

Refugees, Health and Trauma: Barriers to Resettlement

Jennifer Mills
Cross Cultural Learner Centre



Photograph from UNHCR. (2007).
The 1951 Refugee Convention Questions and Answers.
<http://www.unhcr.org/basics/BASICS/3cof495f4.pdf>



UN refugee camp,
Eastern Nepal



Durable Solutions

Voluntary Repatriation



Above: Liberians returning home from Guinea.
Right: Naturalization of Guatemalans in Mexico.

Local Integration



Resettlement

Overview

Local Context

Types of Trauma

Challenges of Resettlement

Effects of Trauma

Helpful Practices



Overview



- UN Convention on Refugees¹
- 9.9 million refugees worldwide in 2006²
- Less than 1% of refugees are resettled³
 - Resettlement need: 561,000
 - Resettlement capacity: 127,000
 - Resettlement country spaces: 60,000

1. UNHCR. (2007). *The 1951 Refugee Convention Questions and Answers*. <http://www.unhcr.org/basics/BASICS/3cof495f4.pdf>

2. UNHCR. (2007). *Statistical Yearbook 2006 Chapter 2*. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/478cda572.html>

3. UNHCR. (2007). *Statistical Yearbook 2006 Chapter 3*. <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/478cda572.html>



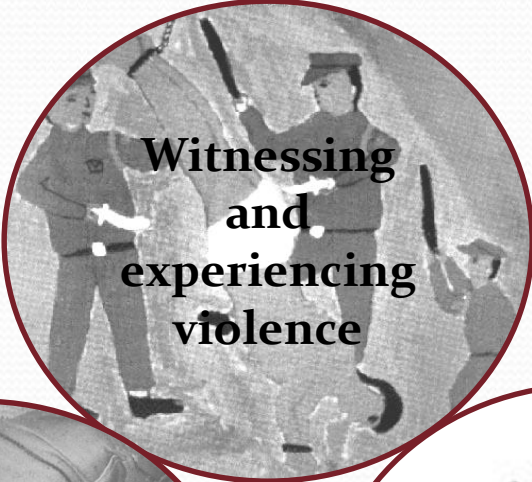
Local Context

- Canada grants permanent residence to about 25,000 refugees/year⁴
 - 7,300 Government-Assisted (GARs)
- Refugees coming to London CCLC (about 300/yr)
 - Top countries of origin: Myanmar, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan
- Shift in emphasis from “ability to settle successfully” to “protection”

Trauma Before and During Flight



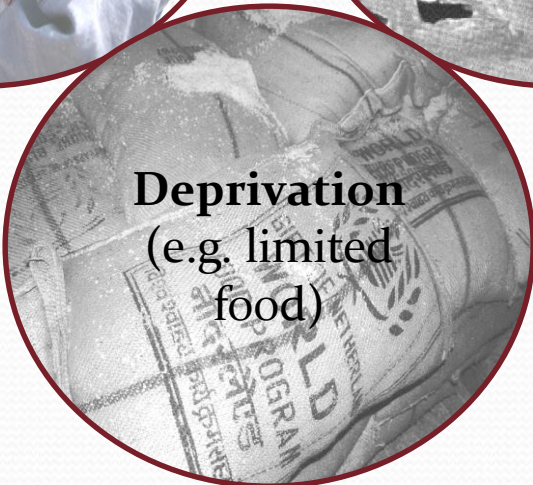
**Separation
from family**



**Witnessing
and
experiencing
violence**



**Sexual
violence**



**Deprivation
(e.g. limited
food)**



**Torture
(practiced in
over 90
countries⁵)**

Challenges of Resettlement



Loss of social support



Low socioeconomic status



Loss of occupation and role



Unable to communicate and confusion around services, expectations and culture



Reorganization of family unit

Effects of Trauma^{6, 7}

Physical

- Injuries (e.g. constant pain, scarring, limited mobility)
- Functional complaints

Social

- Conflict in personal relationships
- Unable to care for children
- Mistrust of others

Psychological

- Depression and/or anxiety
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Flashbacks and nightmares
- Difficulties with memory and concentration



6. WHO. (1996). *Mental Health of Refugees*. <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1996/a49374.pdf>

7. Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. (2004). *After-Effects of Torture*. http://www.ccvvt.org/effects_torture.html

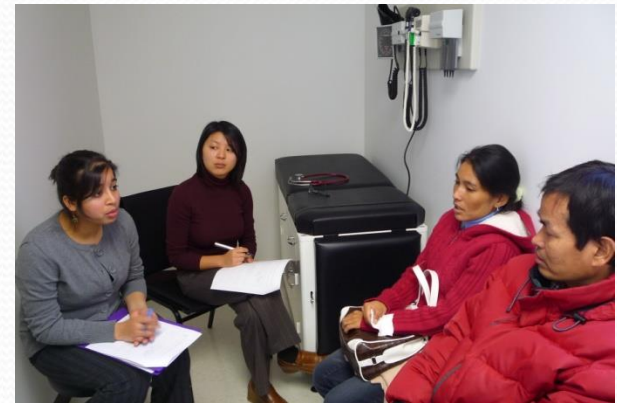
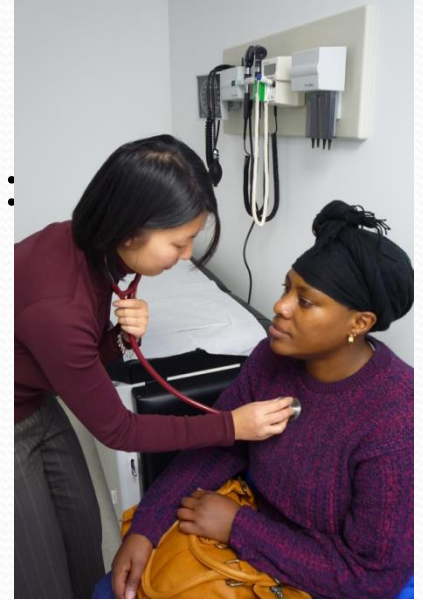
Partners in Caring...

- Pilot project at London Cross Cultural Learner Centre
- Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- We work with Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) living in London
- Goal: Clients will be able to access health services on their own by end of 12 months



...A Community Response to Refugee Trauma

- Settlement Health Worker (Sherin Hussien):
 - Books appointments and interpreters
 - Accompanies clients to appointments
 - Refers clients to health organizations
 - Delivers workshops to clients on health
- Trauma Counselor (Derek Oss):
 - Provides emotional and psychological support to clients
- Volunteer Acupuncturist
- Medical Clinic



Volunteer Opportunities

- Volunteer
 - Host Program at Cross Cultural Learner Centre
 - Community Education Day



Circles of Support

- Individual
 - Finds understanding and validation
 - Coping skills
- Social/Institutional
 - Education, health, social services are accessible
 - Conditions present to initiate social reconciliation
 - Provides opportunities for justice

Contact Information

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre

505 Dundas Street
(519) 432-1133

Community Educator
Jennifer Mills
(519) 432-1133 ext. 278
jmills@lcclc.org



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- Robertson, Cheryl et al. (2006). Somali and Oromo refugee women: trauma and associated factors. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 56(6), 577-587.
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