Community Development with Sudanese Refugees: A Case Study

Coming together: Two cultures, one life
Planning Activities

Activity: Where to From Here?

Time required: 1 – 1.5 hours

Aim:
To document strategies that the community can pursue after the workshop to address identified issues

Materials:
Butcher’s paper, textas

Method:
Small group discussion and scribing

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Present an overview of the types of issues that have been identified in the workshop exercises and brainstorming activities
— Ask participants to work in small groups to generate and document strategies to address each of the identified issues
— Explain that the strategies identified will be used by the subcommittee as a starting point for developing a more refined action plan
— Ask each group to nominate a spokesperson to feedback to the whole group
Refugees are the survivors of human brutality. They can feel helpless, anxious, uncertain or ashamed. They are deemed to be in need of individual support and care. Thus, people who work with refugees have conventionally been involved in casework. These workers are identified as individual experts, who assist and counsel individuals in need.

At first glance there appears to be little scope for community development work with refugee communities, because community development is a collective endeavour based on the principle of mutuality between facilitators and participants in programs. Community development requires a commitment to self-determination on the part of the community members themselves. When people are unfamiliar with a culture, when they are ‘strangers’ in a new land, and when they are recovering from traumatic experiences they need to have personal assistance and time for social and psychological readjustment. They need individual emotional and often basic material sustenance. It is a ‘tall order’ to expect them to resolve issues within the framework of self-determination.

And yet as this report suggests, the community development approach of workshopping issues and strategies with members of a refugee community in a way that focuses on their needs and their priorities, as they see them, is possible. Indeed, as this case study shows, the community development practices employed by the community development team at Foundation House are already bearing fruit. For example, there are a number of indications of longer-term recovery and impact, such as the re-establishment of trust, the development of a more active and participatory community life and the commitment of leaders to take responsibility for planning and pursuing initiatives for and with their community.

What this case study demonstrates is that not only can community development principles and practices be applied to refugee settlement programs, but that they can be an important part of any strategy for recovery from torture and trauma.
This report documents the community development process that took place with a South Sudanese refugee community in Melbourne’s west. It sets out a narrative of the thinking that took place within the project, and what happened. However, consistent with community development principles, this report provides much more than a description of the community development practices applied in the process of the settlement of refugees arriving from South Sudan. It offers an important resource for people who work with refugees and similarly disadvantaged communities. In this way the report is also a handbook for community development. It suggests questions and choices to consider when collecting information. It offers check lists for developing and evaluating a project. It emphasises the transformative potential of community development workshops.

I have no doubt that people working with refugee communities and in community development in general will find Coming Together: Two cultures, One Life both informative and inspiring.

Professor Sue Kenny
Director, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights
Deakin University
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Acknowledgements

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- Rebecca Cole and Jenny Mitchell were the main authors of this resource
- Ida Kaplan conceived the recovery goals for survivors of torture and trauma
- Sandy Gifford directed the evaluation process and its write-up
- Donna Chesters (Coordinator), Anghare Adel, Thon Adut and Nicole Wilson made up the Community Development Team
- In addition to those named above, Sarah Berberi, Lew Hess and Guy Coffey facilitated small groups at planning workshops
- Lesley Hoatson and Marge Quinn provided supervision and debriefing to the project
- Pete Cruttenden edited the resource
- Community participants generously donated their time, energy and commitment to the project

Funding for the community planning sessions was contributed by the Victorian Government through the Community Support Fund (www.dvc.vic.gov.au).

Although it may not be original, it is truly heartfelt when we say that any successes in the project we attribute to the community themselves, and any failures to ourselves.
Preface

THIS IS A CASE STUDY completed through a community development project coordinated in 2004 and 2005 by Foundation House the operational base of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.

In planning for the pilot program described in Chapter 1, the Foundation House community development team found there was limited published documentation of such work with refugees in settlement countries. It seemed a useful exercise to reflect on the program and thereby provide a case study which might guide other service providers.

We hope this case study will be useful to those working with refugees, and more broadly to those developing similar models for other communities.

All quotes appearing throughout this document come from members of the Sudanese community who participated in the project. Some were originally spoken/written in English while others have been translated.
Coming together: Two cultures, one life
Our Story

FOUNDATION HOUSE, also known as the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST), was established in Melbourne in the late 1980s. By 2005 it had grown to an organisation of around 80 staff, consisting largely of social workers, psychologists, community development workers and researchers.

Over 3000 people access the services of Foundation House each year. Its client group consists of refugee and ‘refugee-like’ migrants to Australia, with nationalities of clients reflecting conflict zones around the world. The services provided by Foundation House aim to support clients in their recovery from the impact of torture and the horrific experiences endured by refugees.

In January 2004, Foundation House extended its range of services by piloting a community development program. We aimed, among other things, to assess the contribution of such an approach to the settlement of newly arrived refugees in Australia.

The program started with an investigation of whether similar programs had been employed elsewhere in the world (or, indeed, Australia) to identify innovative approaches and strategies which could be used. Alongside this, there was an analysis of refugee settlement patterns in Victoria and issues considered a priority during the settlement period.

"Foundation House is an organisation that suits Sudanese. We have been subjected to much trauma as a result of the refugee experience. So it is good that the Foundation has come to us and asked for our participation in the process of trauma recovery. It is also good that they want to help us to work things out for ourselves."
The review stage of the program led to a clear decision on the target group for the pilot. The largest group of refugees arriving in Melbourne came from South Sudan. They were settling in three main locations where cheap housing was available for the large families which were arriving. One of those locations was a relatively new area for South Sudanese arrivals, and it was decided that this would be an ideal pilot site. The selected suburb was St Albans in Melbourne’s west, within the Brimbank local government area. In taking this decision, the tribal profile of the program was determined, as Dinka people were the largest group of South Sudanese settling in Brimbank.

Subsequently existing stakeholders with an interest in the target community were identified. Other service providers, community organisations and leaders were interviewed, and their comments on important community issues were sought. Alliances were formed which might be useful for program content and funding requests.

The next important stage of the program was the recruitment of two Dinka community development workers, one man and one woman. Both had been through a refugee experience and were active in supporting the settlement of South Sudanese new arrivals.

By August 2004 the program had a community development team. This team included a coordinator with experience of working within a community development framework with refugees and Foundation House. The team also had two Dinka community development workers who understood the issues of their people and were able to identify elders and leaders who were well respected by the community. As part of this team, a fourth-year Social Work student on placement with Foundation House recorded the inputs and outputs of the project to contribute to its evaluation.

In the following three months, the community development team prepared for a consultation phase within the community. They explored how community development could complement the philosophies, principles and goals of Foundation House’s broader work. They considered the major issues that were troubling the community, and learnt about strategies being introduced by other service providers to address such issues. A project plan was developed, and external expertise in evaluation was brought in to reflect on the plan. Most importantly, the program was given a name which reflected a major tension for refugees settling in a new country, Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life.
After three months of intensive orientation, review and planning, it was time to introduce the project to the community. We contacted South Sudanese community leaders in St Albans over the next few months, and they attended many meetings and forums to determine the pilot’s direction. The theme of ‘parenting’ emerged as a priority issue for the community, and they decided to discuss the theme around three main topic areas:

- parents’ role in education in Australia
- being a parent in Australia
- the impact of trauma on the family

The leaders formed an overarching committee and three subcommittees to plan for residential weekend workshops on each topic. Everyone agreed that the workshops were a planning stage, where issues and solutions would be identified for a future action stage. The State Government was invited to support this planning stage, and $30,000 was made available by the Department for Victorian Communities.

For each area the workshop was structured around:

- what happened in Sudan (traditional roles and practices)
- what's happening in Australia (successes and problems)
- what strategies might help address any problems arising in Australia

The workshops identified issues and solutions as major priorities for action, and these are explored in Chapter 10. Immediately following the workshops, the subcommittees met and strategies were developed to implement solutions. As at January 2006 strategies are continuing, but significant gains have been achieved and foundations established for further action.

“

Australia is a new country for us and there are many problems within our community – problems that cannot be easily fixed. We do have many community volunteers who are doing their best to address some of the issues; however, we need your encouragement and support in order to be more effective."
Coming together: Two cultures, one life

Our story
Target audience
This case study has been developed as a resource to assist those, like us, who work with refugees in countries of resettlement. It may also be useful to those working with similarly disadvantaged communities, where violence and displacement has had a deep impact on lives and where community development can offer connection to others and a sense of meaning and purpose for the future.

Chapter topics
The overview of ‘Our Story’ in Chapter 1 has been broken down into many different topics. They are:
- Implementing a process to ensure agency ownership of the program
- Deciding to adopt a community development program
- Researching: literature review, demographics and community issues
- Identifying ‘the community’
- Looking for funding
- Recruiting the community development team
- Developing processes to ensure community ownership
- Planning for the future
- Turning ideas into actions
- Evaluating the pilot

We have addressed each of these topics separately in the following chapters.

Chapter elements
In each chapter we provide details of our thinking and activities as we developed our model. Questions are posed under the heading ‘issues to consider’ to help the reader decide whether the model might be useful to them. Quotes from community participants are used throughout the resource to highlight their experiences of the program.
In brief and in detail

For some topics, we have provided considerable detail of our experience and ‘how to’ hints, while for other topics we have provided only brief reflections in the form of ‘issues to consider’. This is because we have assumed that most community groups will know some topics inside out or that there is a bevy of relevant resources already available (for example, fund raising), and we have not expanded extensively on these. Readers can see at a glance at the top of each page which chapters contain extended details (the chapter numbers contained within large circles) and which chapters contain only brief reflections (the chapter numbers contained with small circles).
Deciding to Adopt a Community Development Program

IN DECIDING the role of community development in recovery from torture and trauma, Foundation House considered:
- the needs of the client group
- the recovery goals developed by Foundation House in our direct service with refugees
- community development principles

The client group
People who flee wars and persecutory regimes have experienced horrific events. They have seen killings and endured violence. They have been forced to abandon their homes and their culture. They have lost family and friends through separation and death. They have made long, arduous journeys and been deprived of shelter, food, privacy and health care. They have been exposed to the worst of human brutality.

Social and psychological consequences of these terrible events can result in a range of possible trauma reactions. People grieve for those they have lost. They may feel helpless and that they have no control over their lives. They may be depressed, fearful, anxious and uncertain of the meaning of life and their own identity. They may have lost trust in other human beings and feel angry at perceived injustices. They may feel guilty that they survived while others did not, and they may be ashamed of things that happened to them.

Overall the Sudanese community in Australia is very traumatised. We are counselling ourselves but maybe the counsellors need help too.
Recovery goals

In response to the reactions described above, Foundation House has established recovery goals which underpin the services we provide to our client group. The goals aim to:

- make people feel safe
- enhance control over everyday life and the future
- reduce fear and anxiety
- promote caring relationships
- restore meaning and purpose to life
- restore dignity
- value human life
- reduce shame and guilt

Since its inception, Foundation House has provided client services within a framework which promotes these recovery goals. In developing and piloting a community development program, it was evident that these goals were also promoted within community development definitions and principles.

At a fundamental level, community development definitions and principles, parallel the recovery goals proposed by Foundation House. The concepts of social justice, collective participation, empowerment and social action provide a basis for self determination within a framework of social connectedness.

“I think that this program is a good idea because it will help us to handle our own affairs.”
Community Development Recovery Framework

Recovery Goal 1
Restore safety, enhance control and reduce the disabling effects of fear and anxiety

Recovery Goal 2
Restore attachments and connection to others who can offer emotional support and care

Recovery Goal 3
Restore meaning, trust, a sense of justice and purpose to life

Recovery Goal 4
Restore dignity and value, including reducing shame and guilt

Community Development Recovery Processes
- Build relationships with others
- Affirm common identity, values and sense of belonging
- Increase knowledge and skills to enhance settlement
  - Strengthen community structures
    - Develop leadership roles
  - Harness community skills and resources
- Identify communal goals to attain economic and emotional security
  - Initiate and manage communal actions to achieve identified goals

Deciding to Adopt a Community Development Program

Coming together: Two cultures, one life
As well as the clear connections between Foundation House’s recovery goals and community development practices and principles, we also wondered if community development would be a more preferred intervention for some clients than individual or family-based interventions. In recent years we have seen a significant increase in the number of clients from African countries, particularly from Sudan. For many of these clients the idea of asking for help from someone outside the family or community was unfamiliar and considered culturally inappropriate. We felt that a community development approach might better suit such a group, as the collective nature of their cultural practices appeared to be a significant protective factor in their mental health, strength and resilience. In resettling in Australia, these protective factors are not necessarily supported by the values of the dominant culture which is individualistic in orientation.

As we moved through the program, we continually reminded ourselves of the recovery goals, and reflected on how our relationships with the community might contribute to, rather than work against, recovery. We sought to be respectful and trustworthy at all times. We met with the community leaders frequently and at times that suited them. We facilitated debate in ways which contributed to the planning of the program and ensured participants felt in control of the process. We strove to be culturally aware – those in the community development team who were not from Sudan sometimes had to work hard to change long-held beliefs and perceptions, and at times felt they were operating well outside their comfort zones! We provided as much information as we could about topics and processes, so that informed decisions could be taken. When we recorded voices and photographed or filmed participants, we gained consent for future use in a respectful way. We facilitated problem-solving, so that a

“I think it [this project] is a good idea because in Australia we are very far from Sudan and people can get lost.”
sense of ‘the possible’ developed. We encouraged realistic goals, knowing that achievement, rather than failure, was particularly important for recovery. We were keen to provide a safe and friendly setting for difficult discussions, including encouraging ‘house rules’ of mutual respect. We suggested exercises that promoted bonding and friendship, and encouraged participants to enjoy themselves. We validated emotions when people were sad, anxious or angry, encouraging people to feel safe to share their stories. Above all, we were as enthusiastic as the community participants to identify solutions to problems and plan for a next stage where goals could be reached.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- What is the core goal/focus of your organisation?
- How do community development principles ‘fit’ with your organisational goals/focus?
- Is community development an appropriate approach for the group you want to work with?
- Does your organisation encourage the flexibility required to conduct a community development program (for example flexible hours, innovative practices)?
- Will the group you plan to work with benefit from the goals for recovery from trauma?

“We are all in a new country and things are very different. We cannot continue to live in Australia exactly as we did in Sudan. However, it is possible for us to live in Australia while still maintaining some of our Sudanese cultures and traditions.”
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Deciding to Adopt a Community Development Program
Researching: Literature Review, Demographics and Community Issues

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Are other agencies (local or international) running similar programs that might be useful for your planning?

- What do you need to know to help you decide on the target community?

- Who are the people who make up the target community? Where are they? How many people make up the community? What issues have been identified by other service providers and in the literature?

- Have you read the excellent *Getting to Know Your Community: a Guide to Gathering Qualitative Information*, published by the Department for Victorian Communities (2005)?
Coming together: Two cultures, one life

Researching: Literature Review, Demographics and Community Issues
5 Identifying ‘The Community’

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

→ Does your agency work with a particular issue or community? What ‘boundaries’ does this present in identifying a community for your program?

→ Which group within the community with which you work does your research suggest as a priority?

→ Has a community approached you for developmental support?

→ Can you prepare a coherent rationale for your selection of a community?

→ Would the community be interested in participating in the program?

→ Does the community have any existing formal structures or organisations?

→ Who are the community leaders?

→ Which communities are being prioritised by other service providers?
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Identifying ‘The Community’
6 Looking for Funding

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Do you have a project plan and a realistic budget?
- Have you identified appropriate funding sources?
- Do you have support from relevant organisations?
- Have you read Susan Kenny’s excellent chapter on funding and research in *Developing Communities for the Future: Community Development in Australia* (1999)?
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Looking for Funding
Recruiting the Community Development Team

How many people do you want in the team? (This depends on the scope of the program and, of course, funding!)

What profile do you want for the team? (ethnicity, gender, skills, experience)

If you recruit from the target community, are those you select respected by that community?

Have you designed an orientation/skill development program for the community development team and allocated necessary resources to this?
Coming together: Two cultures, one life

Recruiting the Community Development Team
We are all very happy because we have been wondering who will help us, especially with regards to the problems that we are having with our children. We are committed to making this project work.
Identifying leaders

Based on the expert advice and established community networks of our community development team, we recruited elders and leaders to play a central role in the *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* community development program. They were selected for their ability to influence the broader South Sudanese community in the Brimbank area in Melbourne’s western suburbs. Selection criteria were based on the support participants had provided to their community in Sudan, in transit countries and in Australia, and also on the respect they attracted from their community. Some participants, for example: play significant roles in Sudanese structures such as the Sudanese Community Association of Australia; represent the community on public occasions; mediate within the community; provide a balanced response to external issues on behalf of the community; participate in mainstream structures and programs; and use their skills for the benefit of the community.

Spheres of influence

There were three major community ‘spheres’ involved in the program, other than the Sudanese community development workers in the Foundation House team. Each of the spheres was a sub-section of, and influenced, the next sphere. There were:

- A core group of ten key elders and leaders
- Twenty-five other significant community stakeholders
- The broader South Sudanese community in the local Brimbank area

One of the ultimate aims of the project was to ensure participation of the South Sudanese community in the broader Brimbank community, which can be considered as a fourth sphere (see illustration over page).

Core group of elders and leaders

A central group of 10 key leaders and elders was recruited because they were highly respected and influential within the community structures. They became important in determining the nature and content of the program, in recruiting and motivating community participants, and in guiding workshop and meeting discussions. Their role will also be significant when it comes to promoting the program content and outcomes in the future. They are senior office bearers within central community structures; they advise individuals and families; they mediate community problems; they preach to their community in churches and other ceremonies; and they convene meetings and encourage people to participate both formally and informally in community events and processes. They are deferred to in community debate.
The role of the elders is important because children do not belong just to one person, but to all of the community.
We need to form a committee so that we can move ahead with regards to our areas of concern. It is good that Australian organisations such as Foundation House are helping and encouraging us to participate fully in solving our own problems.

Significant community stakeholders

The second tier of 25 program participants was selected because of their contribution to community structures and life, and the positions they hold in the Dinka district organisations. Although they may defer to the core group of elders and leaders, these stakeholders exert significant influence in the wider South Sudanese community.

Influencing a wider group of Sudanese people in Melbourne’s west

The status of the program participants gave them the means to influence the next tier, being the wider South Sudanese community in the Brimbank area. This influence is brought to bear through formal and informal programs. For example, the elders and leaders may contribute to a training program for the broader South Sudanese community, or they may simply talk about issues in meetings and at church. Knowledge gained in the program has been discussed in various community forums, and by speaking of their confidence in talking with Australian government organisations as a result of the program (for example), they become role models for Sudanese people to deal with their new environment. Program participants also exert their influence through the workplace. Because of their standing, increasingly the elders and leaders attain paid positions in schools and adult education, health and welfare organisations and interpreting. In dealing with their community from these positions, they again inform and advise.
**Broader Brimbank community**

The final sphere of influence is the broader local community, where the South Sudanese residents are able to encourage a more inclusive approach. As seen in Chapter 11, as a result of the program, strategies were put in place to influence the broader community. For example, a group of South Sudanese parents are working closely with a local school to raise awareness of South Sudanese values and aspirations for their children.

**Existing community structures**

In inviting participation in the program, one of the central considerations was how to build on the existing structures, functions and roles of community members and organisations. The success of building on these determined the success of the program and the influence it exerted within the community.

Choosing St Albans as the geographic location for the program resulted in a high participation of the Dinka community, because of tribal settlement patterns. Consideration of community structures was therefore based on Dinka structures. Within Sudan, there are more than 20 Dinka districts, and in Melbourne these districts are each represented in the incorporated Dinka Community Association of Victoria. Three of the participants in the community development program were office bearers in the Association, and 12 of the district organisations were represented. Three Equatorial (non-Dinka) tribes were also represented.

The number of high-ranking officials and participants in the various Dinka organisations resulted in a broad sphere of influence for the program. The program was discussed within the Association and the district organisations, including discussions on how to adopt and sustain the program within the community. Knowledge gained through the program was spread among the various memberships. The central and district groups also have subcommittees. For example, there are women’s groups which focus on areas of interest or concern: single mothers, resource sharing, parenting issues, family issues, community crises, prayer and fellowship groups, and recreational groups. For men, sub-groups focus on a church council, a graduates group and recreational activities.
During the community launch, we put forward many issues that are facing our community and concluded that we must work together in order to solve them. The key factor in this process is having a working committee.
This is our chance now. The focus of all departments and service providers is to help integrate the South Sudanese into the wider community. This focus, however, will not continue forever. The quicker we respond the more we will benefit. Therefore let us start achieving as soon as we can.
Are there existing community structures you can use to identify community leaders?

How will you facilitate community ‘ownership’ of the community development program?

Have you targeted participants who are respected within their community and can influence other community members?

Are meetings organised in such a way as to be productive?
For example:
— Is there a clear agenda that everyone agrees to?
— Is there someone to lead/chair/facilitate meetings?
— Are minutes circulated to ensure resolutions are familiar to all?
— Have you considered appropriate venues for meetings?
— Do you need to consider access issues such as childcare?
Planning for the Future

Weekend workshops
As described in Chapter 8, the community participants decided that they wanted to hold three separate residential weekend workshops to discuss and learn about the following topics:

- parents’ role in education in Australia
- being a parent in Australia
- the impact of trauma on the family

Holding residential workshops introduced challenges such as cost, finding suitable venues, transport and participants having to organise childcare. Against these challenges, however, were the considerable benefits of:

- community members being able to focus on the themes of the workshops without the distraction of domestic duties
- community members visiting new locations and experiencing a non-urban side of Australia
- community members coming together in an environment that encouraged building and strengthening community bonds

We decided to hold one weekend workshop a month for three months in coastal locations about two hours’ drive from Melbourne. While this pace ensured that momentum for the project and community interest were maintained, it also required frenetic energy to sustain and we wouldn’t

“What I found most useful about the workshop was expressing our concerns as a community and looking forward with strategies.”
necessarily recommend that others work at such a rate! We found that there was limited time between workshops to debrief the community development team and all facilitators. Although all the workshops were highly successful, their frequency meant there was limited scope for reflecting on what we would do differently from one workshop to the next.

**Objectives**

It was important that each workshop have a clear set of objectives to make sure that the overall aims of the project were met. With community participation, the common objectives of the three planning workshops were agreed as:

- community leaders would connect with each other and identify as a cohesive group to negotiate respectfully towards tangible outcomes
- community leaders would identify issues, gain knowledge about these issues and develop confidence to deal with them
- community leaders would develop and agree on strategies to address identified issues/problems

For each workshop, each of these objectives was further refined to reflect the specific theme of the workshop. These objectives and the programs for each workshop were developed by the community development team and appear in Appendix 1 of this resource. The activities used during the workshops appear in Appendix 2.

While the workshops were being planned, the community development team was constantly reflecting on how the goals of the community recovery framework could be met. How could we ensure the group bonded together, felt secure and trusted each other? How could respect for participants be demonstrated through the processes? Could the workshop outcomes provide sufficient direction to provide a sense of purpose for the future?

In trying to reach these goals, we structured each workshop in a similar way. Each workshop had the following components:

- introductory ice-breaking exercises
- exploring what happened in Sudan (traditional roles and practices)
- exploring what’s happening in Australia (successes and problems generated by the gaps between the old and the new)
- guest speakers providing information specific to the workshop theme
- identifying solutions to address problems arising in Australia
- documenting solutions and strategies for achieving them
Reports to the community
In the week following each workshop the community development team presented the community with a brief written report on the outcomes of the workshop, including the strategies that had been documented. These reports served to acknowledge the work put in by the community in each workshop and remind them of what they had achieved over the weekend. The subcommittees for each workshop used these reports as the basis for their further action planning to address identified problems/issues.

Reflections
In developing the content for the workshops and reflecting on what went well and what we might do differently next time, the community development team considered a number of factors. These are explored below.

Facilitation
The workshops were facilitated by Foundation House staff experienced in working with refugees, community development and group processes. The Sudanese community development workers acted as co-facilitators and interpreters. They also individually facilitated small group activities.

As far as possible we tried to include community leaders in the delivery of the weekend workshops as co-facilitators in small group activities. It was important that this role not compromise their participation in the activities. As community leaders, they were familiar with the role of facilitation and we briefed them on the workshop topics in the week preceding the workshop.

“...It is essential for us to move ahead. There are enough of us willing to work for the welfare of our community.”
While schedules for the workshops were fully developed prior to the weekends, it was necessary for facilitators to respond flexibly to the needs of the participants. During the workshops themselves, this sometimes meant restructuring the timetable and at other times it meant choosing to omit a planned activity. We were aiming to build the capacity of the community and ensure they led the project as much as possible. This meant that participants were the deciding factor when choosing to alter the program. We also had to consider the impact of changes on planned evaluation exercises and sometimes alter these accordingly. When they felt so flexible as to be chaotic, the community development team reminded itself that good community development is driven by the community, and ‘letting go of the driving wheel’ can demonstrate success!

**Guest speakers**

We invited outside guest speakers to present information at the second workshop. Guest speakers in workshops one and three were Foundation House staff members. In selecting our guest speakers we kept the following issues in mind:

- it was essential that the community would find the speaker credible – this meant selecting speakers with relevant expertise and experience as well as being sensitive to the traditional cultural values of the participants with regards to status attached to gender and age
- speakers needed to not only be experts in their field, but also familiar with working with people from different cultural backgrounds, ideally with Sudanese people
- speakers needed to be experienced in working with interpreters
- it was important that we provide speakers not only with a briefing on what we wanted them to speak about, but also with a briefing about the background of the participants and the project itself
- where possible, we invited speakers with whom the participants might have ongoing interactions when putting future problem-solving strategies in place

**Content and activities**

In developing the content of the workshops and choosing activities we considered the varying backgrounds of the participants in terms of education, language and literacy. Communication styles were also considered. As not all participants were able to read and write English we needed to make sure that exercises did not rely on these skills or, if they did, that suitable assistance could be offered.
For the most part we relied on oral instructions (that were either presented in the language of the participants or translated by co-facilitators) and images/objects (rather than text) to guide activities. A significant issue to emerge during the workshops was the Sudanese style of communicating through story telling. This meant that time available for small group sessions had to be carefully managed. We acknowledged this difference throughout the workshops and used activities that were suitable for narrative reflection (see for example ‘Noah’s Box’ and ‘Mystery Envelopes’ in Appendix 2). We also acknowledged the differences in style between the Sudanese ‘story telling’ and the Australian ‘sound grab’, and suggested when the different styles might be useful. Sometimes, in summary feedback sessions, it was necessary to ask participants to try to speak in ‘dot point’ or ‘headline’ form – further building their capacity to participate in the broader Australian community where time is considered of the essence!

**Gender**

When deciding on the make-up of small groups we considered whether discussion would be easier in gender-specific or mixed-gender groups. We were concerned that participants might find it difficult to discuss some issues, particularly those in the weekend workshop focusing on trauma, if they were in a mixed-gender group. We relied on the experience of the community development team to guide when we should mix genders and when it would be more useful to have single-gender groups. In the end, nearly all groups were mixed gender, with the exception of one set of small group discussions at the trauma workshop. We explained the reason for separating men and women to allow participants to be better able to talk about atrocities that had induced shame. Participants agreed that this was appropriate, but decided they wanted to work in mixed-gender groups to develop action strategies.

"The most useful [aspect of this workshop] was the group discussion where people exchanged their ideas and raised their concerns, and the interaction between the group and the facilitators."
Language

The workshops were conducted in three languages: English, Dinka and Arabic. Most participants spoke at least two of these languages, but not all shared one language in common. The Sudanese community development workers spoke all three languages so were able to facilitate in or interpret into the relevant languages. We had to consider the time required for interpreting when planning the workshop program and in planning the composition of small groups (we tried to limit these to two languages to aid the flow of discussion). As co-facilitators became more confident over the course of the three workshops, we considered minimising the amount of talking done in English, but decided that the workshops also provided an opportunity for participants to improve their English language skills so continued to include English for some groups.

Participant consent

Each of the workshops was recorded using a number of media:

- digital sound recording
- video recording
- photographs
- writing

We decided to capture as much as possible using as many means as possible so that we could use the resulting material as a record for the community and for evaluation, reporting and promotional purposes. It was important that we fully inform the participants of the reasons for capturing the material and the ways it might be used and ask for their written consent to this use. All participants were happy to consent to their images and words being used (anonymously) and enjoyed reminiscing over the pictures taken at the weekends. It has to be said that at project end we had generated much multimedia material, and felt that its recording and subsequent use could have been a project in its own right.

Participants themselves also took pictures, notes and video during the workshops. After the first weekend workshop one of the Foundation House team recording the event expressed discomfort at ‘observing’ the participants in such an intensive way. However, by the third weekend workshop the participants were themselves turning their cameras and video recorders onto presenters and evaluators, and capturing the weekends from their own perspectives.
Have you established achievable aims and objectives for the activities you plan to undertake in your community development project?

If you decide to run workshops have you considered relevant logistical issues such as venue, transport, catering, language services etc?

Have you considered cross-cultural and credibility issues when selecting guest speakers? (for example, age, gender, professional status)

Have all facilitators and speakers been appropriately briefed about the program and cross-cultural communication issues?

Is the time allocated to activities sufficient if you are using interpreters or dealing with narrative communication styles?

How will the outcomes of your activities be captured so that the community can further develop their plans and put them into action?

Do you have consent from participants to use quotes/photographs/video footage?
10 Outcomes: Turning Ideas into Actions

On the final day of each workshop, the facilitators summarised the issues that had emerged from discussions over the weekend and proposed actions that Foundation House could take to help the community to address these. The community leaders themselves, working in small groups, generated their own strategies that they, as individuals, and as a community, could pursue to solve identified problems. These became the basis for subcommittees to develop action plans after the workshops.

Participants reported that they felt more knowledgeable and confident after the workshops; however, they were also insistent that Foundation House should continue to work in partnership with them to pursue action plans, particularly in terms of facilitating introductions to other relevant service providers.

The action plans the subcommittees developed included the following elements:

- priority strategies (what)
- actions (how)
- responsibility (who)
- timelines (when)

In terms of this project, we as a community need to monitor its achievements and keep it going if it is to be successful.
The most useful thing I found was making friends with some people and exchanging good ideas, and [thinking about] how we can manage to achieve our goals.

Some of the strategies that the community wants to pursue will require further funding. Others are already under way or complete and have strengthened families and achieved a measurable increase in the participation of Sudanese community members in the wider Brimbank community. The action plans and their outcomes are further discussed below under the topics of each workshop. Broader impacts of the project are discussed in Chapter 11: Evaluation.

Education
Issues
Parents were unfamiliar with the school system in Australia, and felt that their authority and values were being challenged by the schools. They wanted more information about schools and wanted to participate more fully in their children’s school life. They also wanted to teach schools about Sudanese culture, values and practices.

Proposed solutions
PARTNERSHIP WITH ST ALBANS PRIMARY SCHOOL
The education subcommittee decided that they wanted to establish dialogue with a local school to address the issues raised in the workshops. The community development team identified St Albans Primary School as an appropriate school whose principal was keen to take part in dialogue with Sudanese parents.
The school and the education subcommittee worked in partnership to develop a four-week training program to educate 25 of the Sudanese parents about school life and how to support their children’s education. The school also listened to, and acted upon, the suggestions of Sudanese parents. The topics covered were proposed by the community leaders and added to by the school, who took responsibility for delivering the training.

The training program resulted in:
- an increase in parents’ knowledge
- a Sudanese man being co-opted to the school council
- documentation of the training program for dissemination to other schools

COMMUNITY EDUCATORS
The education subcommittee also wanted to pass on what they had learnt about the Australian education system to new Sudanese arrivals. To achieve this they proposed that they be trained as community educators and deliver information sessions across the western region of Melbourne. It was felt that Foundation House had an important role to play in identifying funding for such a program and encouraging schools’ involvement.

Parenting Issues
Parents observed that children are adopting a new life in Australia, abandoning traditional values and questioning traditional discipline. The traditional roles of men and women are also changed by settlement in Australia. These challenges to family values, structures and roles have produced a breakdown in family communication, which in some instances

“…We as a community need to take power and to do more to solve our own problems.”
has resulted in family violence and government intervention. Families felt the need to better understand government services and work with those services to ensure that interventions were culturally appropriate and supported by the community.

**Proposed solutions**

**ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (ESPECIALLY CHILD PROTECTION AND POLICE)**
The parenting subcommittee was keen to connect with agencies which had a role in supporting families. Initial meetings were held with relevant agencies who all expressed interest in developing protocols for working with the Sudanese community. Foundation House successfully approached philanthropic foundations to fund a collaborative strategic planning process between all key agencies and the community, and by the end of 2005 had started the process of identifying key stakeholders.

**PROMOTE HEALTHY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**
The community proposed two weekend residential workshops, one with men and boys and one with women and girls, to facilitate dialogue between the older and younger groups and to identify issues and solutions for communication between the two. These workshops were conducted with the financial support of a group of corporate bodies. This led to proposals being developed for a project to work with youth from the community, with submissions prepared for funding sources. In addition, Foundation House liaised with key family violence service providers, aiming to bring them to the table with Sudanese leaders to identify a coordinated plan of action for all players.
Trauma

Issues

It was agreed that the impact of trauma can reverberate within a family. While community elders play a role in addressing the impact of trauma in the community, they felt the need for professional training to support this role. They also wanted to encourage a dialogue with professional service providers to ensure those services were culturally appropriate when external interventions occurred.

Proposed solutions

INCREASE COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMA IMPACT

The trauma subcommittee proposed that they deliver information sessions to other members of the Sudanese community on the impact of trauma on their daily lives. Foundation House was asked to seek funding and explore linkages with existing peer educator programs to train and support the trauma subcommittee to undertake this role.

TRAIN COMMUNITY LEADERS

As Foundation House is a major provider of counselling services for refugees, it was agreed that a ‘user-friendly’ training program would be developed for community leaders based on Foundation House’s Rebuilding Shattered Lives resource. The aim will be to enhance the skills which leaders bring to their existing mediation role and increase understanding of when a referral to a specialist agency such as Foundation House is appropriate. The program will incorporate suggestions from the Trauma subcommittee and be piloted by subcommittee members.

Maintaining momentum

Throughout the planning process, community leaders stressed the importance of maintaining commitment and enthusiasm within the broader community for the community development project. They often commented that it was not a case of attending weekend workshops and then going away and doing nothing.

Aside from specific action plans relating to the themes of the workshops (discussed above), the community also discussed how they would sustain the project and extend it to Sudanese people in other regions. The Sudanese Community Association of Australia has endorsed the idea of establishing a formal structure for community development under the umbrella of the Association.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues to Consider</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the community decided on a clear set of priority issues/problems to address?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the community developed a clear set of actions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you considered documenting an action plan?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How will the community maintain momentum for the project and how will you support them in this?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How will the project outcomes be disseminated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What opportunities exist for further funding to implement identified solutions?</td>
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</table>
Evaluation

VALUATION ALLOWS us to assess the success of the work we undertake and to learn how things might have been done differently or better. Key principles of evaluation in community development are that:

• the project goals drive the evaluation
• the process is participatory
• evaluation is integrated into the community development process itself

In addition to the community and the funded organisation, funding bodies also invariably require some form of evaluation. The extent of the evaluation depends on the resources available.

Developing an evaluation framework

An evaluation framework is important for helping to structure and guide what information you will collect during a community development project, how the information will be collected and what you will do with the information. An evaluation framework has three key components:

1. Objectives: what is it you want to achieve? (Objectives are measurable.)
2. Indicators: what information would indicate that you have achieved your objectives?
3. Tools: how will you collect this information?

These three components can be used within a simple framework to gather information to assess your project in four key areas:

“”

We are all traumatised and we have been healed.
You have not given us a fish, you have shown us how to fish for ourselves.

1. **Inputs:** what resources did you put into this project? (staff time, both paid and unpaid; volunteer time; donated materials; financial resources etc.)

2. **Processes:** what did you do? What activities took place?

3. **Outputs:** what happened as a result of your inputs and your processes?

4. **Impacts:** what difference did the inputs, processes and outputs make when considered against the overall aims and specific objectives of your community development program?

The evaluation framework on page 50 provides a template combining these key components. While there are a number of evaluation frameworks which might be useful for your planning, this is the one we used because it was straightforward and gave us the information we required. You may find other evaluation frameworks that use similar categories, but the definitions for each category can vary from framework to framework. As long as you are clear about how your chosen framework defines its elements and how these apply to your own project this should not present a problem.

Below, we provide details for one of our objectives by way of an example. Projects can have objectives that relate to the entire project as well as objectives that relate only to one element of the project. The framework we used can be applied to either the overall level or to the level of individual 'sub' objectives. The objective we use below is a sub-objective of our project that related to our first planning workshop. One of the objectives of this workshop was that by the end of the workshop participants would have the confidence to negotiate with schools in order to support their children. As you will see, analysing outputs and impacts allows you to determine whether or not your objective was met, while analysing inputs and processes contributes to measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.
It is also worth noting that processes that relate to one objective of a project can also be considered as ‘inputs’ into a subsequent objective. In our example over page, there were a number of activities that preceded the workshop without which it could not have occurred (such as community consultations about the direction of the project as a result of which we decided to hold weekend workshops). In the complete evaluation these activities are reported against another objective.

Our evaluation process
There are many different guides available on how to conduct an evaluation. Ones we found particularly useful were Feuerstein (1986) *Partners in Evaluation*, Craig (1978) *Hip Pocket Guide to Planning and Evaluation*, and Wadsworth (1997) *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*. Here we reflect not so much on the technical aspects of evaluation, but rather describe what we did to evaluate *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* in the hope that this example will be helpful to others.

We evaluated our project to:
• determine its impact on the South Sudanese community in the Brimbank area of Melbourne’s western suburbs
• assess the usefulness of community development as a tool for recovery from torture and trauma
• meet the requirements of our funding body

For our evaluation we used a participatory approach, involving the community development team and the community participants. The evaluation needed to be simple, straightforward, not intrusive and integrated into the community development process.

“The workshop was very fruitful in letting us know our rights; the Australian education system and how it works.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Inputs (What resources went into this project?)</th>
<th>Process (What did you do?)</th>
<th>Outputs/outcomes (What happened as a result of the inputs and the processes?)</th>
<th>Impacts (What difference did the inputs processes and outputs make?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| By workshop end, participants will have the confidence to negotiate with schools in order to support their children | • Staff time (paid and unpaid) and volunteer time (for all process indicators)  
• Staff salaries  
• Guest speaker fees  
• Venue hire fee  
• Food costs  
• Transport costs  
• Cost of workshop materials | • Organised the venue, catering and transport  
• Met with the planning sub-committee  
• Prepared workshop program (including evaluation activities)  
• Prepared information pack for participants  
• Briefed the facilitators and speakers  
• Conducted the program (for content see program for Workshop 1 in Appendix 1)  
• Produced action plans | • Increase in participants' understanding of the education system  
• Increase in participants' confidence in approaching teachers/schools  
• Increase in participants' confidence in helping children with their homework  
• Ability to plan for the future | • Participants planning and attending a meeting with a local school  
• Participants and school working in partnership to design a training program to raise awareness about Sudanese issues  
• Sudanese representation on school council |
| Evaluation Framework                                                                         | Indicator Method of measurement | Indicator Tools for gathering information | Indicator Tools for gathering information | Indicator Tools for gathering information |
|                                                                                              | Time sheets  
• Journals/diaries  
• Financial records  
• Invoices  
• Records of attendance  
• Acquittal to funding bodies | • Agendas and minutes of meetings  
• Emails  
• Team journal for preparation period  
• Workshop program document  
• Number and demographic profile of workshop participants  
• Reports to community from weekend workshop  
• Documented action plans | • Qualitative interviews with participants  
• Results from 'before and after' workshop exercises  
• Observer documentation of questions asked/ issues raised during workshops  
• Minutes from follow-up meetings  
• Participant statements before, during and after workshops  
• Action plans | • Agendas and minutes of meetings  
• Documented training program  
• Records of attendance at training sessions  
• Minutes of school council meetings |
Here we set out each step in our evaluation process, beginning with the question that we needed to address.

**Step 1: We need to evaluate, so what kind of approach should we take?**

We decided that a participatory evaluation approach was the most appropriate for this program. However, we needed to make a number of crucial decisions about the kind of participatory evaluation that could be realistically supported, taking into account time, financial resources, skills, and the capacities and agendas of the community. We decided on a ‘mid-range’ participatory approach where the community development team would work with staff with research/evaluation expertise to design an evaluation that could be integrated into the community development activities.

The approach was designed to be carried out largely by the community development team itself, but with some initial assistance from research/evaluation experts (Foundation House has a partnership with La Trobe University in the form of the Refugee Health Research Centre and we were lucky to be able to tap into the evaluation expertise of staff in the Centre). An explicit decision was made not to formally involve the community itself in the development of the evaluation approach and framework. However, they set objectives for the workshops which formed the basis for the evaluation. This decision was made in light of consultations with the Sudanese community who had other issues high on their agenda, and learning evaluation theory and skills was not one of them.

“The workshop has taught about many useful things that were not clear to me before.”
Step 2: How did we develop the participatory evaluation approach?

As described above, we used a standard evaluation framework that focused on gathering information about program inputs, processes, outputs and impacts. We worked from the principle that evaluation itself should not take over the community development project and that participation in the evaluation should add positive value to the community development activities themselves.

We began by discussing evaluation within the community development team and assessing our own felt needs in relation to evaluation skills and knowledge. The community development team consisted of staff with expertise in evaluation, community development theory and practice, health promotion, hands-on community development skills, knowledge and expertise about the Sudanese community, and expertise on the key issues to be addressed in the project (parenting, the education system, and torture and trauma). Collectively, the team was highly skilled; however, it did not share a common knowledge base on evaluation. Therefore we needed to establish a common understanding of evaluation across the team and to develop a process for evaluation that could be integrated into the community development activities. We achieved this by having members of the community development team attend workshops on evaluation (both internal and external) focusing on health promotion and participatory approaches.

"The workshop was very good. We were able to get information on the education system but we need more workshops on this."
Following this professional development, the community development team determined the evaluation questions we wanted to answer, given the aims and objectives of the project and the workshops. We also decided the information that we would need to collect to answer these questions. Once the weekend workshop programs had been developed in consultation with the planning subcommittees, the community development team worked with an evaluation expert from the Refugee Health Research Centre to develop the methods for collecting the information. For each workshop, evaluation exercises were either ‘overlaid’ on planned workshop activities or developed and integrated into the workshop programs. One of the challenges faced by the community development team was a lack of time to adequately pilot the evaluation exercises, as well as a lack of time for more formal training of the workshop facilitators in the implementation of the methods. This resulted in some evaluation exercises not working as expected at the workshops and amendments to activities needing to be made ‘on the run’.

After each workshop the community development team aimed to review the evaluation findings and to reflect on how these learnings might be applied to the conduct of the next workshop. Very little time was available for this reflection process as we were pressed to plan and conduct the next workshop. Ideally, more time would have been available to reflect and debrief and use what we learnt from one workshop to inform the next.

“I am very confident about my skills [as a result of this workshop].”
Step 3: What kinds of methods did we use to gather the information?
We wanted to gather both quantitative (how much/many) and qualitative (how/why/narrative) data to use in our evaluation. For a number of reasons we decided to integrate the tools for gathering information into the workshop activities. This was because we did not want evaluation to lead the project, so we were keen for evaluation to be as unobtrusive as possible. We were also resource poor and did not have the ability to devote sufficient resources to a dedicated evaluation role. In addition to exercises within the workshop activities, though, we asked participants to tell us what they thought of the workshops and the project, and recorded their responses in writing and on audio and video tape.

The methods of gathering data were designed as community development activities themselves. For example, in gathering basic background information on who attended the first workshop, we carried out an exercise called ‘Spin a Yarn’ asking participants to provide demographic information about themselves within the context of an icebreaker activity (see Appendix 2 for a complete description of this activity). The outcome of this exercise was that participants had an opportunity to get to know each other and at the same time we gathered information on family background, number of children participants had in school, which schools those children attended and what level of education children had attained. Appendix 2 describes the activities we used in the workshops and indicates which of these also functioned as evaluation exercises.

The workshop was very good and professional. It was important because it allowed our voice to be heard.
Step 4: How did we analyse the information we collected?

Evaluation has two main purposes. The first is to act as a feedback loop to the community development team about how the project is working and how they might make changes in response to issues arising. Secondly, evaluation is important for standing back after the program finishes and learning about what worked, what didn’t and why. Fundamental to both is reflection on the extent to which the program actually brought about the changes it was intended to bring about. If so, what were these? Are they sustainable? If not, why? What is learnt from the project then advises future practice.

Ideally the community development team itself is involved in looking at the data after it has been summarised and discussing the ‘meaning’ of what the data says. A collective interpretation of the evaluation information both builds the capacity for reflection among the team and informs future practice. For Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life we collected data, but had limited resources for the whole community development team to analyse what the information meant for our practice. We were able to assess the cost through analysis of the inputs. We were able to describe our processes and outputs from the many records we had kept. However, we had insufficient resources to analyse the impacts in depth, even though we felt that this was the most important aspect of our learning. Our recommendation to others contemplating a similar project is not to underestimate the resources required for analysing impacts and preparing a comprehensive report. Nevertheless, in this chapter we have commented on the successes of the project, guided by the analysis we were able to carry out.

What I found was the best thing, was our being together as a group.
Step 5: How do we know if our project worked?
One of the key questions evaluation aims to answer is: was the project successful? This is often a difficult question to address because both staff and participants invest much time and effort into community development projects. It is often difficult to stand back and take a look at what worked and what did not and to accept less than positive feedback. By considering inputs, processes, outputs and impacts separately, a clearer picture can be built of the success or otherwise of a community development project.

INPUTS
Assessing what a project cost in time and money (inputs) can indicate whether it was effective and efficient (which is part of determining success). The inputs for Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life were largely related to salary, unpaid hours of staff and participants, unpaid student placement hours and the costs of running weekend workshops (transport, food, accommodation, equipment etc). We estimate that over 5000 unpaid hours were contributed to the project, mostly by community participants but also by members of the community development team, who were also members of the community. This demonstrates the community’s investment in the project and their commitment to ensuring its success. It also indicates the extent of the role of community development workers who are recruited from the target community. Not only do community meetings occur during their paid hours, but in addition they may discuss the program in informal settings such as church gatherings, community events or phone calls at home.

[The best thing] about the workshop was] meeting new faces who I didn’t know before.
I came to the workshop in order to participate with friends, one bringing his opinion to the other. I am really happy tonight.

PROCESSES
Assessing what was done in the project (processes), provides both qualitative and quantitative data which can be used to assess a project’s success. Processes used in Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life included:

• research which identified settlement patterns and project models (used to plan the project and inform funding submissions)
• recruitment and orientation of the community development team
• networking with service providers to identify community leaders, projects being conducted with the community, and relevant issues for the community
• professional development for the community development team, including participation in programs conducted by other service providers
• internal team meetings
• practical preparations for the weekend workshops
• meetings with community leaders in formal and informal settings, before and after the weekend workshops
• weekend workshops

These processes were essential not only to ensure that the project was based on a solid rationale, but also to ensure that the community development team was well prepared to implement the project, and community members and Foundation House staff were able to work in partnership.
OUTPUTS
Assessing what happened directly as a result of the inputs and processes in a project (outputs) can be used to determine whether project objectives have been reached. For *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* we assessed outputs in terms of the specific initiatives that participants achieved as a result of participating in the weekend workshops (including their planning). These included:

- establishment of a community structure of subcommittees around key topics
- the decision to run three separate weekend workshops on topics identified by the community
- increase in participant’s knowledge and skills about specific topics/issues
- increase in participant’s self-confidence
- increase in participants’ sense of connections with, and belonging to, the South Sudanese community
- increase in participants’ sense of belonging to, and engagement with, the wider local community
- evidence of value shifts as participants found ways to incorporate new values into their families while maintaining Sudanese values
- strategies for further action developed by community participants during the workshops
- follow-up meetings of subcommittees to pursue strategies proposed during workshops
- exploration of partnerships with other services (for example, community health, child protection, domestic violence and police)
- two further weekend workshops (one with women and girls, one with men and boys) to address inter-generational communication issues

“This is my first time to attend such a forum and I think it is a good idea because in Australia we are very far from Sudan and people can get lost.”
In addition, the following two outputs had potential for significant long term impacts:

- establishment of a partnership with a school to develop and pilot a training program about the education system
- co-opting of one of the participants to a school council

It was also important for us to assess whether the project had supported participants to progress towards the recovery goals referred to in Chapter 3. This was much more complex to assess, but there were indications of success. Participants all spoke very positively about their experiences of the overall project and the weekend workshops, as is evident from their comments throughout this resource. In addition to reporting that they had gained information and skills, many commented on the benefits of being together as a group and meeting other members of their community. Based on comments and feedback from participants we felt that the workshops had succeeded on a number of levels, both in terms of the participants’ personal healing from trauma, and in terms of the plans that had been made for further action (discussed in Chapter 10).

We felt that trauma recovery was indicated by assessing outcomes against the goals in the community development recovery framework (see page 13). Participants felt that they had a close attachment to others in the workshops, that their opinions had been respected, that their planning had provided a sense of purpose, that information they had received contributed to a feeling of control, and that they had been afforded dignity through the project’s processes.

“It is very good that we as elders can come together to talk about the problems that we are having with our children.”
IMPACT

The overall goal of a community development project is to bring about some change for the better and, in bringing about this change, to build the capacity of the community. For *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* the aim was to build the capacity of the Sudanese community to be better able to identify and resolve important issues and problems that they were experiencing in the resettlement period as a result of their experiences of trauma. Although the specific issues for this project focused on parenting, the overall aim, which was important to Foundation House and the community, was to build the capacity for healing and enhance communal strengths. Such longer-term change is often difficult to assess and, if it is achieved, it can be difficult to attribute these changes specifically to the community development program.

While it is too early to fully assess the enduring impact of our project, there are already indications that long-term impacts are likely. For example, as a result of a partnership established between a local primary school and the South Sudanese community in St Albans, a training program for South Sudanese parents about the Australian education system was developed and successfully piloted. Foundation House has received many enquiries about the program which is now being documented and promoted to other schools. As a result of this program we expect that the capacity of schools and parents (and through them, communities) will be increased. Parents will gain knowledge of the school system, schools will increase their understanding of issues facing refugee parents in terms of their children’s education and, together, schools and parents will develop strategies for addressing these issues.

A further indication of long-term impact of our project is the appointment of a member of the South Sudanese community to the school council. This is likely to enhance this individual’s understanding of the education system which, through his role as a community leader, will be shared with other community members. In being an active participant in the school system, this individual has already influenced the council to more actively take account of the needs of South Sudanese parents. This is evidenced by the council’s request for him to conduct a needs analysis of South Sudanese parents at the school. We expect this to have a long lasting impact on both the school and the South Sudanese community.
It is important to design a long-term strategy for getting feedback about what happens as a result of the community development project. Here, issues of change and sustainability are key. *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* is a continuing partnership between Foundation House and the South Sudanese community in Melbourne’s western suburbs. Our ongoing involvement with the community in pursuing the strategies suggested during the planning workshops will provide opportunities to observe the longer-term impacts of the project and to gain further community feedback.

### Final reflections on the project’s success

As is often the case, the resources for evaluating our community development project were limited. We felt that, with extra resources, ideally we would have employed an experienced evaluator to provide a more structured and rigorous approach within a community development context; one who could analyse our data and write a comprehensive report. We would have liked formal follow-up interviews with participants to explore their reactions to the project, and assess whether it had a positive impact on their settlement in Australia.

Nevertheless, within the constraints of our funding, we feel able to observe that the project has been successful when community achievements and recovery goals are assessed. We base this on the many quotes which appear throughout this resource, and on the many more which do not appear but are in writing and on tape. In these, community members speak of their growing confidence and their identification of themselves as a community with the skills to name issues and together solve problems. Our Sudanese community development team members gave us feedback of growing community trust in Foundation House and the community’s plans to ensure the project was sustainable within their own structures. We observed outcomes which suggest the project’s success, ranging, for example, from producing achievable action plans to the appointment of a community member to a school council.

Throughout the project, meetings and workshops were very well attended, stimulating and productive. The meetings and workshops motivated the South Sudanese leaders to define themselves as a group who could take responsibility for planning and pursuing initiatives for and with their community. They identified areas where they felt disempowered – for example, within the education system – and initiated actions to help them become informed, less fearful and better able to negotiate control over their community’s future.
This more active and participatory community life strengthened relationships and developed an awareness of the skills, knowledge and other resources within the community. This gave the community confidence to engage with relevant agencies, and indicated a growing degree of control in their interactions with broader society to address the difficult issues they faced.

While it is too early to assess the long-term impacts of *Coming Together: Two Cultures: One Life*, our early observations and reports from the community indicate that a significant degree of recovery and re-establishment of trust in others has already occurred. There is also a suggestion that the workshops contributed to an increase in the self-esteem of participants, which enabled them to take control of their lives and plan for the future.

It is clear from the comments and activities of community members who participated in the planning phase of the *Coming Together: Two Cultures – One Life* project that the South Sudanese community is committed to ongoing involvement in strengthening their community and increasing their participation in the broader Australian community.

**ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

- Is evaluation necessary for your project? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- What kind of evaluation do you want to undertake?
- What stages of the evaluation will different people participate in?
- What is the mix of knowledge, skills and strengths of your community development team? Where are the gaps? Do you need to do some formal professional development and skill building in evaluating?

*continued over page*
ISSUES TO CONSIDER

→ What resources are available to build a team approach to participatory evaluation? Time? Money? Outside expertise?

→ Do you want the methods of data collection to be non-intrusive?

→ Will the community development team do the data collection themselves or will an outside evaluator collect the information? If the community development team will collect the information, what training do they need in data collection methods?

→ Do you want qualitative information? Quantitative information? A mix of both?

→ Do the methods of data collection need to take account of language and literacy of participants?

→ Will your data be used only for evaluation or also for other purposes (for example, newsletters, publications, publicity)? Have you obtained permission from participants to use evaluation data publicly, albeit anonymously?

→ Is there time during the community development project for analysis and reflection? Is there time after the community development project for interpretation and critical reflection of the evaluation results?

→ Is the team analysing input, process, output and outcome information in relation to the original objectives?

→ Did the project have any unintended outcomes? If so, were these good or bad? Why?

→ What impacts are anticipated as a result of the community development program? Are these short-term or long-term impacts?

→ Can you isolate measurable outcomes which can be attributed to the program?

→ Does the project have the resources to assess the impacts of the community development project?
Coming together: Two cultures, one life
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Appendix 1

Workshop Aims and Programs

Workshop One: Focus on Education 64
Workshop Two: Focus on Parenting 66
Workshop Three: Focus on Trauma 68
Workshop One: Focus on Education

Aims

• To provide accurate information to assist participants to have confidence in:
  — negotiating with schools
  — providing support in the education of their children
• To assist participants to develop strategies for working with schools and their children to enhance educational outcomes

Program

**Friday**
- 7.00 pm: Buses arrive
- 8.00 pm: Dinner
- 9.00 pm: Welcome and Introduction
- 9.30 pm: Ice-Breaker – Spin-a-Yarn
- 10.30 pm: Evaluation Exercise – My Hopes
- 10.40 pm: Evening Close

**Saturday**
- 8.00 am: Breakfast
- 9.00 am: Morning Session Commences
  — Group Prayer
  — Introduction: Agenda; Confirmation of Group Rules
- 9.15 am: Evaluation Exercise – How Well Do You?
- 9.45 am: Small Group Activity – Noah’s Box
- 12.30 pm: Lunch
- 1.30 pm: Debrief of Morning Session & Agenda
- 1.45 pm: Small Group Activity – Brainstorm on Education (Issues & Challenges)
- 3.00 pm: Afternoon Tea
- 3.20 pm: Guest speaker (Educational Specialist)
  Topics covered include:
  — the structure of the school system in Australia
  — the ways children learn
  — how parents can become more involved in their children’s education
  — selecting a school for your child
- 5.30 pm: Session Close
- 6.30 pm: Dinner
- 7.30 pm: Recreation and Free Time (volleyball, table tennis)
- 8.30 pm: Stories around campfire
- 10:00 pm: Evening Close
Workshop One: Focus on Education (continued)

Sunday
8.30 am  Church Service & Prayers
9.00 am   Breakfast
9.45 am   Debrief of yesterday's activities and agenda
10.00 am  Group Discussion – Where to From Here?: What Foundation House can do
10.45 am  Small Group Discussion – Where to From Here?: Suggested Strategies for Action
11.15 am  Morning Tea
11.35 am  Group Feedback Session – Where to From Here?
11.50 am  Group Activity: Totem Truths
12.45 pm  Camp Close
          — Evaluation Exercise (How Well Do You? – Part Two)
          — Survey
          — Concluding Remarks
1.30 pm   Lunch, Clean Up
2.00 pm   Depart Camp
Workshop Two: Focus on Parenting

Aims
- To provide accurate information to assist participants to have confidence in parenting within an Australian context
- To help participants recognise the influences of Australian culture on their children and work out some strategies for managing this reality
- To assist participants to develop strategies for gaining further familiarity with ‘the big issues’ of being a parent in Australia and participating in solving problems

Program

Friday
7.00 pm  Buses arrive
7.30 pm  Dinner and Slide Show (photographs from previous workshop)
8.00 pm  Welcome and Introduction
8.30 pm  Ice-Breaker – Family Matters
9.15 pm  Evening Close

Saturday
7.30 am  Breakfast
9.00 am  Morning Session Commences
— Group Prayer
— Introduction; Agenda
9.15 am  Evaluation Exercise – How Well Do You?
9.35 am  Small Group Activity – Mystery Envelopes
11.00 am  Morning Tea
11.15 am  Brainstorm on Parenting
12.30 pm  Lunch
1.00 pm  Guest Speaker (Family Counsellor)
   Topics covered include:
   — Effective communication
   — Win-win problem solving
   — Age-appropriate parenting
   — Importance of flexibility
3.00 pm  Afternoon Tea
3.30 pm  Guest Speaker (Child Protection Manager)
   Topics covered include:
   — Child Protection – how it works, scenarios
   — Discipline and Risk-taking behaviour
5.30 pm  Session Close
Workshop Two: Focus on Parenting (continued)

7.00 pm  Dinner
8.30 pm  Group Party (Music, Dancing)
10.30 pm Evening Close

Sunday
8.00 am  Breakfast
9.30 am  Church service
11.00 am Morning Session Commences
    — Agenda
11.05 am Group Discussion – Where to From Here?:
    Suggested Strategies for Action
12.00 pm Presentation – Spotlight on Success:
    Case studies in community development
12.30 pm Lunch
1.15 pm  Final Reflections
1.30 pm  Evaluation Exercise: How Well Do You? (Part 2)
1.45 pm  Camp Close
    — Concluding Remarks
    — Group Photos
    — Clean Up
2.30 pm  Depart
Workshop Three: Focus on Trauma

Aims

• To provide accurate information to assist participants to more fully understand the impact of past trauma on their everyday lives
• To assist participants to develop strategies for addressing their past experiences of unresolved trauma, in order to create a preferred future for themselves and their children in Australia

Program

Friday
7.00 pm  Buses arrive
7.30 pm  Dinner
8.30 pm  Welcome and Introduction
8.45 pm  Ice-Breaker – Heart Beats
9.00 pm  Evening Close

Saturday
8.00 am  Breakfast
9.00 am  Welcome and Introduction
9.15 am  Whole Group Discussion: Introduction to Trauma
10.30 am Morning Tea
10.45 am Small Group Activity – The Impact of Trauma
12.15 pm Group Feedback Session – The Impact of Trauma
1.30 pm  Lunch
2.00 pm  Small Group Activity – Brainstorm on Trauma
3.30 pm  Afternoon Tea
3.45 pm  Small Group Activity – Brainstorm on Trauma (cont.)
4.45 pm  Whole Group Discussion: What Did You Learn Today?
5.15 pm  Group Activity (beach walk, group photos)
7.00 pm  Dinner
7.45 pm  Recreation & Free Time
8.30 pm  Camp stories
10:00 pm Evening Close
Workshop Three: Focus on Trauma (continued)

Sunday
8.00 am  Breakfast
9.00 am  Church Service & Prayers
10.00 am Morning Session Commences
    — Agenda
    — Review of outcomes of previous workshops
10.15 am Group Discussion – Where to From Here?:
         What Foundation House Can Do
11.15 am Morning Tea
11.30 am Small Group Discussion – Where to From Here?:
         Suggested Strategies for Action
12.45 pm Group Feedback Session: Where to From Here?
1.30 pm  Workshop Close
         — Evaluation Exercise – What have the workshops meant
             to you?
         — Concluding Remarks
1.45 pm  Lunch
2.30 pm  Clean Up
3.00 pm  Depart
Coming together: Two cultures, one life
Appendix 2

Workshop Activities
(with Facilitator’s Notes)

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Introductory Activities

Activity: Welcome and Introduction

Time required: 15 minutes

Aims:
— To welcome participants
— To introduce facilitators and workshop staff to the group
— To alert participants to ‘housekeeping’ issues
— To communicate the overall aims and objectives of the weekend

Materials:
Copies of agendas for participants

Method:
Presentation by facilitator

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Welcome participants to the workshop
— Invite a member to open the workshop with a group prayer
— Introduce facilitators and other staff
— Inform group of ‘house-keeping’ issues including:
  – evacuation points
  – location of toilets
  – tea/coffee-making facilities
  – catering
— Provide an overview of the community development project
— Refer to the aims and objectives of the weekend in the participants’ agendas
Activity: Setting House Rules

**Time required:** 15 minutes

**Aim:**
To establish group expectations and reach consensus on group ‘rules’

**Materials:**
Butcher’s paper, Blu-tack, marker pens

**Method:**
Facilitator-led group brainstorm and scribing by facilitator

**Discussion points/suggestions:**
— Invite participants to establish a series of group rules
— Ideally these rules should include:
  – complete confidentiality among participants
  – mobile phones to be switched off during the sessions
  – respect for each other
— It is important that all participants are encouraged to participate in this process so that the rules may be ‘owned’ by the group
Icebreaker Activities

Activity: Spin-A-Yarn

Time required: 45 minutes

Aims:
— To enable participants to learn more about each other
— To create a community profile to inform the program and its evaluation

Materials:
Very large ball of wool, butcher’s paper, textas

Method:
Participants sit in a circle. Using a large ball of wool, the first participant winds a length of wool around their finger and tells the group four things about themselves:
— their name
— how many children they have
— what grade levels their children are in
— what schools their children attend

This information is recorded by a scribe on butcher’s paper. The participant then throws the ball of wool to another member of the group and the process is repeated until all members of the group have participated and a ‘web’ of wool is created.

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Have the four questions written on the whiteboard/butcher’s paper to assist with memory
— Ask for a volunteer to start the process
— Encourage people to throw the wool across the circle (as opposed to just handing it to the person next to them) to create an intricate web
— At the end of the exercise, the facilitator should interpret the community profile created and comment on the number of children involved
— At the end of the exercise, note the web that connects all participants
— At the end of the exercise, the web can be cut into lengths of wool and given to participants to braid into a bracelet/bookmark as a keepsake of the workshop and reminder of their connections to their community
Activity: Family Matters

**Time required:** 30 – 45 minutes

**Aims:**
— To introduce participants to one another
— To highlight the parenting strengths of participants

**Materials:**
Butcher’s paper, textas, participants’ names, hat/basket

**Method:**
Individual introductions and scribing

**Discussion points/suggestions:**
— Ask each participant to say their name and answer the following:
  – name one activity you like to do with your children
  – name one reason you like being a parent
— To begin the exercise select one person’s name from the hat. Once they have introduced themselves and answered the questions, ask them to select someone else’s name from the hat
— Have a co-facilitator write down people’s responses
— Interpret the findings in terms of the range of activities that families do together and the roles parents play in their children’s lives
Activity: Heart Beats

**Time required:** 15 minutes

**Aims:**
- To give participants the opportunity to re-acquaint themselves with each other and meet new participants
- To give participants an opportunity to express their feelings about participating in the workshop

**Materials:**
Small hand drum

**Method:**
Participants sit in a large circle and pass a small hand drum from one to the next.

**Discussion points/suggestions:**
- Ask each person to say their name and beat the drum in a way that reflects how they are feeling
- Reflect on the range of feelings expressed through the drumming and what particular drumming methods might have symbolised (for example, energised, excited, tired, nervous)
- Let participants know that all these feelings are normal and that they might feel differently at different times of the workshop
- This exercise can also be used throughout the workshop to refocus the group if energy levels are dropping
Reflection Activities

Activity: My Hopes

Time required: 15 minutes

Aims:
— To encourage participants to take ownership over their own learning by reflecting on and establishing their own goals and objectives
— To provide facilitators with information about participants’ goals so they can tailor the workshop appropriately
— To provide a list of participants’ goals against which the outcomes of the workshop can be evaluated

Materials:
Two A5 cards for each participant, pens/textas, collection box

Method:
Distribute two cards to each participant and ask them to write or draw on one card why they are attending the workshop. On the other card ask them to write or draw what they hope to achieve as a result of the workshop. Ask them to place their cards in the collection box.

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Let participants know they can write in the language of their choice
— Let participants know they can ask for help if they need assistance with writing
Activity: How Well Do You?

Time required: 25 minutes

Aims:
— To gauge participants’ level of knowledge/confidence in response to particular scenarios (both in their home country and in Australia)
— To provide evaluation data against which outcomes of the workshop can be measured

Materials:
Three large photographs/cartoons/symbols of different levels of understanding

Method:
Place three different cards that demonstrate different levels of knowledge/confidence that participants might have in response to a given scenario (for example, ‘very confident’ could be represented by a happy face; ‘not confident’ could be represented by a confused/worried face; ‘neither confident/unconfident’ could be represented by a neutral facial expression).

Read out pre-prepared scenarios relevant to the workshop topic and ask participants to move to the area in the room where the card is displayed that best symbolises their level of knowledge/confidence in responding to the scenario.

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Scenario examples:
  – If you were living in Sudan and a new family with kids came to stay in your village, and they asked you to tell them about the education system in Sudan, would you be able to:
    • say a lot and tell them lots of stories about how things work
    • tell them a bit about it but not give a lot of detail
    • say just a few things about the system
  – Now in Australia, if a new family from Sudan moved in next to you with kids, and they asked you to tell them about the education system in Melbourne, would you be able to:
    • say a lot and tell them lots of stories about how things work
    • tell them a bit about it but not give a lot of detail
    • say just a few things about the system
— Interpret the results, and if possible link the results to the overall aims and objectives of the workshop. (For example, 'It would appear that many of you do not know a lot about the education system in Australia. Tomorrow we will have a guest speaker who may be able to assist you with this knowledge.')
— By repeating this exercise at the end of the workshop you can gauge the impact of the workshop.
Activity: Noah’s Box

Time required: 1.5 – 2 hours

Aims:
— To encourage participants to reflect on their own experience of learning
— To highlight that there are many different types of learning that go beyond formal education and that parents/guardians can play a vital role in their child’s education

Materials:
Objects likely to remind participants of their own education and ways of learning, for example: bundles of sticks (counting); Sudanese cooking utensils (cooking); plastic animals (nature); photos of a Sudanese school (school); Arabic alphabet (alphabet/reading), box to place the objects in.

Method:
Divide participants into groups of five/six people. Invite participants to choose an object from ‘Noah’s Box’ that reminds them of something about their own education and tell the group what the object symbolises for them.

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Where relevant and possible, decide on workshop groups ahead of time so that each group includes participants with a diverse range of experiences
— Prompts to begin discussion could be:
  – what made you choose that item?
  – what was it about that item that made you think about learning?
— Allow participants to reflect on their educational experiences in their own way. Follow up questions could include:
  – did you attend a formal school? If you didn’t attend formal school how did you learn?
  – what were your teachers like?
  – what did you learn at school? What was your favourite subject?
  – what role did your parents play in your education? What did you learn from them?
— After the last participant has finished speaking, facilitate a general group discussion about the different ways in which people learn. Highlight the important role that parents/grandparents play in the education of a child. Highlight the importance of informal learning as a supplement to formal education.
Activity: Totem Truths

Time required: 1 hour

Aims:
— To highlight the strength of each individual
— To highlight the contribution that every participant makes to the strength of the overall group

Materials:
A4 pieces of card (one for each participant); drawing materials; craft materials (for example, feathers, sequins, pom poms, glue, fabric); scissors; Blu tack; poles to attach cards to.

Method:
Give each participant a card and ask them to draw an animal that symbolises the strength/skill that they bring to their community. Once all participants have completed their drawing, ask them to affix their drawing to the pole to create a group ‘totem pole’.

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Explain that in some ethnic groups totem poles are carved to tell the story of a person and/or tribe
— Give examples of the kinds of strengths that people possess and the value of working as a team
— Ask participants to write the name of their strength/skill on their drawing
— Give each individual the opportunity to say a few words about their strength to the rest of the group
— Summarise by pointing out the range of skills and strengths that are available to the community
Activity: Mystery Envelopes

Time required: 1 – 1.5 hours

Aims:
To encourage participants to reflect on their own personal experiences of being parented

Materials:
Butcher’s paper, textas

Method:
Small group discussion

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Divide the participants into small groups of approximately six people
— Prepare enough questions so each participant has a question to answer and place one question in individual, separate envelopes, for example:
  — In the Sudan, describe a typical family. In this typical family, who would be the most important people in a child’s life?
  — What were some of the ways that you learnt about your culture from your family? Who taught you? Why was this important?
  — What were one or two of the traditions between parents and children that were practised in your family when you were growing up?
  — In Sudan what were some of the common issues and/or conflicts that occurred between parents and children? How were these resolved?
— Ask each person to take it in turns to choose an envelope and answer the question
— The questions are designed as prompts for discussion
— This activity can be easily adapted to cover any topic
Planning Activities

Activity: Where to From Here?

Time required: 1 – 1.5 hours

Aim:
To document strategies that the community can pursue after the workshop to address identified issues

Materials:
Butcher’s paper, textas

Method:
Small group discussion and scribing

Discussion points/suggestions:
— Present an overview of the types of issues that have been identified in the workshop exercises and brainstorming activities
— Ask participants to work in small groups to generate and document strategies to address each of the identified issues
— Explain that the strategies identified will be used by the subcommittee as a starting point for developing a more refined action plan
— Ask each group to nominate a spokesperson to feedback to the whole group
Community Development with Sudanese Refugees
A Case Study

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