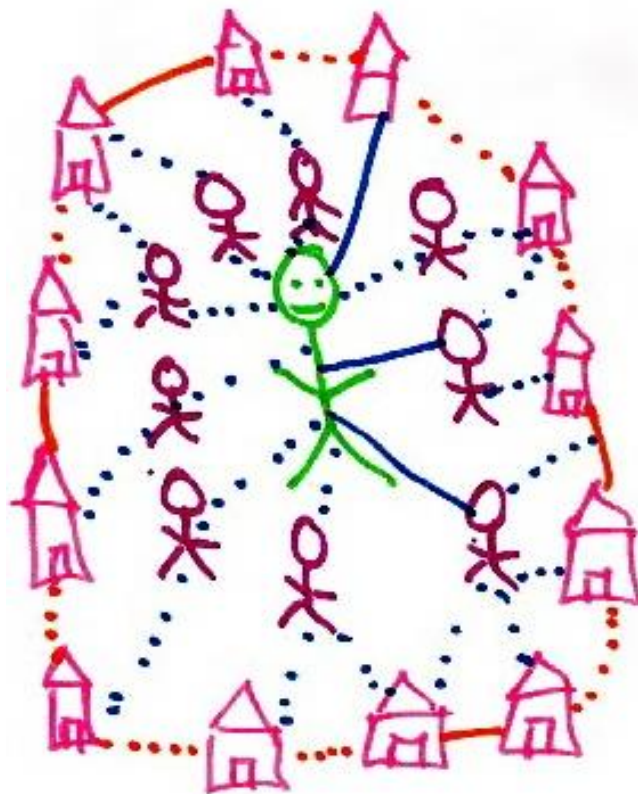


# 'The Glue that Binds'

## Social Capital in Refugee Communities Settling in Australia

October 2013



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The key research team member from STARTTS was Evaluation Officer Emma Pittaway. Many other STARTTS staff, including staff from refugee backgrounds, participated in team discussions to contribute to and review research questions and findings, and in the research consultations. Key CRR team member was Linda Bartolomei, supported by research associates Kristy Ward and Geraldine Doney, and several research interns, in particular Shevaun LaForest.

For overall support of the concept and process, special thanks to Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, STARTTS Community Development Coordinator and Jorge Aroche, CEO of STARTTS.

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## Introduction

This report describes a project that explored the perception of social capital in resettling refugee communities in Sydney. The aim of the research was to understand social capital from a refugee perspective, including which aspects are important in settlement, and to develop a methodology, including indicators, for measuring the social capital outcomes of community development projects in resettled refugee communities.

The project was initiated in 2012 by Services for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) who invited expressions of interest from academic institutions to work with them in the development of an evaluation methodology. The Centre for Refugee Research (CRR), University of NSW was selected to partner STARTTS in this project. The project was funded jointly by STARTTS, WESTPAC and the Australian Council for the Arts. Most importantly, the project included community members from refugee backgrounds as active research partners.

Few studies have explored social capital in a refugee resettlement context, or from the perspective of refugee community members themselves. The view of the STARTTS and CRR research team was that community perspectives can best be understood if members of the group are involved in the research as active and respected partners, not as passive subjects of research. The project methodology was therefore designed to involve participants from refugee backgrounds in:

- exploring and analysing the meaning of social capital in their communities
- identifying and defining meaningful indicators of social capital in resettlement
- assessing the relative importance of these indicators in the context of effective settlement.

This also provided the opportunity to identify, emphasise and build on the existing capacities within the participating communities.

## **STARTTS and the Centre for Refugee Research**

The Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) is a research and advocacy centre at the University of NSW. All of their work is grounded in a human rights framework and principles of community development and social justice. CRR conducts research, education and advocacy programs, partnering with community based refugee organisations, service providers and international organisations. These programs contribute to an increased understanding of displacement and resettlement issues, and support advocacy for improved refugee protection and policies, services and outcomes.

STARTTS provides torture and trauma rehabilitation services to resettled refugees in NSW. An important part of this work is to support and promote healthy communities through community development activities. Community development is seen as essential to a holistic approach to working with torture and trauma survivors, since trauma impacts communities as well as individuals. When groups of people are exposed to persecution, violence and dispersal, the family, social and cultural bonds that hold a community together are damaged. The challenges of resettling to a new and unfamiliar country cause further disruption and dislocation. An important part of trauma recovery therefore involves not only treating an individual's trauma, but also working with communities. STARTTS' community development work recognises and fosters the strengths of refugees themselves, to help communities to overcome trauma and to become confident members of Australian society.

One of the key goals of STARTTS' community development work is to increase positive social capital in the refugee communities with whom they work. To assess how well their projects achieve this goal requires an understanding of social capital, and a way of measuring changes in social capital. However, while there is a lot of discussion about social capital, there is no standard definition of what social capital is, or how to identify and measure it. In particular, there is little information about what aspects of social capital are important in a refugee resettlement context (especially from the perspective of refugee community members), or how social capital can be assessed and supported in refugee communities.

## **Background information about social capital**

### **What is social capital?**

Social capital refers to social relationships, connections, networks and resources that exist within a community, as well as the 'norms' or formal and informal rules that govern social interaction, such as trust and cooperation (Rostila 2010). Social capital assists cooperation within and between communities. It is sometimes understood as a collective resource which can increase a community's capacity to address problems together and enhance community wellbeing (Putnam 2000).

However, there are differing views about exactly what makes up social capital, how it works, who benefits, and whether it is always beneficial. There is also debate about how to distinguish between what contributes to and what results from social capital (Portes 1998; Poder 2011), and whether social capital is the same for all groups of people, in all communities, in all societies (Li 2004). This project drew on previous theories and understandings of social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1998 & 2000; Putnam 2000; Li 2004), in order to contribute to an expanded understanding of social capital in a resettlement context.

Drawing on this social capital literature, the research team developed the following working definition to describe the broad goal of STARTTS social capital projects:

'supporting individuals and communities to strengthen positive social relationships, connections, and networks which increase their capacities to address problems in common and enhance wellbeing through increased access to social resources'.

### **Why is understanding and strengthening social capital important?**

The idea of social capital has become increasingly popular in government and community settings, recognising that positive connectedness of communities is important to social harmony and to the wellbeing of community members. If social capital is strong and social networks are positive and active, they are more likely to provide mutual benefit amongst their members. Social capital enables resources, information and networks to be shared. This can benefit individuals, for example an individual may be able to get a job through information shared within their social network. It can benefit communities for example, the more individual community members obtain employment through their networks, the more building of resources and connections within the community will occur. As some of the people from refugee backgrounds who participated in the research explain

in the image and quotation below, positive social capital within smaller communities can benefit the wider society<sup>1</sup>.



*The outcomes we'd expect if we could build social capital? We have a happy person here directing social policy, because that is where all of these [other] things come from. Participation from the communities from the word go; good communication within the community; feeling safe; strong leadership; social, political and economic participation in Australian life; knowing how to meet needs; communities knowing who to contact in a problem; respect! And then participation in the design of services and programs. **If social capital works - then you will have a happy community that can do things for itself, and advocate for itself, and that can be respected by everyone else.***

## Types of social capital

In spite of differing views about some aspects of social capital, three broad types of social capital have been defined in academic literature: bonding, bridging and

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<sup>1</sup> All hand drawn images in this report are from the 'Storyboarding' activity undertaken by project participants, as described in Appendix 1. All quotes are from people from refugee backgrounds who participated in this project.

linking social capital (Granovetter 1973; Putnam 2000; Woolcock and Szretzer 2004).

*Bonding capital* refers to social connections to people within one's own social group or close to oneself, for example one's ethnic community or immediate neighbourhood. Bonding capital tends to result in close bonds within relatively homogenous groups, providing social support mechanisms that are essential for "getting by" in life (Woolcock 2000). In some cases, bonding capital can be negative by excluding those who are dissimilar to the majority, or by alienating one group from other social groups (Portes 1998; Poder 2011).

*Bridging capital* refers to horizontal connections to people and groups in the wider community, for example people in employment networks or from other ethnic communities. Bridging capital provides opportunities for individuals and groups to access social and economic resources that aren't available in their own community or social group. It facilitates information exchange, social inclusion and community participation.

*Linking capital* refers to vertical connections to people in positions of authority or working in government or relevant social institutions. Linking capital gives individuals and groups access to social power and opportunities for upward mobility or "getting ahead" (Woolcock 2000).

This way of thinking about social capital helps us to understand the broad concept of social capital and the links within and between communities and the wider 'system' in which they live. What lays behind each of these types of social capital are the *relationships* between people: the *social connections* between individuals, their wider *social networks* and the *norms or qualities (formal and informal rules)* of the interactions between individuals and groups in their social connections and networks (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1998).

*Social connections* are the formal or informal connections and relationships between individuals. Examples include connections within families, with neighbours, with other people from the same language or ethnic group.

*Social networks* are the formal or informal networks linking individuals with groups or groups with groups. Examples include membership of a religious, ethnic or sporting group, links between different ethnic groups, links to other people or groups in the wider community.

*Social norms or qualities of positive social relations* are the group-held beliefs about how members should behave in a particular context; the formal and informal understandings and values that govern the behaviour of a group or



wider society. While many definitions of social capital give importance to particular norms, especially trust and reciprocity (Coleman 1998; Szreter and Woolcock 2003; Rostila 2010; Fukayama 1995), the research team did not name specific norms in consultations, so as to be as neutral as possible and learn from participants what qualities were most important to them.

In this project, the research team, guided by the community participants, explored these three particular aspects of social capital. An improved understanding of the make-up and qualities of connections and networks in settlement, and how these enable individuals and communities to access social resources, laid the foundation for developing ways of measuring social capital. This was seen as very important in providing guidance for STARTTS' community development work.

### **Measuring social capital**

The study by Graeme Hugo on refugee settlement in Australia, highlights the significant volunteer contribution humanitarian entrants to Australia make to the development of their own communities, as well as to the wider Australian community. He notes that this contribution is *'largely unnoticed and unquantified due to the informal nature of much of this volunteering, which is more often directed within their families, networks and communities than through more formally recognised volunteering associations.'* (Hugo 2011, p.48). Underlying this finding, is the challenge of identifying and measuring social capital, and the unacknowledged community strengths which enable the development of strong bonding, bridging and linking social capital in resettlement.

The idea of measuring social capital (and changes to social capital) is controversial, since it does not have a single agreed definition, and is such a complex concept that it cannot be quantified by a single, direct measure (Stone and Hughes 2002). But while it is hard to measure social capital directly, the presence of (or changes to) social capital can be inferred or measured indirectly through the use of **indicators**. An indicator is a measurable quality that 'stands in' or substitutes for something more difficult to measure (Sapsford 2006, p14). Thus, to measure social capital, we can identify what 'signs' or 'markers' indicate the presence of social capital, and measure or assess these indicators as a way of assessing social capital.

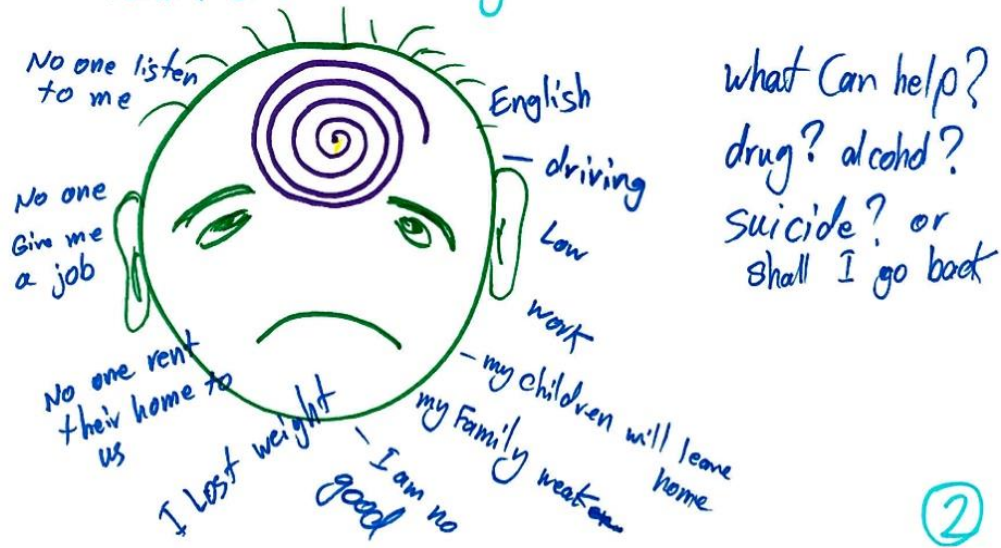
Measuring social capital is also challenging because, as well as being concerned with connections within and between communities, social capital is concerned with the *qualities* and *outcomes* of these connections; and both desired qualities and desired outcomes will vary in different social, cultural and political settings. Therefore the indicators of social capital relevant in one context may not be the most suitable indicators of social capital in a different context (Stone and Hughes

2002). Given the range of cultural, religious, educational and socio-economic backgrounds from which refugees have come it was important to work in partnership with diverse refugee community members. Refugee communities have also had very diverse experiences of flight and displacement. For some refugees, their period of displacement has been relatively short in comparison to others who may have faced many years of violence and deprivation in refugee camps or urban slums. These different backgrounds and experiences all impact upon and compound the challenges refugee communities face in rebuilding their networks and connections in resettlement. It was therefore essential that the social capital indicators developed as part of an evaluation tool for STARTTS' community development projects, reflect the experience and priorities of different communities.

### **Measuring social capital impacts of projects with refugee communities**

The research team's work with newly arrived refugees suggests that, at least in the initial stages of settlement, refugee communities have limited opportunities for community engagement and network building. Their social capital is depleted at the very time they need support and networks to link into their new environment and develop a sense of connection and belonging. This highlights the importance of effective evaluation and measurement of outcomes of settlement services in general, but in particular, of the programs targeted at building social capital.

How I am going to learn all these?...  
I think I don't belong to here.



'How am I going to learn when I arrive in Australia, and I am still not feeling like I belong in that place? I am thinking a lot and dizzy about how I can achieve what I want here in Australia. It's too much - no one can help you as quickly as you want, until you loose your self esteem. If you bring someone with all these challenges and you want them to settle - you can see the lack of connection within his family and within the mainstream. It will affect the social capital.'

## **Social capital in refugee communities**

While some research has explored social capital in migrant communities (Ooka and Wellman 2003; Zetter et al 2006), this project sought to learn more about the particular impacts of the refugee experience on social capital, and the extent to which theory relating to bonding and bridging capital is relevant or important to refugee communities.

The refugee experience creates a unique context for social capital, because of the particular impact of the refugee journey on social connections, networks and social norms such as trust. War and displacement break social networks and fragment families and communities, while persecution and trauma dissolve existing social bonds and norms, often leading to high levels of distrust and suspicion of outsiders or authorities (Hinchey 2010). In situations of war and conflict regimes deliberately undermine and destroy trust and social bonds as a way of maintaining power and control. The work of Ignacio Martin-Baro, 1989 highlights that prolonged war can normalise these fractured relationships. When social norms are destroyed or are weak, then social capital is also weak or doesn't exist.

New connections and networks are often rebuilt during the refugee journey, such as in camps or urban settlements, only to be disrupted again by individuals and families moving on to different countries. By the time a refugee arrives in Australia, their social connections and networks, including family, may be dispersed across several countries or even continents.

Understanding what aspects of social capital are most important to refugees in the process of settlement can help organisations such as STARTTS ensure their community work is guided by the priorities of the communities with whom they are working. It can help identify which aspects of social capital community development projects should be aiming to support, and ensure that projects are as effective in this aim as they can be.

## **Project description**

### **Aims of the project**

This project was designed to address the information gap about social capital in resettlement, working with refugee community members as active project partners to inform and contribute to the outcomes. The aims of the project were to:

- Understand what social capital means to refugee communities, and identify what aspects of social capital are important in settlement in Australia
- Develop a set of 'indicators' or measures of social capital, based on this understanding
- Develop a framework for assessing how successful community development activities are in helping to build social capital, using the social capital indicators
- Develop a training kit on this evaluation framework, and test the use of the method on one of STARTTS current community development activities.

Thus the project had a strong practical focus of developing an evaluation framework to assist in developing and assessing social capital outcomes of community development projects. The framework developed will support refugee community members to play an active role in the design and ongoing monitoring and impact evaluation of community arts programs and other similar community building activities, such as those run by STARTTS.

The project also provided the opportunity to expand academic enquiry into the broad conceptual area of social capital as it relates to refugee communities, and to contribute to a theoretical understanding of social capital in resettlement. This broader theoretical exploration will be shared through academic articles and reports about the project.

### **Ethical Issues**

The project activities and approach were designed to address a range of ethical questions that arise when conducting research with refugee communities, such as issues of power, genuinely informed consent, how research will be used, gender issues, and what control participants have over research analysis and findings. Under the guidance of refugee colleagues, CRR has developed an innovative participatory research methodology that acknowledges and engages the knowledge and capacity of refugee community members as active research partners. This methodology was adapted for use in this project; its underpinning ethical foundation was present across all project activities.

Project activities were structured so that participants from refugee backgrounds had the power to negotiate issues of confidentiality and the outcomes of the research project. They were involved in analysis of the research findings and had the authority and opportunity to veto the interpretation made by the researchers. This approach challenges the notion of capacity building which, in current usage, often implies that the recipients have little or no capacity. It instead recognises, acknowledges and draws on the existing capacities of individuals and communities.

It also recognises that social capital can mean different things to different groups, culturally, and across age, gender and class. Research activities were facilitated to ensure participation and representation from diverse groups of people. Women and men were able to meet separately as well as together and a specific focus on refugee youth was included.

## **Project activities**

The project took place in several stages.

### ***Starting to define social capital in settlement***

The definition of social capital for people from refugee backgrounds settling in Australia was first explored with the STARTTS community development team (which included people from refugee backgrounds who work with STARTTS) and within the research team. This provided a framework to guide the rest of the project. It helped to identify the gaps in knowledge and what questions needed to be asked and answered during the project.

### ***Advisory group consultations***

An advisory group was established, consisting of senior members of communities from different refugee backgrounds including Karen, Kachin, South Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Vietnamese, Chaldean, Kurdish, Burundian, Hazara, Liberian and Assyrian. This advisory group included members and leaders of ethnic organisations and community groups, some of whom are also STARTTS staff. The advisory group first participated in two one-day consultations which explored:

- the meaning of social capital in their communities
- the impact of the refugee experience and resettlement on social capital
- what can strengthen and weaken communities in settlement; and what qualities and attributes are important to enable strong and positive communities
- what aspects of social capital will benefit from being strengthened and supported in community development initiatives.

During the consultations, members participated in several group activities including ‘storyboarding’, an activity that engages participants in a detailed situational analysis of an issue of concern. The illustrations in this report are from this storyboarding activity, described in more detail at Appendix A.

The advisory team was also invited to provide feedback on documentation from the consultations and on the draft social capital objectives and indicators that were developed in the later stages of the project.

### ***Consultations with refugee community members***

Meetings were held with five community groups, through STARTTS’ community programs including Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) groups. A total of 35 men, 45 women and five adolescent girls participated, from different refugee backgrounds, including Mandeian, Afghani, Congolese, Sierra Leonean, Liberian, Iraqi, Vietnamese, Chinese and Sri Lankan.

These meetings involved group discussion and activities that explored:

- what and who had been most important in assisting participants in their settlement in Australia
- the make up and role of participants’ connections and networks in supporting their settlement and in dealing with settlement challenges - that is, who helped them, and how - and how their networks in Australia developed and grew
- the important qualities of their relationships (social norms) within these connections and networks

### ***Development of draft social capital objectives and indicators***

Based on information shared during these consultations by the advisory group and community groups, the research team developed a draft list of social capital objectives and indicators. These objectives and indicators form the basis of the evaluation methodology for assessing the social capital impact of community development projects and initiatives.

### ***Testing and revision of draft objectives and indicators***

STARTTS staff and some members of the advisory group provided feedback on the draft social capital objectives and indicators, which were modified on the basis of their feedback. A draft evaluation methodology using the indicators was developed. This draft methodology and the objectives and indicators were then

tested and further refined, by using them to evaluate STARTTS' *'Dancing in Harmony'* community development project<sup>2</sup>.

***Development and delivery of training on the evaluation methodology***

A 'pilot' training on the evaluation methodology and tools was held with STARTTS staff in April 2013. The training package for the evaluation methodology was refined on the basis of feedback from this pilot training.

***Preparation of academic journal articles***

Three articles on this project and the broader theoretical and conceptual issues of social capital in refugee resettlement are in preparation. They will be submitted for publication in 2013-2014.

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<sup>2</sup> Dancing in Harmony is a STARTTS community development project that aims to assist community dance groups from African backgrounds to develop infrastructure, business plans and access to resources, and to create opportunities for community members to engage with the wider Australian society. It aims to empower young people from refugee backgrounds and assist them to build skills, negotiate cultural boundaries and tell their stories through dance. The evaluation of the Dancing in Harmony Project using the draft evaluation methodology developed in this project provided useful feedback to further understand social capital in settlement and to improve the method.



## Project findings

The initial framework for exploring social capital in refugee communities came from a general understanding of **social capital as the 'glue' that binds communities together**, through social networks and the social rules or 'norms' that underlie the interactions within social networks. In this framework, social capital was understood as an asset that **enables individuals and communities to access resources, address problems in common and enhance wellbeing.**



*"The outcome of building social capital: people can be on the same level together. How can we get back that spark and that confidence and motivation? We need to think about that. Try to connect the broken pieces."*

Through exploring this framework as a starting point, project participants shared a detailed picture of how people from refugee backgrounds living in Sydney experience social capital. The following sections outline the information, analysis and lessons learned from this project, including

- Effects of the refugee experience on social capital
- The settlement environment and social capital

- The importance of strong bonding social capital to bridging and linking capital
- ‘Enablers’ of social capital – individual, community and socio-political factors needed to support positive social capital
- Lessons learned for effective community development

### **How the refugee experience affects social capital**

Stories and analysis shared in this project confirmed how social capital is negatively impacted by years of war, trauma, displacement and separation.

*Before we arrive we have other issues, history, political differences, and fragmentation. The impacts of those experiences before we come here can have a great influence.*

*When people come here, due to what we went through, people don't trust each other. You don't feel like you want to connect because of bad past experience; fear maybe, perhaps the people you lived with betrayed you or something. So some people come and choose to stay in isolation. They choose not to interact, which isn't good. It is very difficult to put them together again.*

A theme of isolation and aloneness was common, with separation from family and what is familiar making it very challenging for some people to adapt quickly in their new community. People described how they are affected both because of missing the attachment to family, and because they do not have established networks in Australia to substitute for the absence of family.

*For me family is very important. I am here alone; no one supports me. Friends' support is not like family support. I had bad dreams from past experience. I need 5 – 10 years, the time to overcome that kind of challenge. It's not easy to change quickly.*

Participants discussed how their separation from family and community still affects them after many years. There is always a pull in different directions, highlighting the importance of family reunion.

*As long as we come to Australia we cannot forget where we come from; we still have a connection back home. I met with my sister after 23 years – we are still thinking how we can connect . . . Even when you are settled in Australia the separation still affects you.*

### ***Damaged Trust, Broken Connections and Loss***

Issues of damaged trust, broken connections and loss were strong themes, as was the idea that the refugee experience damages the social, physical and economic fabric of family and community, eroding individual and community self esteem.

*As a result of war, disease increase and health in the community is going down. There is separation of people, and they lose their habitat, either displaced internally or externally. . . There is grief and loss. The trust between different parts of the community can be wounded. Infrastructure is damaged, and also economic impacts . . . A lot of suffering and grief.*

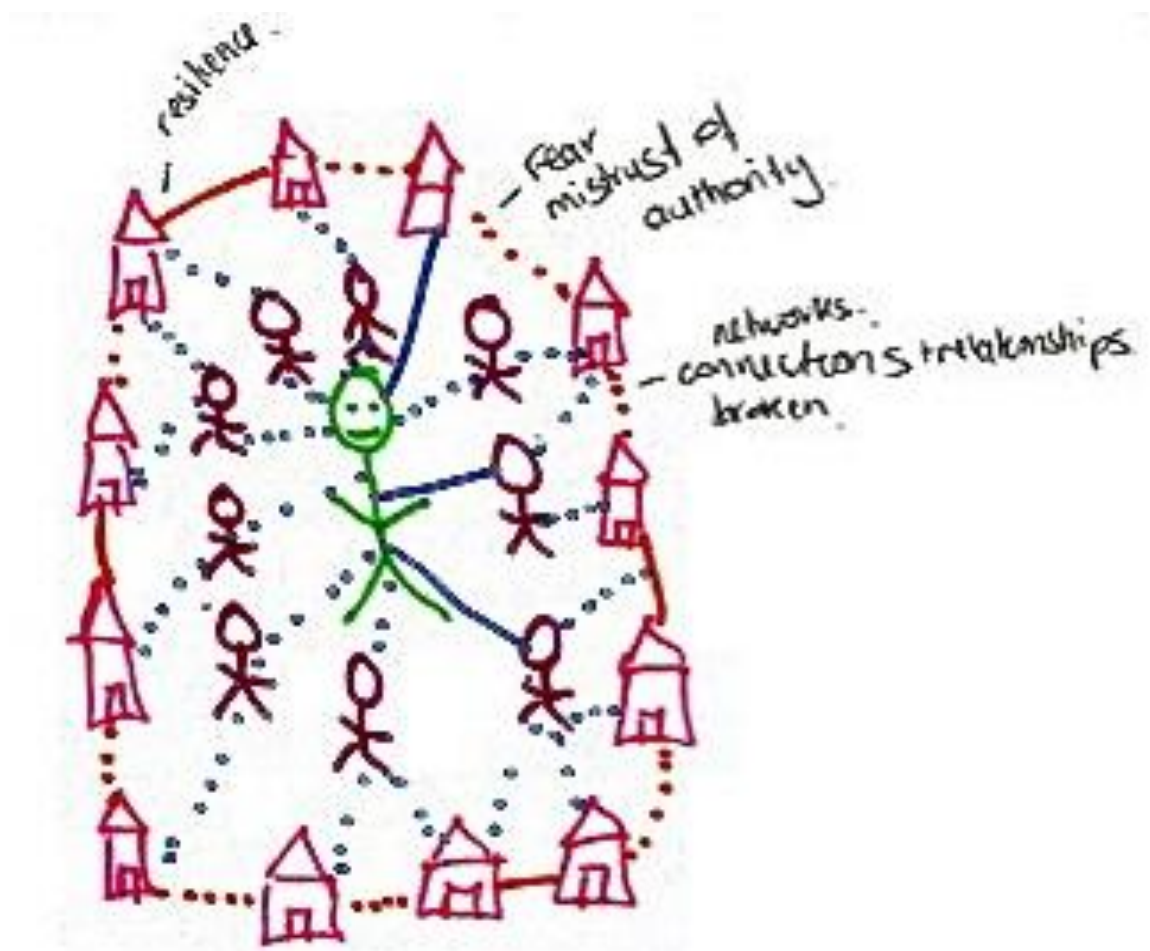
Participants discussed the different dimensions of loss. This included the traumas associated with the loss of family, the loss of physical assets including land and property as well as the loss of social status and the associated feelings of self-esteem.



*The first drawing is when we were a happy family before the war. We have a house and everyone is happy and there is sunshine and there is fruit. Here the war comes in: before the war you have things, but after the war you lose everything including self esteem, loved ones and you lost your property. And then you have no value at all and that makes you desperate and every day life is a struggle.*

### **Strength and Resilience**

However, participants emphasised that even though people have experienced a lot of trauma and loss, they remain resilient and they maintain what connections and community assets they can. This is one strength amongst many that they feel people bring with them to resettlement in Australia.



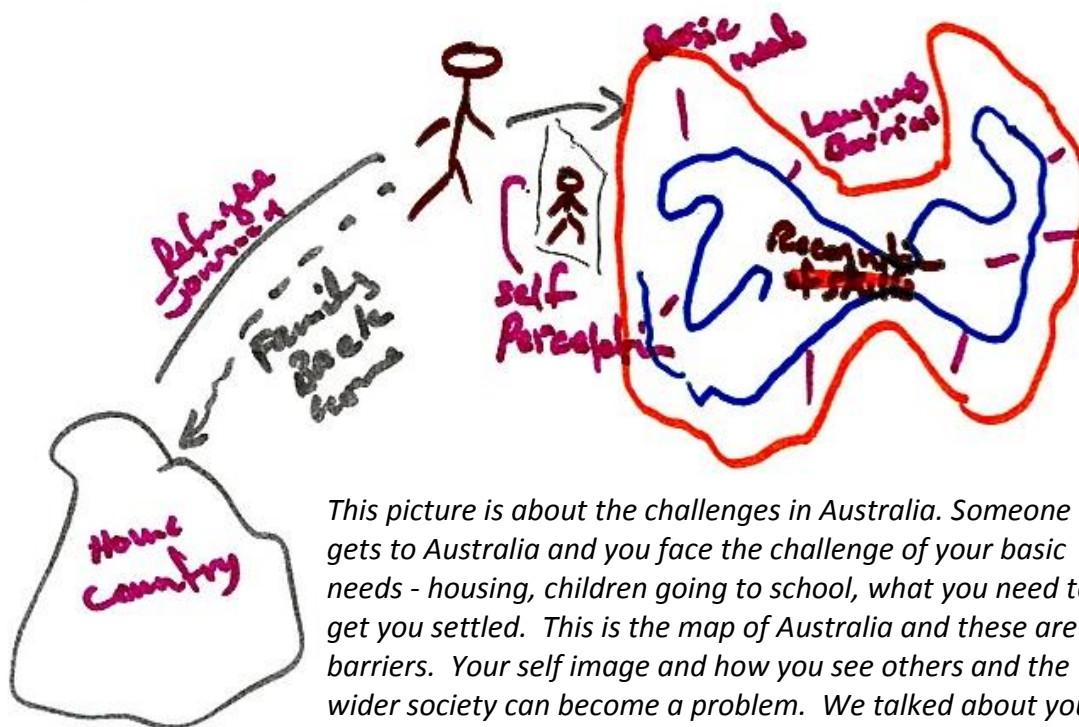
*But there is also resilience: individuals family groups and communities are resilient. Issues of war, trauma and persecution lead to mistrust within community, it leads to fear of authorities - and then there was resilience. . . At the same time as the community is fragmented, families and groups of people are keeping together and supporting one another.*

## How the settlement environment affects social capital

The impact of the loss of social status and self-esteem continues during the process of settlement in Australia.

*When you first arrive in Australia you will be someone feeling you've lost your status, your social status. In your country you are something, and here you are close to nothing. Self esteem will go down, you wouldn't have language to feel confident to communicate, many people lose their children. Anxiety, mood problems - you will struggle, for many people they will struggle a lot until they get the balance back.*

During settlement, a community's ability to rebuild their social capital is affected not only by their pre-arrival experiences but also by the settlement environment. Language barriers, a lack of understanding of and connections to Australian systems, tensions within the family unit or conflict within the community are some of the internal individual and community obstacles to self-esteem and to building positive social capital described by participants.



*This picture is about the challenges in Australia. Someone gets to Australia and you face the challenge of your basic needs - housing, children going to school, what you need to get you settled. This is the map of Australia and these are barriers. Your self image and how you see others and the wider society can become a problem. We talked about your family back home - you are always worried about them and the guilt that comes with that becomes a problem - you are in a nice place and your family are back home so you send all of the money that you have got.*

### ***Social and Political factors***

Social capital is affected in settlement not just by these personal challenges. It is also strongly affected by social and political factors, such as the sense of welcome people feel and the impact of settlement and other policies. Many participants described how negative perceptions of refugees in the community and experiences of racism and discrimination undermine individual and community self-confidence. It affects their sense of belonging in Australia.

*I've been living in Australia for seven years. I have good interaction with people and try to present myself well in the community . . . We can be feeling at home one day, and then someone comes and calls you "Black African!", "Go home!". So all the energy that you have, it will go down straight away, because you are feeling that the person doesn't fully accept you as the member of their community . . . We are not treated as equal.*

Participants felt that media and government representations of certain groups contributes to undermining their status and sense of self-worth. While this affects individuals, it also impacts on the capacity of individuals and groups to build their internal strength, their social networks and their links with institutions in Australia.

*There is media misrepresentation [and] sometimes government and other bodies generalise. It weakens and disempowers the community and is not a good practice. They don't understand or respect our cultural values. This weakens community very much.*

Participants acknowledged the importance of building *their* knowledge and skills to assist their settlement – the need to adapt to the culture and systems in Australia. However, at the same time they felt that it is important for the culture and strength of their community to be acknowledged and respected by the broader community and by Australian services and institutions. They considered how Australian systems need to, and would benefit from, also adapting and being flexible to other cultures - the importance of two-way cultural fluency.

*It is good that we as refugees learn new culture of [this] country. But do they acknowledge we have cultural norms? They see us as having no self-esteem, devalued by war so we have nothing else left. So do we have nothing left? NO!! Each individual group of people should be acknowledged - their value, culture. This will lead to revelation.*



## The importance of strong bonding capital for bridging and linking capital

Given the challenges of resettlement, one of the significant findings to emerge in this project was **the importance of strong bonding capital as a foundation for bridging and linking capital during settlement**. If a community has internal strength, mechanisms to support people within the community and a positive self-image, it helps to:

- build bridges for individuals and groups to the wider community
- facilitate access to community resources and power structures.

### *The importance of Social connections within Refugee Communities*

How do the connections within the community develop in the first place, and what connections are most important? Participants talked about who was the person who helped them most in their early days of settlement, and how their networks and connections expanded from this first point of contact. For most people, a family member played the most significant role in linking them to networks of community members and supports and services in the wider community. For some people who knew no-one when they arrived in Australia, a service provider played an important role in facilitating those linkages.



However, for most people a member of their own community was the principal starting point for building their networks. Connections within community are especially important because the person may be initially isolated from the wider community for reasons of language, or physical appearance. The stress of adapting to a new place, or lack of welcome and inclusion from the wider community can also severely limit the social networks and connections available to newly arrived refugees.

*Where I live now, for 2 years my neighbours don't know me. No one has said hello even though I sit outside.*

In terms of settlement and community needs, people often feel most comfortable to receive information from someone familiar. That person then has an important role in linking the person depending on them to appropriate services or supports. This highlights the importance of supporting increased social capital within communities – with good knowledge of and linkages to other networks, communities can play an effective role in supporting community members to access available supports and services and so help in turn to support positive settlement and build the individual's social capital.

*A small community can have impact more directly and more effectively for individuals. That community has to connect the person ... Small community linking to a bigger community.*

This begins to illustrate another of the important findings from this project: that **social capital within a community is cumulative and cyclic**. The more positive social capital a community has, the greater the potential to further increase social capital to benefit individuals and the community as a whole.

### ***Community organisations and leadership***

To facilitate strong bonding capital in communities, the participants talked about the importance of having strong ethno-specific community groups, supported by strong and principled community leadership. Positive leadership in a community was seen as very important, with a key individual or community leader often having a role of both strengthening and building the bonding capital of a group, while at the same time acting as the critical bridge to wider social networks and connections. **Thus, positive community support and the building of social capital come from within the community and not just from the actions of external settlement services.** Participants reported that it is important to recognise and build on this existing capacity.



*The issue I have is, [services] look at problems and say ‘what is the problem and how can we fix it’. This approach doesn’t recognise people are coming here with existing social capital. We need to recognise people already have it and that it can be built on – **we are not starting with nothing.***

This critical point reminds us that, while social capital is often eroded or destroyed as a result of the refugee experience, that prior to their displacement many refugees lived in situations in which they both exercised and accessed high levels of social capital.

### ***Strong communities***

Participants shared many ideas about what makes communities and community organisations strong, including being able to access resources to enable their activities. They strongly associated internal community strength with effective social networks and with positive settlement outcomes for themselves and the wider community.

*What is a strong community is the first point. If there is a good understanding between members of community or community groups it can strengthen the community. We need financial capabilities. We also need strong communication; strong relationships; strong social networks between individual and groups; cooperation. The more the community can address settlement needs, the greater the ability to integrate in Australian community; we can have freedom and safety.*

This led the research team to realise that there are a number of important ‘enablers’ of social capital in a resettlement context. Enablers are factors that were repeatedly identified by refugee communities as being essential to and indivisible from social capital itself.

**This recognition of social capital enablers as intrinsic to the functioning of social capital is a unique feature of the social capital model developed in this project.**

## **Social capital *enablers***

Social capital enablers are factors that are critical for enabling refugee individuals and communities to access and build on existing social capital, thereby enabling them to extend social connections and networks and build new links in settlement.

**Social capital enablers include individual capacities, community capacities and socio-political factors.** The enablers identified in this project are listed in the table on page 41.

Social capital enablers create the situation in which the positive social connections and social networks that support successful settlement can flourish. The consistent feedback from the consultations was that the goal of ‘strengthening social capital’ in settlement was meaningless unless social capital enablers were already strong or concurrently being strengthened. It would therefore be a valid objective of projects aimed at improving social capital, to build social capital enablers, since these enablers are precursors to building social capital.

Social capital enablers can be likened to the leaves of a small seedling. Without initial leaves, the plant cannot produce enough energy to begin growing toward the light. Once the stem of social capital has grown, the outcome is the growth of more leaves, which produce more energy for the plant to continue reaching outwards, and so the cycle continues.



### **Individual capacities as social capital enablers**

Individual capacities are the individual characteristics and capacities that determine a person's ability to access social resources. Individual capacities include things such as educational level, understanding of wider Australian culture, and having a sense of safety and belonging. They are the qualities that determine whether an individual is able to access or make use of existing social capital. For example, someone who feels physically insecure or who lacks self-confidence would be less able to make use of the same social connections and networks as someone who feels safe, secure and confident.



*Here we have a family who ran away - they came here with fear. They see a big barrier between them and all the groups in Australia. They don't have trust and they say, who are these groups, they don't like us, they look dangerous. Their kids want to play with others but they don't feel safe. There is no sense of belonging.*

Similarly, someone who lacks an understanding of English or of Australian systems and norms will face barriers to accessing bridging and linking capital such as

educational or employment networks, even if these are available to others in the same community.



*Of course the language is important but you need to adapt in other ways. And even though Australia is multicultural when you come into the reality of looking for a job people see a lot of barriers like degrees, work experience that you don't have. You really have to start from zero for everything. Some of the people never study before and when they come into the country they have to start from scratch. [So its always] pointing out the gap. People start seeing more of their weaknesses, which makes them depressed and makes them feel that they don't fit in the community.*

These individual capacities were repeatedly raised in the consultations as being indivisible from social capital. It didn't make sense to the consultation participants to talk about strengthening social connections and networks without also talking about how to build the capacities that individuals needed in order to access them.

### ***Community capacities as social capital enablers***

Community capacities are those factors that enable a community to interact with confidence and competence in the wider Australian community and with Australian institutions. The strengths and resources of the community were seen as critical parts of the effective support of new arrivals and to the development of a community's and individuals' social capital. Yet it was also felt by participants that the role played by communities, for example through their community leaders and community organisations, was undervalued or unrecognized in the wider community, by some service providers, and by funders of community services.

Three key overarching community capacities identified by participants can be described as *cultural capital*, *cultural fluency*, and *effective community leadership*.

### ***Cultural capital***

'Cultural capital' refers to the cultural identity and cultural practices of a community. Participants did not see these as fixed or unchangeable, but felt that to develop a sense of belonging and identity in a new culture, it was important that new arrivals felt respected as members of a particular cultural group. Participants identified the importance of cultural capital as a foundation for positive social relationships. For example, they spoke about the importance of shared cultural practices as a basis for strong bonding social capital. Having a sense of self worth from one's cultural identity was also seen as important to a person's confidence to interact with the wider community.

Having a sense of cultural value and opportunities for shared cultural practice was also seen as important in being able to pass on knowledge of and pride in cultural backgrounds to the children of people from refugee backgrounds. A lack of shared cultural capital was identified as a key ingredient in intergenerational conflict, leading to the loss of bonding capital between generations within a community.

*Understanding and passing on cultural values and norms are important for next generation. The idea that we need to help each other, to promote a sense of learning.*

### ***Cultural fluency***

Equally important to strong social capital is cultural fluency, which can be described as the capacity of a person (or community) to understand and interact with the cultural norms, practices and expectations within a particular group.

One aspect of cultural fluency is the capacity of a newly arrived community to operate successfully in the wider Australian context. A correlating individual capacity is for individuals to have the ability and confidence to actively participate in the wider Australian culture. One participant gave the example of a community leader in his community feeling unable to attend social or formal functions for fear of not understanding norms such as table manners. This inhibited his ability to build links between his community and the wider society.

However, another aspect of cultural fluency that participants felt was important to their social capital was the capacity of members of the wider Australian community to successfully and respectfully interact with the culture of new

arrivals. It was felt that this “two way” cultural competence was a factor that could aid the settlement of new arrivals, including through the provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate services.

*Cultural respect, cultural knowledge, it is a two way thing... and the importance of communities be asked what they need. Valuing difference and knowledge of people who have arrived.*

On a community level, lack of cultural fluency manifests as a shared lack of understanding of the norms and rules that govern Australian society. For example, participants spoke about the difficulties of successfully running community organisations and securing funding for community-run programs due to a lack of knowledge in their communities about the written and un-written rules about how to address legal technicalities and submit funding applications.

*There is an expectation that refugee communities know what it means and what it is to have a registered community organisation in Australia. But this is the first time we have had to do this.*

### **Effective community leadership**

*Weak leadership means weak community, strong leadership means strong community.*

One of the very strong messages from participants was the importance of community leadership and community organisations to the development of individual and community social capital. Positive and effective leadership can bring communities together, building strong bonding social capital, while also building bridges between the community and Australian systems and other communities. Participants identified the qualities of effective leadership, and the importance of these qualities for community cohesion, and for cooperation and unity within the community and with other groups:

*To make a strong community the most important thing is good communication. As a leader and as a community we need to have good communication skills. And trust. The community needs the skills to understand and have respect for each other. The leader needs to love the community, and to provide social [occasions] or activities to build up relationships with communities. And, not to have sub-communities, as most communities have these and they are divided. If sub-communities have good relationship and rules in order to stick together, they will have good community.*

Strong community organisations were seen as a key component of community leadership, and therefore integral enablers of positive social capital within a community. Ethno-specific community organisations were seen as a focal point for community, providing a means of bringing community members together, providing services, information and support to community members.

*If the community is not well organized, it will be 'like sheep without shepherds'. Leadership and the type of leadership is important for a strong community.*

However it was felt that the community organisations and individual community leaders have several challenges, including lack of financial and physical resources.

*Resources: there is no community without resources . . . As refugees, we come here empty handed . . . We can't take anything, we just run out without anything from the war-torn country. This means we need support - not just financial support. We need [information] and resources.*

Even something as apparently simple as a meeting space was seen as a barrier to community bonding and development, as community organisations cannot access affordable, accessible places to meet.

*There is no community without resources. For example, this room: if there is no room you can't come here to [have this] meeting.*

Participants were also concerned that community members often lack knowledge about the formal requirements for community organisations and about funding opportunities and applications as discussed later in this report. Even where community organisations submit grant applications, there was felt to be a bias against small, ethno-specific community-based organisations in favour of large organisations. This reflects a lack of recognition for the important role community organisations play, and the critical role community leaders frequently play in navigating different providers, and supporting and welcoming newly arrived people to the community.



*Three strengths: First our settlement in Australia is supported by our community organisations and community members from family groups. If we can organise ourselves, that becomes a strength. We have leadership skills – this is something important within the community organisation and for any networking. We have human resources related to education and everything. [These strengths] enable support systems and partnerships and communication here in Australia.*

### **Socio-political factors as enablers of social capital**

Socio-political factors were the third group of social capital enablers identified. These are factors that create the overall environment in which settlement occurs, and which have a significant influence on a community's social capital. The identification of these social and political factors recognises the absolute importance of social and institutional norms and values, and legal and political factors to the strengthening of positive social capital. Four key socio-political factors were identified:



***Respect and Acceptance of diverse cultures.***

As noted in the previous section, participants talked about the importance to their communities of cultural recognition and validation not just by services but also by the wider community. They described how confidence in oneself and one's cultural identity, and the safety in which to express these, are necessary for having the confidence and trust required to make wider social networks and connections. If respect and acceptance from Australian services and institutions or the wider community is lacking, the strength within the community is weakened, and bridging and linking capital is similarly affected.

*If you don't have respect, if there is no respect, the community will fall apart. And if it falls apart it means you don't have any cooperation; no cooperation in your community, around the world.*

***Formal and social recognition of skills, qualifications and experience of people from refugee backgrounds.***

This was raised in several consultations as a key barrier to the building of bridging and linking capital for refugee individuals and communities. Lack of recognition of both formal and informal qualifications or skills closes opportunities to people from refugee backgrounds, while also contributing to poor self esteem and lack of resources available within a community. Participants described how lack of recognition by the Australian system also contributes to diminished sense of self-confidence within communities, which further weakens bonding, bridging and linking capital of communities.

*One of the things that weakens community is that they aren't aware of their own strengths. Sometimes the weaknesses are so obvious (and focused on) that it holds communities back.*

***Appropriate and responsive settlement services***

Many participants described examples of services effectively assisting them to settle in Australia and to build bridging and linking capital. Others related stories of culturally insensitive or inaccessible and unresponsive services. Lack of engagement with refugee communities in the planning of services was seen as a key issue.

*Some people and some government areas, they do not understand things from my cultural backgrounds. They bring this [service] in and leave leaders and community out of process.*

*Many times the services seem to be reactionary – in fact the whole system is about reacting rather than planning. Groups come here and people don't know what to do and so they throw services at them and see what happens. What's important is to have the whole community involved in this process from the word go and not five years later.*

Thus, a critical enabler of social capital is not only the level of government support for settlement services, but also the recognition by policymakers and services of the need for *appropriate and responsive* services guided by community input.

One critical settlement support identified by participants was enabling community networks to develop through facilitating access to community resources. For example, participants explained that communities need spaces to meet and information on how to access grants or facilities that can allow their organisations to address community needs.

*Also, for small emerging communities, there are difficulties in how to obtain government support and funding . . .*

*There needs to be resources so that communities get this knowledge: on how to get funding, how to write good applications, acquittals – there is all this knowledge needed that they have never had to have before.*

Therefore, appropriate settlement support includes activities *with* communities to help develop community organisations and services.

A further aspect of community support that participants discussed was frustration with short term funding. They explained how this can undermine the development of social capital within an emerging community.

*We find that government funded projects for a community group, they come, but after 6 months it is not funded. We need long tem funding. Evaluation and improvement, not just evaluation and ending.*

### ***The importance of family reunion***

The importance of family reunion was raised so often in this project that it has its own place in the list of enabling socio-political factors. Individuals and communities who are unable to be reunited with their family members miss out on this critical bonding capital. Further, participants noted that the emotional trauma of being separated from family members, many of whom are in very unsafe situations, drains the time, energy and resources of resettled family

members, leaving them less able to establish and sustain social relationships with people in Australia.

*Missing family... We are always sending money home and that impacts what you can do here. And it has psychological impacts. My mum is always making calls to Africa and if she hasn't spoken to them she feels as if something is missing – she's not happy. ... Family and links left behind are important to the health of people here because psychologically they are linked and they have to feel like they have done their bit and people are safe. It takes time and money.*

## Discussion

As discussed earlier, the initial framework for exploring social capital in refugee communities came from a general understanding of **social capital as the 'glue' that binds communities together**, through social networks and the social rules or 'norms' that underlie the interactions within social networks. In this framework, social capital was understood as an asset that **enables individuals and communities to access resources, address problems in common and enhance wellbeing**.

Through exploring this framework as a starting point, participants shared a detailed picture of how people from refugee backgrounds living in Sydney experience social capital. Participants confirmed the negative effects of the refugee experience on social capital, but stressed that resettling communities also have a great deal of strength and resilience to draw on to support their community's settlement. They outlined ways in which the settlement environment itself can both positively and negatively impact on their social capital and their overall settlement.

This background context and exploration by participants enabled a better understanding of *which social connections and networks are important* in resettlement and in establishing links to the wider community. It highlighted *what qualities of relationships or social norms are needed* to enable strong and positive social connections and networks to exist within and between communities. Participants also outlined the *importance of social and physical resources* to support the rebuilding of social capital in emerging communities.

It became clear that, in refugee settlement, **positive social connections and relationships within communities (*bonding capital*) are an important foundation for *bridging capital*** (connections to people and groups in the wider community) **and *linking capital*** (vertical connections to people in positions of authority or working in government or other social institutions). What happens within communities plays a significant part in determining how well individuals and groups are able to interact with the wider society and with the structures and institutions of society, and therefore, how well they are able to access social resources. At the same time, the social and political environment in settlement also affects the social capital within refugee communities.

The refugee participants spoke of the importance of having strong ethno-specific community groups, supported by strong and valued community leadership, as well as the importance of cultural recognition and validation by the wider community. They discussed the negative impacts that the lack of resources as well as the socio-political dimensions of racism and discrimination can have on weakening the internal bonding

capital of community. It was clear from the discussion that strong internal bonding capital is often a key ingredient in enabling individuals and communities to take advantage of the resources and capacities offered through bridging and linking capital, with confidence in oneself and one's cultural identity and the safety in which to express these often being a precursor to the confidence and trust required to make wider social networks and connections. This role is often played by a key individual or community leader, whose role it is to both strengthen and build the bonding capital of a group while at the same time acting as the critical bridge to wider social networks and connections. This was highlighted in the evaluation of the *'Dancing in Harmony Project'*, by the key role that "F", a young Sierra Leonean refugee woman, played as the group leader for a group of Sierra Leonean dancers. She worked to both build the group and to maintain the group's motivation, while acting as the critical conduit to the project's choreographers. With the key support of "F", the group built their 'bonding capital', while through the choreographer, the group were able to build their understanding of the professional dance world and to make wider contacts, thus building bridging social capital.

### **Development of a model of social capital in resettlement**

Understanding these issues led the research team to develop a model of social capital in refugee settlement (figure 1, page 41). The model illustrates four important aspects of social capital identified by participants:

- The **social connections** and **social networks** that are important for the development of positive social capital in settlement
- The **relational norms**, or positive qualities of relationships, that are needed to enable the positive development and use of social connections and networks
- **Social resources** that are necessary for supporting the ability of individuals and communities to build their social capital
- **Social capital enablers**, which are the individual, community and socio-political factors that enable refugee individuals and communities to extend their social connections and networks and build new links in settlement.

### **The importance of social capital enablers**

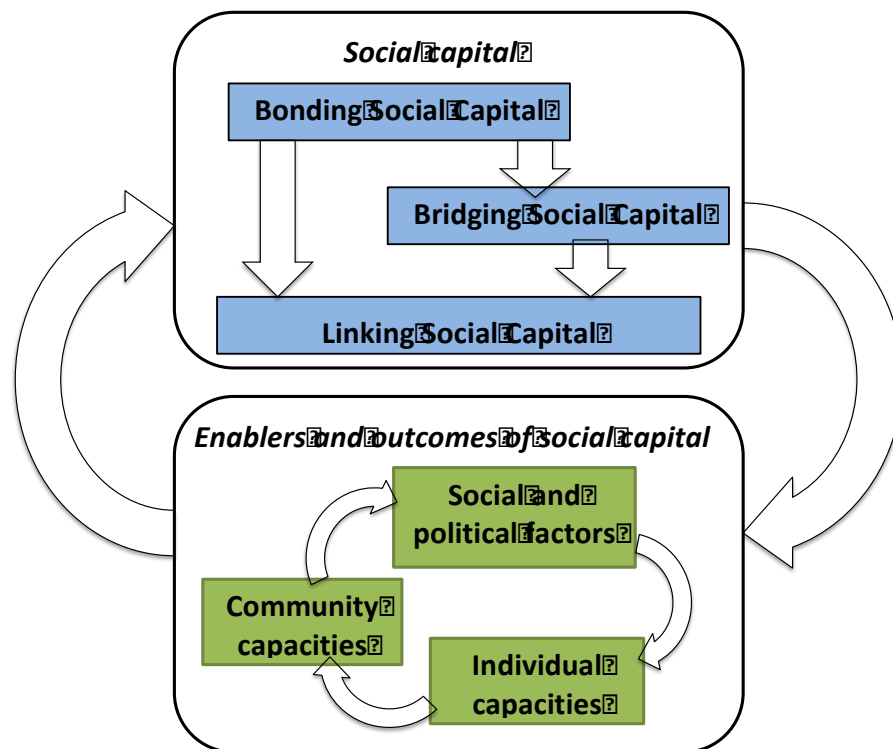
A unique characteristic of this model, compared to previous studies of social capital, is the **recognition of social capital 'enablers' which were essential to and indivisible from, social capital itself**. The enablers provide a list of individual and community capacities and socio-political factors that are critical for enabling refugee individuals and communities to access existing social capital and to build and strengthen social capital by extending social connections and networks and

building new links in settlement. The consistent feedback from the consultations was that the goal of ‘strengthening social capital’ in settlement was meaningless, unless social capital enablers were already strong or concurrently being strengthened.

### Social capital as a cycle

Many of the enablers identified in this project would normally be considered to be the *positive outcomes* of strong social capital, instead of *input* factors necessary to achieve positive social capital.

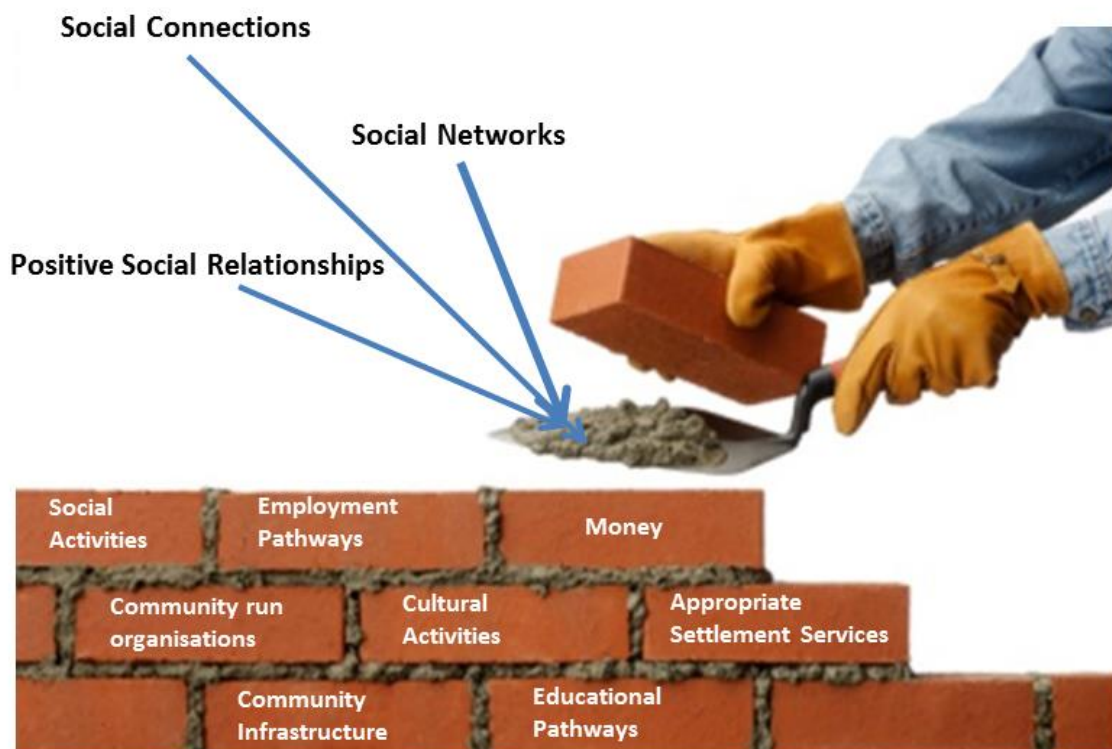
Instead of being understood in a linear relationship (social capital leads to positive individual and community factors), the participants in this project identified that these factors are mutually reinforcing and cannot be so simply separated. It is a circular or cyclic relationship, rather than a linear one. This highlights the complexity of social capital and its interdependence with other positive social factors.



### So how do we ‘Build Social Capital’?

Let’s imagine that social resources are the bricks that build positive social outcomes, and social connections and networks and the relational norms that govern them are like the ‘glue’ or mortar binding the bricks together.

The concept of social capital highlights the fact that social resource 'bricks' such as community infrastructure, social services and financial support are only useful if they are bound by the 'glue' of strong social relationships and networks.



<b>Model showing the Four Aspects of Social Capital</b>			
<b>Social connections and social networks</b>	<b>Relational norms</b>	<b>Social resources</b>	<b>Social capital enablers</b>
Family connections Links to settlement service providers Links to teachers and schools Relationships with teachers/mentors Educational networks/opportunities Employment related networks/opportunities Connections to people with shared interests Connections to members of one's own immediate community Networks of community organisations Connections to community leaders Connections to people from outside one's immediate community Connections to people in positions of authority Links to political systems and networks Transnational social networks	Community Goodwill Mutual support and cooperation Trust Community Harmony Organisational accountability and transparency Understanding and acceptance of diversity within the community Family Harmony	Money Community infrastructure Community-run organisations and services Appropriate settlement services Emotional support Employment pathways Educational pathways Cultural activities Social, recreational and sport activities	<b><i>Individual capacities</i></b> Socio-economic status Educational attainment Understanding of broader Australian culture Sense of freedom and equality Sense of safety and stability Sense of independence and autonomy Self-confidence and self-esteem Sense of belonging Sense of hope/aspiration Cultural self-esteem <b><i>Community capacities</i></b> Cultural capital Cultural fluency Efficacy and responsibility in community leadership <b><i>Socio-political factors</i></b> Respect for and acceptance of diverse cultures Provision of appropriate and responsive settlement services Recognition of the skills, qualifications and experience of people from refugee backgrounds Opportunities for family reunion



## Project Outcomes

This project has provided information about what aspects of social capital are important during refugee settlement. It has also provided insights into the nature of social capital and the way it functions in an embedded relationship with things such as capacities, values and resources. There are several project outcomes stemming from these findings:

- Development of a Social Capital Evaluation Toolkit for STARTTS community development projects
- Lessons for supporting community development with resettled refugees
- Contribution to the academic literature on social capital.

### 1. Development of Social Capital Evaluation tool and Guide

Gaining a better understanding of social capital in resettlement enabled the research team to develop a tool and Guide to assist in the design and evaluation of community development programs that aim to increase social capital. The tool includes guidance on setting *social capital objectives* for particular community development projects, and for using *social capital indicators* to assess whether these objectives have been achieved during evaluation of the project.

The **social capital objectives** are statements of desired social capital outcomes; what you would want a community development project to actually achieve, or the changes you expect to have, in relation to improving social capital. The social capital objectives relate to each of the important aspects of social capital identified by the community members. Each objective has a number of **social capital indicators**, or measures, that can help to indicate changes in aspects of social capital and thus whether the social capital objectives of the project have been met.

The evaluation tool and the specific social capital objectives and indicators are detailed in a separate *“Guide for designing and evaluating programs to increase social capital among refugee communities.”*

## **2. Lessons for community development with refugee communities**

Exploring social capital in resettlement identified a number of important lessons for achieving positive settlement outcomes and community development in refugee communities.

### ***The importance of a strengths based approach***

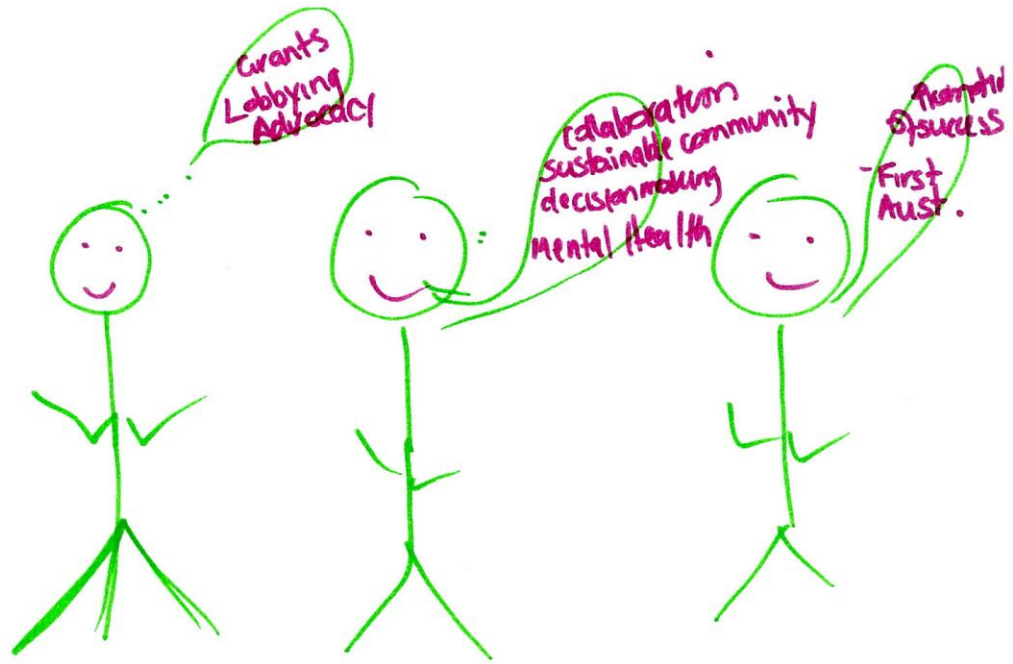
This project affirmed the need for government and services to adopt a strengths-based approach within a community development framework. Participants stressed that services will be more effective in meeting settlement needs *and* in supporting social capital in communities, by taking the time to understand the particular needs, strengths and perspectives of the community, and by actively involving the community in program planning. By understanding community needs and priorities, services will be able to deliver more effective programs.

*We talked about the communities and their social capital being recognized; bringing the skills that they already have when they came - the challenge of that being recognized.*

A strong point made by participants is the need for government, services and the wider Australian community to *'recognize what people have and work with that, not focus on what people are lacking.'*

*We mentioned [our refugee experiences] as a disability, but I think this is too negative. ,Our health is wounded, but we also come with resilience, and with war and trauma there is growth . . . Many students from refugee backgrounds even though they come with no English at all you can see them blossom. ,We do have issues, but we also have strengths.*

Participants attributed the lack of recognition of their skills and strengths in part to the systemic approach to refugee settlement that does not effectively draw on (and foster) the strengths in a community.



## Assets based / strengths based approach.

*The approach to working with communities, the service delivery model, looks at things from a negative perspective. Assets in a community aren't drawn out. It's a deficit model; but we need to look at a strengths based model! Build on existing strengths. Give people the opportunity to apply for a grant. Develop skill sets for lobbying and advocacy. Support collaboration with mainstream community to learn how to form sustainable community organisations. Make sure there are opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Enable dialogue and relationship with first Australians.*

### **Importance of building enablers of social capital**

As noted in earlier sections of this report, the project has shown that the capacities, values and resources which are usually seen as outcomes of social capital, are in fact also important *enablers* of positive social capital in communities. Social capital enablers include individual capacities, community capacities, and socio-political factors. Social capital enablers are important for achieving positive relationships within communities (bonding capital), as well as links to the wider community (bridging capital) and to institutions and services in society (linking capital).

Assisting in the development or strengthening of social capital enablers is therefore a legitimate and valuable contribution to social capital and community development in refugee communities. This will entail supporting individual capacities, and in developing and supporting community organisations and community capacity.



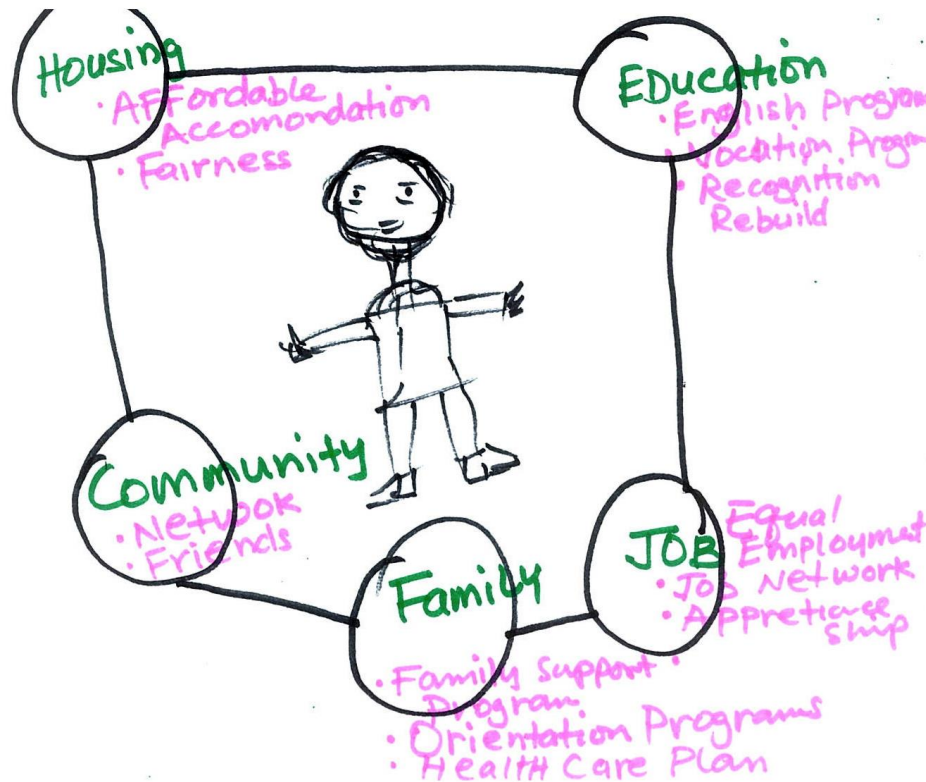
There was also a strong focus in all consultations on the important contribution community organisations and informal community networks make to supporting settlement. Again, there was a sense that these existing networks could be better engaged with and supported for, the benefit of community members, and more broadly.

### ***Appropriate support systems and opportunities***

Support of the development of strong bonding social capital within communities is an important aspect of settlement support, since bonding capital was identified as an important foundation for bridging and linking social capital. Such support could include:

- meeting basic settlement needs
- providing opportunities for social and cultural connection

- providing assistance with linking to wider society and opportunities, for example through community orientation and education
- providing access to resources that enable communities to meet and develop internal support mechanisms and community services.



Effective, *strengths-based* settlement services can also serve as a proxy for community social capital in early stages of settlement for emerging and disadvantaged communities. In these cases, the settlement service needs to be aware of the importance of their role as connectors and enablers within and between communities and the wider system, not just as providers. This role would necessarily incorporate support (and resources) for the development of community organisations and community-run programs.

### ***Educational, training and employment pathways***

The importance of education and employment pathways was emphasised again and again by community members in this project. Consistent with the notion of social capital enablers, access to training and employment helps to build resources and knowledge within the community and to establish links with the wider community. It can therefore make a significant contribution to building the bonding, bridging and linking social capital of a community.

*The employment issue is very important and serious. The Australian government should understand and help our organisations, so we can employ each other and support ourselves and get jobs. Employers ask for referees from newly arrived refugees, but they don't have one. They just came here.*

However, participants emphasised the importance of the right kinds of educational, training and employment pathways; that these need to understand and respond to how social capital operates in refugee context in order to be most effective.

### ***A socio-political context conducive to safety and equality***

The development of strong social capital (and of positive settlement generally) requires that the social and political environment is welcoming and supportive.

*If you are in fear and danger it is very difficult for community to be strong.*

## **3. Contribution to theoretical and practical understanding of social capital**

The concept of social capital has been developing over several decades, with increasing interest from policy makers, academics and services as to how best to support and engage the potential social, economic and wellbeing contribution of social capital. This project was therefore also concerned in contributing to the wider literature about social capital, in particular, to help address the gap of information about social capital in a refugee resettlement context.

The particular contributions of this project to understanding of social capital are:

- adopting a participatory research approach in which community members are valued and respected research partners
- identifying the particular/unique characteristics of social capital in resettlement
- identifying individual capacities, community capacities and socio-political factors as *enablers* as well as *outcomes* of social capital

- developing a model for evaluating social capital impacts of community development projects.

Three academic papers exploring these aspects of the project and associated theoretical issues will be submitted for publication in 2013/2014.



# Appendix 1

## Storyboards

The 'storyboard' technique involves participants in preparing a series of drawings to conduct situational analyses including proposals for action. Working in small groups, participants focus on an issue of concern to their community, and prepare a series of posters that illustrate and analyse an issue. Storyboards are used to explore the nature of an issue, its impact on communities, identification of existing relevant services or service gaps, potential solutions to identified problems, and hoped-for outcomes. Storyboarding can be used with people of all levels of education, including people who are pre-literate. Storyboarding allows participants to name problems and issues within their communities in a positive and empowering environment. It recognises the skills, knowledge and experience and human rights of participants. The underlying premise, is that all people have capabilities and capacity to understand and analyse community issues, and identify potential solutions, if the resources are available to support them.





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