognise the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today. I want also to recognise the people here today who have similar life experiences as mine.

Now, let's talk about me. As Anton mentioned during his introduction, I'm from Turkey. Turkey is a very

beautiful country with its climate, culture, history and so on. People in my country are very expressive, very dynamic. If they are not happy with administrators or implementation of any new legislation they quickly get together to voice their concerns and protest. I was raised in this environment and shaped similarly. I had been a political activist and participated in different movements to improve democratic standards and human rights in the country. My main focus was women and disadvantaged minority groups, religious and ethnic groups. I was active in the human-rights association in publishing a woman's magazine discussing the issues of Kurdish women.

As you know, opposition always has a price to pay. It was the same for me too. In several instances I had been taken into custody, experienced different forms of torture and put into gaol. During the last incident I suffered five broken bones. I wasn't able to walk and needed to have two operations. My husband was in prison. I was on conditional release for the duration of the treatment.

Then my husband was released, pending trial. We had an opportunity to escape many years imprisonment. We organised fake papers, including passports, to come to Australia. Australia wasn't our preference, it was the only option given to us by the man who organised our travel. Consequently, I started a new journey. After a long and difficult trip to arrive in Australia, we were put into the detention centre. It was a very disappointing start in the new country.

After being granted a visa to live in the community, we started to build a new life. They were very painful days. I was missing – oh no, I don't want to cry! I was missing my mum, my dad, my siblings. I was missing my workplace, my friends, and endless discussions and debates on different issues on the agenda at local and international levels. I was missing being loved. I was missing being cared for. Many more things I was missing. At this time, I wasn't able to speak English and I didn't meet many people who spoke my language. There were just a few job opportunities that I could apply for because of language barriers. Oh, my God! I was a mess. I was feeling lost in the cosmos. I was very isolated, very lonely. In addition to PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], I started to experience grief symptoms, such as a sense of emptiness, sleep and appetite disturbances, excessive activity to keep myself from thinking.

At this stage, I was very sad, constantly crying and I was asking myself why did I have to live here and why did I have to do the things I was doing? I was very angry, tired, anxious and irritated. I was aware that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, but I wasn't able to see

it or able to find a way to reach it.

One day, one of the teachers from my English class approached me. We started to talk about the issues I was having and she gave me some information about STARTTS and a pamphlet with the contact details. Shortly after, I made the first appointment with them. I started to see a counsellor from STARTTS. At the beginning, I was having difficulties in trusting someone because of my personal experiences, but in a short time she built a good rapport and communication between us. After initial assessment, my counsellor started to identify my broad range of needs to be addressed. They were welfare, employment, education, physical and mental-health issues, and so on. She started to provide counselling, as well as liaison and referral to relevant services.

A multi-disciplinary team was working with me. It was including, but not limited to, psychiatrist Angie, counsellors Cecelia and Julie, physiotherapist Sue, and lovely interpreter Gül. It was a wonderful group of people, who had the knowledge and experience, understanding and empathy, love and care, for people in difficulties. Their determination to make a positive change in my life was very obvious and then things started to be different in my life. My isolation was broken. I wasn't feeling lonely and lost quite as much as before. There was somebody caring for me, worrying for me, and I was having a sense of belonging to a group.

I started to share my painful experiences, sadness, as well as good memories and happiness. I started to share my dreams and wishes as I started to make plans for the future. All this helped me to build confidence, to stand up and to walk towards the future. I started to look for ways to find the light at the end of the tunnel. I started a course in community services at TAFE while I was working as a cleaner and then I completed study in social work at uni. I have been working in health at different positions for many years.

Currently I am working as a bilingual counsellor for multicultural problem-gambling services and running my private practice. I provide support for disadvantaged people, especially migrants and refugees, to make positive change in their lives. I would like to contribute more and more to the society in our new country. This is a way to give back as well as be a part of the healing process. Although I still miss the things I left back in my home country and grief is still in my life, I love my new country that provided a safe and free life for me and my family. If I didn't have contact with STARTTS I don't believe that I would have been as successful as I feel today. And many thanks to you guys, I will always remember you and your remarkable impact on my life. R

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

PHOTO: Fabio Lotti

KATHY CARLAN SNOWBALL is a writer and traveler that lives in Kenya and works with refugees. She writes about migration and the vast array of birdlife under the Asian-East African Flyway.

The Brilliant Birdlife of Kenya

'The desire to fly is an idea handed down to us by our ancestors who... looked enviously on the birds soaring freely through space... on the infinite highway of the air.'

- WILBUR WRIGHT

he Asian – East African Flyway is a group of migratory paths used by more than 300 species of birds. The flyway spans an impressive 64 countries from South Africa and Madagascar to Eastern Siberia and Alaska.

Birds migrate a circulatory route through North and East Africa, searching for lands to build their nests and raise their young. The epic journey spreads birds throughout the coastlines of Tanzania and Kenya, and many rest a while in the Kenyan highlands before continuing on their path. Some linger north throughout autumn while the days are longer than the nights.

In Kenya we see the birds midway through their long journey. The travellers draw thousands of visiting ornithologists who spend days tracking sandpipers and Basra reed-warblers through the highlands; mornings listening for the trill of the marsh warbler, and nights listening to the song of the thrush nightingales or the chattering of the nightjar through the forest.

These birdwatchers with their binoculars, khaki shirts and Guide to the Birds of East Africa tucked under an arm seem delighted. Itinerants themselves, tracking flight paths all over the globe in chase of endemics and rarities, they exclaim over the lovely lilac breasted rollers in the red desert park of Amboseli, the dusty landscape so like the desert regions of Australia. They 'catch' the ubiquitous herons stalking through the waterways of Nairobi, a twin scene that mirrors the mangrove waders of the northern New South Wales lakes.

Speckled mousebirds, lesser kestrels, and the impossibly intriguing honeyguides, who guide hunters to bee colonies for help with harvesting their honey.

But we could go on, we really could – Kenya is famous for her vast collection of beautiful birds. While I appreciate their song and their presence, their distinctiveness is slightly wasted on me. One eastern olive-sunbird looks remarkably similar to the green bee-eater, a huge kori bustard practically indistinguishable from the sulking old-world Egyptian vulture. Far more familiar to me are the seagulls and the pelicans of the coast. Pelicans, but not-quite-right, pelicans, not nestled as they are amidst hippopotamus.

As developers take advantage of economic stability in Kenya's capital Nairobi is growing skywards and we have watched the beautiful old jacaranda trees slowly disappear to make room for multistorey office blocks and monolithic apartment complexes. The birds have hardly disappeared though, just adapted. Massive marabou storks make the tree branches by the national stadium droop; and pick over the rubbish in the drains below. Eagles roosting outside my house by the river are spinning a nest with pieces purloined from the neighbouring construction site. They are a busy but silent pair, not like the waders who fly in for the afternoon, noisily feasting on the seeds my elderly Indian neighbour throws from his balcony and spreads across his rooftop.

Migration means becoming accustomed to many different things. For me, living in an apartment complex with six-foot walls, electric fencing and a permanent guard station has been a difficult, but necessary, adjustment. But as much as you adapt to new things, much stays the same. The new place becomes home and normalcy quickly settles. Socialising with people from similar backgrounds is the norm, you seek out familiar experiences, and discussions often centre on events or politics in your former home.

It was brought home to me how far from home I was when walking through a lush green tea plantation in the Aberdares, near Mount Kenya, the guide crushed a leaf in his hand, passed it to me, and when I held it to my nose I realised it was from a gum tree; the crackling brown leaves brought the scent of sharp eucalyptus. When I looked up my eyes sought what I swiftly realised wouldn't be there amongst the branches - the brown eyes of a kookaburra gazing down at me.

There are only sunbirds here, having flown down from the slopes of Mount Kenya. Impossibly agile, they hover on golden-tipped wings, green-throated and scarlet-chested. They have feathers of burnished blues

and orange plumage almost indistinguishable from the flowers that proliferate about the mountains of Kenya. They are beautiful, but a sunbird is not a rosella. And there they all are, calling this gum tree home like it's not miraculously halfway across the world.

The birdwatchers of Kenya wake you up to your displacement when they go hunting these miniature interlopers. Resting over chai on safari, they call for silence as they spy a collared lark. They drop their teaspoon and grab the camera, chase the departing flutter and leave you

pause teacup paused midway to your lips and experiencing the dawning feeling of dislocation and how not-home this home still is.

When nesting ends, the birds join the other departing populations in flying outwards for the season. I fly home for the holidays also, south to the sweltering heat, December mornings spent immersed in the wide blue

ocean and – best of all – the heart of stone-fruit season. It's also the season when the magpies have stopped swooping, and we can walk through the parks without fear of imminent attack.

There is much that leaves us interconnected with home, but the background sounds of home can't follow you, and you don't hear their absence until something quite foreign takes their place. Of course, particularly difficult when you come from a place famous for the unusual birdlife. There is nothing I have heard elsewhere that is as similar, or as

beautiful to me, as the rollicking call of the Kookaburra or the whip and crack call of the eastern whip bird through the bush.

When I'm at my mother's house by the southern beaches I'm wakened by the gentle dawn warbling of the magpie. Even the raucous cackle of the flocks of pink and grey galas is welcomed silently, by me. But my mother looks out apprehensively at her vegetable garden, as we drink tea from my grandmother's china. She keeps no fences around her herbs there though.

When I'm home again in Nairobi I wake to the sounds and the movements of the birds of East Africa by the river. Without glancing through my own copy of the

Guide my unworldliness regarding these birds extends to announcing all coloured birds as some variant of a sunbird, all waders surely herons. They are appreciated although being strangers to me, recognised enough as fellow travellers on this southnorth journey.

Not so long ago a friend and I took a motorbike trip north of Nairobi, giraffes lopping alongside the bike as we cruised. We rode through the Rift Valley, where the flight path leads birds onward towards the Mau Escarpment and beautiful Lake Nakuru. It's there where my favourite

of all the birds of Kenya lives.

I sent a photograph to a wildlife photographer friend, who told me her name. She's a tiny thing, the golden weaver. She builds her hanging nest with intricately woven strands of grass or palm leaf strips, wrapping up what's safe inside. The weavers form an elaborate community of these nests, clustered together throughout thorny branches.

They perch upside down in the doorways in the dusk, and sing down the sun to each other.

My photographer friend cautioned me that without exact geographic co-ordinates and an accurate description of her song it was impossible to distinguish whether she was an African, a Holub's or a Taveta, I'm not sure but both these birds seem to be African.

But perhaps the longitude and latitude, and the precise tone of melodies don't matter so much. When I wake up and see her in her woven nest, I want to paraphrase the

words of the author Eric Berne, maybe leave that in the safari guestbook for the birdwatchers, 'the moment one is concerned with which is a jay and which is a sparrow, one can no longer see the birds or hear them sing.'

Whoever she really is, she and I share Kenya as a temporary home, building our lives here with pieces collected from our travels. R



Superb Starling.

Indonesia's Asylum Hub

Much has been made of the boats arriving on Australian shores, and the fate of the people who make it this far. But to get to Australia many asylum seekers pass through Indonesia, where they face long waits, difficult circumstances and an uncertain future. Most end up in Cisarua, West Java. Documentary photographer DAVID MAURICE SMITH explored life in Indonesia's asylum hub.

he Australian government has taken a firm stance towards the boats targeting its shores, and while the boats may have stopped the global phenomena of persecution, torture and violence that lead to large-scale human displacement have not. An obvious question remains: what has become of the souls whose desperate and dangerous circumstances forced them to flee their homelands?

Nestled in the interior of West Java, Indonesia, the town of Cisarua has become a hub for asylum seekers from Asia, the Middle East and Africa desperate to find a new country to call home. In this mountainous region known for relentless rainfall, trauma acts as an unfortunate bond between desperate strangers from faraway places. They gather in small pockets of overcrowded dwellings, maintaining low profiles to avoid attracting antagonism from the locals. With no ability to work or study, theirs is a life in limbo, shadowed by their pasts and uncertain of their futures.

Initially asylum seekers from Iran and Iraq were attracted to the town by a local population who spoke



The Hoseinis, an extended family of 10 Hazara asylum seekers from Afghanistan, live together in a one-room apartment in Cisarua, Indonesia. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi



Mohammed – who is not comfortable showing his face – is a 33-year-old from Iraq. The day before this shot was taken he and his young family were informed the UNHCR had rejected their initial application for refugee status. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi

Arabic (Saudi men had historically travelled there for holidays focused on carnal pursuits). Sudanese, Eritrean, Somali, Afghan, Indian, Sri Lankan, Burmese and Pakistanis followed, lured by solidarity, affordability, cooler temperatures and a proximity to the UNHCR offices in Jakarta.

Many arrived with hopes of taking boats on the precarious journey to Australian waters, while others came with a more conservative plan to place their fate in the hands of the UNHCR process. Still others arrived with no clear strategy, having literally run for their lives in the dark of night.

UNHCR statistics estimate that in 2013 there were more than 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia, with many of them living in the Cisarua region. It is here that the heartbreaking human stories so common to asylum seekers can be easily heard.

After being detained and tortured by the Taliban for 48 hours (they were searching for a male relative who was a driver for the International Security Assistance Force), Hazara asylum seeker Hasan Hoseini gathered his family and fled their home in Afghanistan's Helmand province, paying a smuggler US\$72,000 dollars to get four adults and six children to Indonesia. Two months after they arrived in Jakarta the little money they had left was stolen by a thief who broke into the single-room apartment they all share. While they express gratitude to be safe

from the immediate threats they faced in Afghanistan, they have entirely new challenges to face. The thought of a life in Australia or elsewhere is distant, blurred by harsh reality.

The Hoseini family, like all asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia, have no access to humanitarian support (Jakarta did not sign the 1951 convention on refugees and does not acknowledge the rights of asylum seekers) and face an overworked UNHCR system that leaves many waiting years for interviews to determine their fate. Detention centres set up to accommodate their influx have reached capacity and stories abound of desperate individuals trying to bribe their way into the centres to ensure they are fed and receive basic medical treatment.

Some have escaped tragedy at home only to have it strike again. After fleeing indefinite compulsory military service well known for shocking human-rights abuses, Abraham (not his real name) walked for 67 days from his home in Eritrea to Khartoum, Sudan, where he hired a people smuggler with borrowed money to get he and his brother to Australia. On 27 September 2013 the boat they were on sunk, leaving 44 of the 72 asylum seekers on board dead, including his brother. He has since lost all contact with his parents, wife and three young children in Eritrea and assumes they have been taken by the government. In Cisarua he shares a tiny flat with three other Eritreans, pooling their savings in hopes of lasting



Abraham – not his real name – who walked for 67 days to flee indefinite compulsory military enlistment in Eritrea. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi

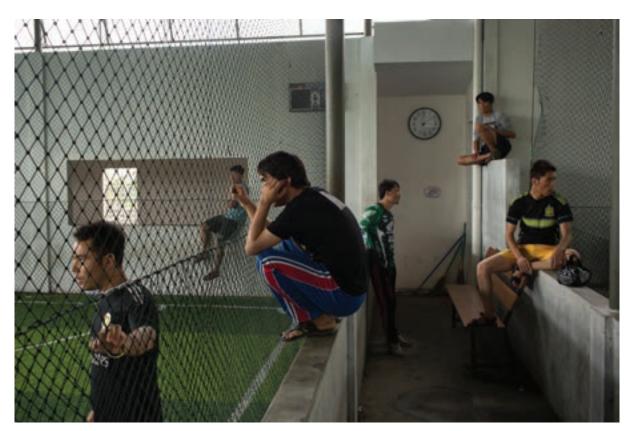


Adel Rahim from Khartoum, Sudan, shows the scars left by 27 months in prison after being detained as a political dissident. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi

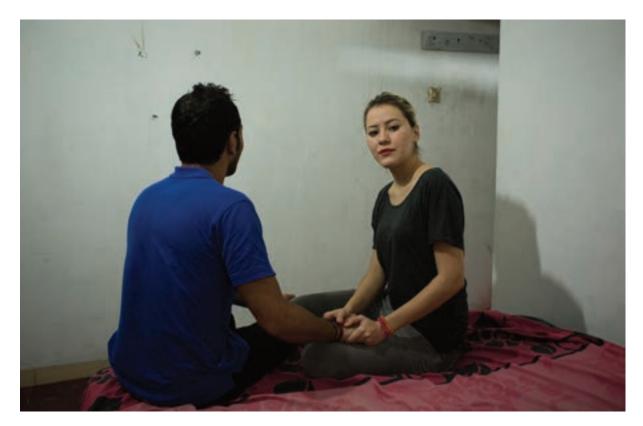
60 REFUGEE TRANSITIONS • ISSUE 29 INDONESIA'S ASYLUM HUB



Aboodi Alkhald fears for his children's future. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi



Hazara asylum seekers gather to play sport in Cisarua. Weekly games offer a welcome distraction from the difficulties of life in limbo. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi



Asylum seekers Mohammed – not his real name – and Tara fell in love when they met three months ago in Cisarua. PHOTO: David Maurice Smith/Oculi

long enough to ride out the UNHCR process. Having arrived in Jakarta in July 2013, Abraham's interview to determine his status has been set for 21 April, 2015, a daunting 21 month wait.

With the scars on his back a testament to the 27 months he spent being tortured as a political prisoner in his native Sudan, Adel Rahim speaks with long, considered pauses in his broken English. After being offered a job in the US, his government accused him of being a spy for the west and he was sent away without trial. He was tortured, his wife was murdered and his oldest son was also imprisoned. When asked of his plans to get to Australia, he answers with a shrug of his shoulders: "Australia, no problem. America, no problem. Europe, no problem. Just be safe."

Many asylum seekers faced unexpected hardship when they arrived in Indonesia and discovered that the conditions promised to them by smugglers were far different to the realities. Tales are common of broken promises by smugglers, who disappear after collecting large sums of money or passports, and landlords collecting rent in advance then kicking out tenants.

After fleeing religious persecution in Iran two years ago, truck driver Aboodi Alkhald and his four children tried to reach Australia by boat. After paying for the promise of a reliable twin-engine fast boat, the overloaded single-engine vessel they were presented with sank. They

were rescued by fisherman from a nearby island. Aboodi has vowed that even if Australia was not turning back boats he would never attempt the voyage again.

In the face of the challenges endured in Cisarua, a desperate search for normalcy endures, with asylum seekers clinging to shreds of routine that depict life as they once knew it. A group of Hazaras (largely from Pakistan) have managed to organise their own football league. Others gather once a week at the community pool or the gym to exercise. A rare few have even found love.

Mohammed (he did not reveal his full name), a Shia Muslim from Iraq, met Tara, an Iranian Christian, in March. They have been inseparable since, but Tara's family has just received their second rejection for refugee status from the UNHCR – meaning they must either return to Iran or continue to live illegally in Indonesia. They, like so many others, do not know what the future holds for them.

Whether the policies of more fortunate countries such as Australia uphold the rights of asylum seekers or not, the decision to flee will continue to be made by those living in places where violence and conflict are a daily reality. Desperate people will keep making their way to Indonesia, accepting the waiting game that goes along with it, because they believe they have no alternative. Boats or not, the will to secure a safe and stable future for their families will win out. R

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Ageing Slower – with Brain Power

Dr JOHN ARDEN is a leading expert in brain health psychology. Author of 13 books, such as The Brain Bible, Rewire your Brain, and Brain-Based Therapy with Adults, he is the director of mental health training for the Kaiser Permanente Medical Centers in Northern California. He spoke to OLGA YOLDI.



Your study of neuropsychology has inspired you to integrate neuroscience and psychotherapy, synthesising the biological and the psychological into a new vision for psychotherapy. *The Brain Bible* is your new book. What is it about?

The Brain Bible is based on the most recent developments in neuroscience that have identified the key lifestyle factors which can control or have positive effects on the length and quality of our lives.

It builds on the latest neuroscience research such as neuroplasticity (how the brain can rewire) and neurogenesis (the birth of new neurons) and provides practical advice to improve the functioning of the brain. It is for anybody who wants to know about how to keep their brain healthy. The five factors identified in the book have been heavily researched by neuroscientists and if you practise them over a life time you will not develop dementia symptoms as soon as other people who do not maintain these lifestyle practices. Since these lifestyle factors are so critical you will also not suffer as much from anxiety and depression.

How is this different from your other books?

My other books, like *Brain-Based Therapy* and *Rewire your Brain* are more focused on applying therapeutic techniques to change the brain. This book is more geared towards identifying healthy lifestyle practices and how to build a foundation for resiliency. Without establishing and maintaining the factors, your efforts to develop mental health would be like building a house on sand.

TheBrain Bible, therefore, describes the five factors that promote a healthy brain. It is for people of all ages who want to know about the science behind the factors and is written in a down-to-earth manner. Readers will learn about how to maximise their potential and avoid the brain degrading habits.

Ageing successfully just doesn't happen by itself, it takes effort and knowledge. What happens to our brain as we age?

Roughly after age 29 our brains do not respond as quickly as they had previously, but we still are able to absorb much information over our lifetime. While we are not as quick, we have a broader perspective and we are wiser. If we can be wiser about our health our decline won't be as steep.

For example, around age 55 there begins a divergence in aging patterns between people. Some become very unhealthy while others tend to thrive. Those that fail to practice the healthy brain factors identified in the book age faster. On the other hand, those with healthy

lifestyles don't tend to age as quickly. We see amazing differences between these two groups. By age 65 those that don't maintain healthy lifestyles might look as if they were 75 years old, while the others might still look as if they were 55.

Those people that have already been diagnosed with dementia, what advice would you give them?

There are factors that can slow down the dementia process even in the early stages of the onset of the illness. If you have good living practices before dementia you may delay it, maybe avoid it.

Those factors are a fundamental aspect of your book. They are what you call the SEEDS. Could you explain what it means?

If you plant SEEDS you will have good brain functioning. SEEDS is a mnemonic which stands for social connections, exercise, education, diet and sleep. These are fundamental for a healthy life and for ageing well.

Social connections are what make us human. Our species have been able to thrive and evolve in this planet because they have worked together to survive. So we have developed brain networks, social networks that enable us to thrive. Because we are fundamentally social creatures, we thrived on this planet, because we worked so well together. We have a social brain network and if it is not kindled through good attachment relation-ships and intimacy we get depressed, we get anxious and even the ends of the chromosomes (called telomeres) shrink. When the telomeres shrink too quickly the result is accelerating ageing.

People affected by trauma particularly need to have good quality relationships. We tend to be healthier in positive relationships, and falter when we are not and get lonely. We know that when old people get lonely they get depressed and get dementia symptoms faster.

Exercise is the most powerful anti-depression and anti-anxiety agent that we have available. With exercise you release a protein called brain-derived neurotropic factor, which results in the generation of new neurons in the hippocampus, which is an area of the brain responsible to lay down your memory. Exercise is an evolutionary imperative because 11,000 years ago we were hunters and gatherers and moved 10 miles a day. We had the same bodies but we don't do that now. Thus, you could say that exercise is an evolutionary imperative.

Education represents the second "E" of SEEDS. By engaging in ongoing learning we build cognitive reserve. This is a concept that essentially means that

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lifelong learning enhances brain structure, reduces risk of dementia, and increases longevity. A variety of cognitive skills can enhance or be enhanced by attention, working memory. Memory improvement is intertwined with how education supports brain circuits that enhance storage and retrieval of long-term memory. There are a variety of memory-enhancing techniques including using associations and mnemonics that are helpful for ongoing learning.

Diet is also fundamental for a healthy brain. Because many people have maintained an unhealthy diet there is now an epidemic of health problems including metabolic syndrome, which leads to brain impair-

ing conditions such as type 2 diabetes and other medical problems. This is due to the fact that people who don't eat well impair their bodies including the structure of their brain and their neurochemistry that our brain uses to produce complex thoughts. The cornucopia of our brain chemistry depends on a nutritious and varied diet. So it is important that we eat well and eliminate from our diet simple carbohydrates such as sugar, white flour, white rice, as well as fried foods, which contain transfatty acids.

Sleep is the fifth healthy brain factor. Though good quality sleep is crucial to brain health it hasn't received the attention it deserves. Maintaining access to each of the stages of sleep is really important to our health. However, many people unfortunately believe that if they can get "some" sleep they are ok. They don't understand that the stages of sleep are so important for our

longevity, immune system, memory, and for the growth of the brain.

I am referring to the slow wave sleep and REM sleep. Currently there are too many sleep depressors many people consume like alcohol which taken in the evening depresses slow wave sleep. Those people who are on the computer late at night are looking straight at the light of the screen which results in the suppression of the secretion of a hormone called melatonin and as a consequence creates insomnia.

There are a variety of sleep promoting techniques. For example, if you take a walk in the late afternoon

or evening the levels of stress hormones like cortisol go down, while the rebuilding neurochemicals that help you regenerate your brain go up including the neurotransmitters that help you get to sleep. Also maintaining a lower body temperature is very important. A lot of people don't, are over-covered with too many blankets in bed which raises their body temperature and causes shallow sleep. Keeping your body temperature cool at night is critically important for the quality of sleep.

What you eat at night has a major factor on your sleep. For instance, eating simple carbohydrates, such as sugar, will promote poor quality sleep. Because simple

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carbohydrates turn into glucose in the middle of your sleep cycle, your sleep won't be quite as deep.

All of the SEEDS factors are even more fundamentally critical for people who have been traumatised. If they don't get good quality sleep, exercise on a regular basis, maintain a good diet, and are not learning something new, they are building a house on sand. Psychotherapists need to work with their clients on helping them in planting SEEDS. Teaching healthy brain practices is absolutely critical for people who have been traumatised. They desperately need these behaviours in place so the therapy can be built on firm ground.

How about the care of the soul?

The care of the soul is embodied in the care of the brain and the body. I think you can still be spiritual and believe in the importance of the brain. In my book *Science, Theology, and Consciousness* I explored spirit-

uality. I addressed the main theologies and the history of them. I tried to make sense of all them from a scientific, evolutionary and philosophical perspective.

I am a strong proponent of spirituality. But I don't believe we need to transport ourselves to another world to be happy. This can be a pretty good world as it is. I believe the care of the soul is about the care of one another, the care of the body. You need to keep your body and mind healthy. Buddhists and Hindus thought the same in their practice of meditation and yoga. Jesus said that your body is your temple. We should make sure that our temple is healthy. R

Minister for Mental Health visits STARTTS office



PHOTO: Ryan Stuart

he NSW Minister for Mental Health and Assistant Minister for Health Jai Rowell visited STARTTS on the 22nd of September. The Minister met with senior staff and was also able to tour the office, taking the opportunity to chat to some STARTTS staff about their work.

"It was great to learn about the services provided by STARTTS and how refugees' experiences of severe trauma from war and violence can be overcome with treatment and support," Mr Rowell said. "The STARTTS staff are doing a great job in meeting the needs of traumatised refugees, the majority of whom are resettling in Western and South Western Sydney."

STARTTS CEO Jorge Aroche was very pleased to be able to showcase STARTTS' work. "Over many years STARTTS has seen time and again that, given the right support, refugees can overcome experiences of trauma and make an important contribution to our society. Today's meeting was a great opportunity to demonstrate how we help our clients rebuild their lives." R

Dr Ruth Tarn (Mrs Ruth Radcliff Pike)

Dr Ruth Tarn was one of the people primarily responsible for establishing STARTTS during the early years. As the first Acting Director, she was the kind, strong centre in the middle of a frantic, pioneering refugee service. It was hard to believe that Ruth had returned from retirement to work at STARTTS, because she had so much energy. I was also struck by how intelligent and perceptive she was, by her quiet determination, generosity and sense of humour. When we were concerned about how many clients she was seeing every day, she said, 'Don't worry about me, I'm just an old draught horse who has been brought in from pasture!' (In fact Ruth was a very beautiful ageless kind of woman, with striking blue eyes, and a rather unsettling astute look.)

One of the most important points to about Ruth was her deep commitment to helping others. The pages of her diary were full of appointments for clients, including home visits for people unable to travel to STARTTS. She couldn't bear for anyone to wait for long, and she saw people as soon she possibly could. She was one of the most generous people I have ever met. I believe that Ruth's genuine caring, wisdom and her depth of experience and understanding were major factors in refugee clients and communities developing a trust in STARTTS.

Ruth also extended her caring and support to the small staff group at STARTTS. Most of us were quite inexperienced in the work, and I think we all felt as if Ruth understood each one of us and cared deeply about us. I think this deep connection, respect and trust between the staff has stayed with STARTTS since 1988 when Ruth held us together as a kind of family. When Ruth passed away, we couldn't believe that she had gone: it was such a loss for all of us who knew her.

On attending Ruth's funeral recently, I heard the beautiful eulogies from her six children (Phillipa, David, Frances, Alan, Diana and Leone), her niece Susan Kaldor, and her friend Nancy Essex. I realised that being such a critical pioneer for STARTTS had only been one of this remarkable woman's achievements. She had been Dux of both her primary school (Gordon Public School) and her high school (Pymble Ladies College). From PLC, she had then studied Medicine at Sydney University,



graduating in 1949 and gaining her registration in 1950.

Ruth's six children were born between 1951 and 1963, and during this period she was also working long hours in a GP practice, and for some of this period also working at Royal Prince Alfred hospital in the evenings. Her husband bought a seven acre farm in Northmead, including a poultry farm, five cows and some pigs, and Ruth worked alongside him in the early mornings and evenings on the farm, even taking responsibility for the farm while he was overseas. She also managed to knit jumpers and make clothes for all her children, and was a wonderful cook.

The next phase of her phenomenal career included working for the School Medical Service, and studying psychiatry at Cumberland Hospital. She had a key role in working at Wysteria House, and in setting up several community health services, including Blacktown, prior to working at STARTTS. There must be countless numbers of people, both clients and colleagues, on whom Ruth had a deep positive influence. Following working at STARTTS, Ruth retired to the Central Coast for a period, but then started working again in various positions including working at Centrelink, and also writing reports about institutions as an Official Visitor.

One of her children described her as rather enigmatic. She was an intelligent, warm, charismatic presence in the room, a passionate beautiful woman. Her generosity and caring for the clients and staff live on in us at STARTTS, in the deep fabric of the organisation. At Ruth's funeral, Susan Kaldor said that Ruth was not here to look after us now, so we all had to look after each other as she would have looked after us. I hope that we can carry on this deep caring, which Ruth gave us, into the future, for both our clients and our colleagues.

This eulogy was written by Robin Bowles, with editing suggestions and information from Phillipa Kemp and Tiep Nguyen. Some ideas from the eulogies at Ruth's funeral have been included, thank you to all of Ruth's family. Robin and Tiep both started work at STARTTS on the same day in 1988 and are both still working at STARTTS. Phillipa Kemp is Ruth Tarn's eldest daughter.

The Reverend Martin Chittleborough

The Reverend Martin Chittleborough passed away in Adelaide on the 17th August 2014 at 78 years of age.

Martin led a life rich with family, friends, community and the Church. Born in Adelaide in 1936, he was ordained into the Anglican Church in 1961. He served as parish priest in Tailem Bend and Meningie until 1966, when he moved with his wife Anne to Papua New Guinea to take up the position of priest in charge of Agenehambo Parish. In 1969 he was appointed Archdeacon of Northern Papua, a position he held until 1974, and was director of the PNG Christian Training Centre 1973-1976. Following the family's return to Australia in 1976, Martin was priest in charge of the Parish of Waikerie 1976-1978 and served on the National Council of Churches for five years before becoming Rector of St Jude's Church in Brighton, South Australia.

It was during Martin's tenure with the National Council of Churches that he first became involved in working with refugees. He visited several refugee camps in different parts of the world - Palestine, Lebanon, Greece and Thailand. In 1978 he visited Vietnam and saw first hand the devastation of war. In 1980 he visited Cambodia and watched as countless bodies, including those of children, were pulled from mass graves. He later spoke of his terrible feelings of helplessness in the face of such overwhelming misery and injustice. Back in Australia, it was this feeling of helplessness that motivated him to work with others to assist refugees and particularly, survivors of torture. He became an active member of the Indo-China Refugee Association (later to become the Australian Refugee Association) and held the position of Chair of ARA 1984-1985 and c. 1995-2002. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Refugee Council of Australia and became its first Chair, a position he held until 2002. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Adelaide-based Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS).

Of RACS first 200 clients, 70 per cent had experienced torture. At that time no services existed in South Australia to assist torture survivors. However Martin was aware that groups of doctors and psychiatrists were working to set up services for survivors in Victoria (later to become Foundation House), NSW (later to become STARTTS) and Queensland (later to become QPASTT). Martin was



keen to see something similar established in South Australia and began to gather a group of like-minded people around him. The Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (or STTARS as it was better known), started life as a loose network of people with a telephone and a photocopier in a back room of the Indo-China Refugee Association. Martin approached Professor Alexander McFarlane, one of Australia's leading experts on trauma and Sandy agreed to become the first Chair of STTARS. They worked together to develop a network of psychiatrists and GPs prepared to work probono to provide services to survivors of torture and trauma resettling in South Australia. Martin left the Parish of Brighton to coordinate the fledgling service as a volunteer and lobby the State and Commonwealth Governments for funding. In 1991 STTARS became an independently incorporated organisation and Martin became the first Director, a position he held from 1991 to 1998.

Martin is remembered by many as a wonderful and inspiring man. Passionate and pragmatic with a capacity for dogged perseverance, his care and concern for others was far-reaching. One of Martin's regular admonitions, "Grasp the near edge," says a lot about his approach to issues. Even though we may not be able to solve all the world's problems, he believed there are always opportunities for doing something positive to help other people change their lives. He had the ability to take a very broad view of a situation, imagine what might make it better, and then clearly articulate that vision, encouraging others to join with him and providing the leadership to make it happen. Martin's gentle humour made light of his achievements but his commitment was total and he never lost sight of his goals. His part in changing perceptions of, and services for, former refugees and asylum seekers in Australia has been significant and lasting.

Martin is survived by his wife Anne and children David and Kirsty, six grandchildren and a great-grandson. STTARS today employs 70 staff across six different program areas and provides services to approximately 1000 survivors of torture and trauma every year.

The author, Bernadette McGrath, was the Director of STTARS from 2002 – 2014.

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The NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) helps refugees deal with their past experiences and build a new life in Australia. Our services include counselling, group therapy, programs for children and young people, community development activities and physiotherapy. We also work with other organisations and individuals to help them work more effectively with refugees. Opened in 1988, STARTTS is one of Australia's leading organisations for the treatment of torture and trauma survivors.





