

## Strength and Struggle



### Working with Young People from Refugee Backgrounds

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- ❖ Department of Immigration & Citizenship
- ❖ Young people aged 12 – 25 years
- ❖ African young people and humanitarian entrants from other countries
- ❖ Arrived in Australia within the last 5 years
- ❖ Casework, Information & Referral, Groups, Community Development

### Observations from working with young people from refugee backgrounds

- ❖ Incredible strength and coping skills!
- ❖ While some young people have similar migration/refugee journeys, individual experiences can be vastly different
- ❖ The support systems that are ideally in place for young people are often damaged by displacement, family breakdown, and the effects of torture and trauma



### Youth Survey...

- ❖ 38 survey participants
- ❖ 1 Intensive English Centre
- ❖ 2 High Schools
- ❖ 12 – 18 years old
- ❖ 1 month – 8 years in Australia
- ❖ From: Sudan, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda & Lebanon

### Resilience Factors

- ❖ Family
- ❖ Friends
- ❖ Community/Belonging
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Employment & Finances
- ❖ Safety/Security
- ❖ Self Esteem

## Family

- ❖ Family is very important!
- ❖ Most feel their families are always there to support them
- ❖ Many would talk to their parents if they had a problem and needed help
- ❖ Some have left behind parents and many have left behind other family members

## Friends

- ❖ Friends are very important!
- ❖ Many miss friends/relationships from their home countries
- ❖ Most would talk to friends first if they had a problem and needed help



## Community/Belonging

- ❖ Most young people feel that they are part of a community.
- ❖ Many miss the sense of community and belonging they felt at home
- ❖ Many feel that bullying & racism are barriers to feeling accepted in Australia

## Education

- ❖ Most young people feel that school is difficult for them, particularly English and Maths
- ❖ Despite this, many young people said that school was what they enjoyed most about Australia
- ❖ 1/3 of those surveyed are accessing homework help support

## Employment & Finances

- ❖ Young people are uncertain about finding employment after high school
- ❖ Most young people worry about not having enough money for things

## Safety/Security

- ❖ The majority of young people feel safe living in Australia
- ❖ When asked what they enjoyed about living in Australia, young people noted they enjoyed the freedom, safety, opportunities and peace offered by life in Australia

## Self Esteem

- ❖ 2/3 generally feel pretty good about themselves and have plans for the future
- ❖ The other third were more uncertain
- ❖ Young people who had been living in Australia for less than 2 years were more positive
- ❖ Those living here 3-5+ years were more concerned about finances, finding work, school, and racism

## Who would you talk to?

1. Friends
2. Parents & Teachers
3. Other Family
4. School Counsellor
5. Youth Worker
6. No one
7. Community Elder & Police



## Life in a New Land...

- ❖ "Life in Australia is quiet and I can see the other people living happy around me and I don't worry about everything, that's why I like living in this country."
- ❖ "School is the thing I enjoy the most in Australia."
- ❖ "Freedom and opportunities with things in life."

## Missing pieces...

- ❖ "I miss everything, my friends, my house, my village, my school..."
- ❖ "I miss everything, my relatives, my school, the adventures I had, and everything else that makes my country special."
- ❖ "The joy of home, there is nothing like home, so I miss it a lot."

## Recommendations

- ❖ Long term support
- ❖ Parental/Family involvement
- ❖ More support in transitioning from IEC to High School and from High School to work, TAFE or university
- ❖ Peer Education & Life Skills Programs
- ❖ Peer Support Groups
- ❖ Opportunities to break down racial, cultural, and intergenerational barriers

## Programs in Action



Girls Basketball Program 2007  
Boys Basketball & Life Skills Program 2007

## Programs in Action



Refugee Week 2007

## Programs in Action



"Your Life @ Lunch" - Merrylands High 2008

## Programs in Action



Girls Group 2008  
Dance/Life Skills Program

## Programs in Action



Drumbeat Program - Delany College 2008