

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST

CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP 2004

***REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE
USING MENTORING***

CHURCHILL STUDY TOUR REPORT

‘Turn a jobless refugee into an indispensable colleague’ Emplooi poster, The Netherlands

‘Our role is to put the flame into the mentors’ eyes.’ Tom Pedersen, Mentor Coaching, Denmark

Jill Carr

2 Horne St, East Brunswick, Victoria, Australia 3057 Tel 03 9387 3201; email jillecarr@yahoo.com.au

Co-ordinator, *Given The Chance* Refugee Project, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence, PO Box 1389, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia 3066; Tel 03 9416 0044 / 0419 314 792
Email jcarr@bsl.org.au / www.bsl.org/given

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Signed Jill Carr

Dated 25/1/2005

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of a 2004 Churchill Fellowship to visit refugee employment projects, in particular those using mentors.

I visited the following programs:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jill Carr 2 Horne St, E. Brunswick, Victoria, Australia 3057 Tel 03 9387 3201; jillecarr@yahoo.com.au

Co-ordinator, *Given The Chance* Refugee Project, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence, PO Box 1389, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia 3066; Tel 03 9416 0044 / 0419 314 792
jcarr@bsl.org.au / www.bsl.org/given

Fellowship Objective To visit refugee employment projects, in particular those using mentoring.

Overview of the *Given The Chance* Refugee Project:

The Project helps refugee community development by assisting refugees towards career employment. Elements include a work preparation course specific to refugees, work experience placements and long-term mentoring with a professional in the field the refugee hopes to enter. The project is based at the Ecumenical Migration Centre of the Melbourne welfare agency, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, with funding largely from the Victorian Government.

Highlights, Findings, Implementation

Emplooi, The Netherlands; a non-government project that uses a national network of 100 retired executives based in job centres to mentor case loads of refugee mentees, generating between 500 to 600 jobs each year; the link with job centres is valuable, and means time is not lost in missed meetings; *Promote concept to business, government, senior and professional associations, employment networks, philanthropic foundations, and seek support for a pilot*

UAF, The Netherlands: national assistance for refugee tertiary students; is also highly effective, providing holistic support specific to refugees from first year into graduate employment, including financial assistance of 60% gift / 40% interest-free loan. *Promote concept among universities and TAFES, and philanthropic groups*

Intercultural Communication Institute, Oregon, USA: stimulating research and innovative ideas re cross-cultural training; the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), provides sophisticated analysis of intercultural skills of individuals and organisations, and is a resource the project could offer on a fee for service basis *Review project training material with input from refugee participants, liaise with other agencies developing intercultural training, seek partners in establishing centre of excellence in intercultural mentoring*

Mentor Coaching, Copenhagen, Denmark: preparation of workplace supervisors to mentor trainees, eg refugees, and also young trainees from troubled backgrounds such as ex-offenders, ex-drug users; 95% complete the traineeships and most continue in employment, demonstrating the value of targeted training *Promote concept to related employment programs within the Brotherhood and to relevant agencies, incorporate training techniques, eg supervisors' awareness of mentees' learning style*

Towns Together project, Malmo, Sweden: a national project in Sweden's 3 largest towns in partnership with business, government and refugee communities: to promote the benefits of diversity to business, and the view of refugees as potential new customers *Promote this approach to the Brotherhood's innovation unit, to business organisations such as the Business Council, and to refugee communities;*

Vocational language program, Stockholm Comune, Sweden,: preparation for employment areas requiring workers, developed in conjunction with employers, and combined with initial language training *Promote, tighten link between *Given The Chance* training material, and current job opportunities*

Time Together refugee mentoring program, London, UK: now operating in 6 cities, it is the largest mentoring program in the UK, and is key to the UK Government making mentoring part of its integration policy; training material includes a video; their web site is highly developed with an online skills bank, etc. *Seek support in promoting mentoring as valuable in achieving refugee settlement, promote training approach, use website as model for expansion of *Given The Chance* web information*

Refugee Integration projects, Italy; new types of jobs for refugees, and tools to improve assistance to refugees:

cultural mediators: to negotiate issues and conflict between local people and refugees, utilising skills and knowledge gained out of refugee experience;

live-in carers for the elderly: growing demand for single, female live-in carers of the elderly; benefit to the refugee include stable board and lodging; a training course has been developed;

advocacy of: a log book: for refugees to carry with them to record their own and agencies' activities re job seeking, to solve the problem of duplication of documentation and reception work; also, common skills audit form and resume for job-seeking refugees

promote to other agencies working with refugees

* * *

Proposed Dissemination of Findings via;

- presentations within the Brotherhood of St Laurence and to *Given The Chance* project participants – refugees, mentors, workplaces, other refugee agencies, refugee community leaders and organisations, local government, employer, professional and business groups, eg Rotary, retiree associations, government, unions, universities, labour market research centres, Job Network providers, Centrelink
- presenting conference papers, eg on mentoring, intercultural issues, employment pathways for culturally diverse people, community development
- publishing articles, eg our journal ‘Migration Action’ and other refugee and social policy-related journals
- advocacy of recommendations, as per end of Report, p 23

PROGRAMME

- Institute of Intercultural Communication, Portland, Oregon, **USA**;
- National and local Government, Catholic and lay agencies in Bologna and Rome, **Italy**
- Local Government, Refugee Council, Emplooi, in Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague, **The Netherlands**
- Refugee Council, mentoring consultant, community agencies, in Copenhagen, **Denmark**
- Projects, study centre, government and city projects in Malmo, Stockholm and Norrkoping, **Sweden**
- Refugee Council, Time Together Volunteer program, Evelyn Oldfield Unit, Employability, Refugee Education and Training Scheme, in London, **UK**.

FELLOWSHIP: LESSONS LEARNED

USA

Intercultural Communication Institute (ICI), Portland, Oregon,

The ICI is a small independent non-profit centre which develops and runs intercultural training, holds annual summer schools, conducts research, and acts as a clearing house of material, published and unpublished. The centre is used by diversity trainers, universities with international students or global campuses, organisations doing business abroad, and people working in intercultural mediation and conflict resolution.

Purpose of Visit:

- to identify resources to improve training for both refugees and those working with them – mentors, workplace supervisors, agencies; with particular regard to employment and study preparation, and to mentoring
- to attend a 3 day training course on using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) based on research by the ICI and used by, eg, organisations to measure employees’ intercultural understanding and skills, to identify gaps and develop appropriate training

The ICI Library is a unique collection of material on intercultural communication - books, articles and unpublished papers from the ICI’s annual summer schools with current thought on these issues. I spent 2 days browsing and photocopying. Much of the material is unpublished and is not available elsewhere.

IDI Training Course run by Milton Bennet and Mitch Hammer

Day 1: overview intercultural theories and research, background to the development of the IDI – research, testing, analysis, validity

Day 2: application of the IDI, case studies using the IDI to diagnose issues; providing feedback

Day 3: we undertook the test ourselves and were debriefed on the results; individual profiling, group profiling, research applications

Conclusion: ICI resources useful in Australia

Material to improve effectiveness of content and delivery of intercultural training re mentoring and employment preparation: will foster mutual benefit to refugees and to their mentors and workplaces; potential to deepen understanding between people of differences races, creeds and cultures

Resources collected: NB copyright applies

- Intercultural Development Inventory
- Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory
- Books, articles, reports, etc dealing with intercultural issues, research, theories, training methodologies

VISITS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

Background to Current Situation re Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the EU

Accurate statistics on refugees and asylum seekers are very difficult to collect. Official figure that after a large increase in asylum seeker numbers in 2000 / 2001, numbers dropped except in Italy: in 2003 there were 170,000 asylum seekers in Italy, 90,000 in UK and Germany, 70,000 in France. This is due to increasing restrictions on asylum seekers, eg Germany's electronically monitored eastern border, and to the impact of the Dublin Decree, with EU countries now returning asylum seekers to their initial entry point, which is often Italy, with asylum seekers arriving by sea from the south. The average success rate in the EU of applications made by asylum seekers for recognition of refugee status has dropped to 10%. This means 90% are required to leave. While the EU sets minimum standards re reception of asylum seekers, interpretation of these varies greatly.

'Immigrant' tends to be used in the EU as a catch-all term that includes refugees and asylum seekers. Historically, 'immigrant' usually means people coming from places EU countries once colonised. Only Denmark and Sweden have offshore refugee programs and they are for very small numbers – 500. Compared with Australia's proportion of people born outside Australia, EU countries, excepting France and the UK, look monocultural.; eg 'immigrants' are called 'new Danes / Dutch', etc, and there is much emphasis on their learning the local language and customs. There is considerable popular anxiety about being 'overrun' by asylum seekers.

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VISITS IN ITALY

NB. Visits were conducted in Italian. I have endeavoured to check facts with written material. Feedback on any errors readers find would be appreciated.

Background:

Asylum seekers mostly arrive in southern Italy by boat, pass through Rome and head north as that is where factory work is, or continue to Germany. Rome acts as a 'revolving door', with agencies often reprocessing asylum seekers several times over. Asylum seekers come mostly from Africa, East Europe and Asia. Italian legislation re asylum seekers is unclear, and to date there is only 1 commission, located in Rome, to determine requests for recognition as refugees. Another 5 commissions are to be set up in 2005 to help remedy this. Asylum seekers are given 3-month visas renewable for a theoretical ceiling of 1 year, but requests for refugee status take months, often more than a year, to process. Services assisting asylum seekers advocate for legal capacity to recognise refugees prior to entry into Italy. The 'Fini Bossi' law, brought in in 2000, has made it more difficult for asylum seekers, and allows only 23 days for assessment of applications.

Asylum seekers are assisted mostly by Catholic agencies, eg Caritas, which provides basics such as blankets, food, training. They are allowed to do short term casual work or take courses. They receive 70 Euros per month from the State (about A\$150). Those who are recognised as refugees are then required to study Italian language and culture, via courses run by the Church, unions, and charities. While studying, refugees receive 560 E per month (about \$A1,100).

Bologna: a university town of 400,000 in northern Italy.

Centro dei Servizi Formazione ('centre for enabling services')

Funded primarily by the Comune (local council) and located in a small office in the city centre, they assist asylum seekers with basic needs such as housing, food, Italian language study, and also with the complex legal requirements for making applications for refugee status. The day I visited, 4 young Congolese were sleeping in the office. The reception area is always crowded.

Courses available via the centre:

- work preparation: some courses are linked to the University of Bologna; courses are generally 4 months long, and run 3 times a year; refugees receive a small stipend to attend.
- 'Chiedo Asilo ('I ask for asylum')', a national program for asylum-seekers, funded by the EU and the State, and run in about 70 places in Italy; the program in Bologna offers 28 places
- The national unemployment office funds employers to offer traineeships /apprenticeships; centre staff do some workplace visits.
- a new course about seeking work in the private sector for immigrants; centre staff did interviews, wrote up research.

Process re Applying for Recognition as Refugees:

The previous week the Refugee Commission had sat in Bologna and decided on 140 cases in 2 days, hearing each case in about 5 minutes and taking notes by hand. They rejected all the Afghan asylum seekers. I attended a meeting of centre staff with the Comune lawyer to prepare appeals on behalf of the rejected asylum seekers on the ground of denial of natural justice.

* * *

Caritas Conference on Migration: 'Exile – an invisible wound'

Caritas is the major Catholic welfare agency with branches in many countries. A few years ago there was much controversy when a senior Church figure proposed that Caritas only work with Catholics: this has been repudiated. Conference participants were mostly service providers. Speakers included Caritas workers and unionists.

Summary:

- Caritas' goal is to 'create a society which is open, dynamic, secure'; they don't want refugees to become citizens without effective citizenship
- 1 in 10 refugees becomes self-employed
- immigrants to Italy in 2003 were mostly from Romania, Morocco, Albania, Ukraine, China, Phillipines; gender ratio is about equal; 70% go north
- Italian media is very negative toward immigrants; 'their stories are drowned in silence'; Italians have forgotten their own history of emigration
- Main areas of work they find is domestic, agricultural, factory
- Opportunities are offered by globalisation such as dialogue between different religions

ROME:

Caritas: meeting with co-ordinator Josefa

Josefa co-ordinates 40 refugee projects; 100 new asylum seekers arrive at her agency daily; the concept is that Caritas pilots a model which the State then takes over. Caritas at some levels liaises with government. Josefa's office provides level 1 & 2 support, eg:

- managing 50 volunteers who teach Italian to refugees: classes are 6 hours a week.
- a campaign versus the sex trade – a great problem re Ukraine; they are using posters with photos to try to raise the awareness of young Ukraine women who are brought to Italy.
- a new type of work for female asylum seekers has developed called 'babante' - live-in assistants for the elderly; many refugee women do this work for their first few years in Italy; there is a high demand from Italians; Caritas has developed training which is paid for by local government.

- professional training, eg tailored for women, to make and sell handicrafts; they are trying to set up a co-operative funded by a philanthropic foundation: no Government funds are available nor is there interest from business.
- 40 Caritas agencies run welcome and integration programs for refugees, eg training to work in pizzerias; the pilot went well; they are running the course again: Caritas pays the refugees undertaking it
- Caritas also has a work preparation course: where the opportunities are, services, employment law re rights and responsibilities.

It is very difficult for male refugees: there is no manufacturing work; there is some work in hospitality but most employers don't want Africans.

Many agencies working with refugees advocate that asylum seekers should carry with them log books so that agencies can record their actions with the asylum seeker and learn about what other agencies have done or are doing.

Refugee Projects in South Italy:

- Siracusa project in Calabria: a new agricultural – biological project, which is very successful; a co-operative of wineries also trains migrants who can set up markets in their home countries;
- there is also some agri-tourism eg woodwork
- a project in a formerly deserted village in Calabria; ruined houses have been repaired by groups of refugees; they are now selling handicrafts, and the village is attracting tourists

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Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), Berardino:

First level Services:

JRS was born in the 1980's when asylum seekers began arriving in Italy by boat; JRS started a canteen now serving 300 meals a day in Rome, and offers 300 beds a night. There are few paid staff, and many volunteers; they help about 8000 refugees a year. Medical services are provided by volunteers. JRS also runs a school teaching Italian to refugees.

Second level services:

JRS developed a laundry co-operative of refugees; it required much assistance to get started; it has been running 8 years; they won't do another as it is very costly.

JRS also has projects in north Italy where there is much more work – women often do hair-dressing, eg in Trecento, Vicenza, but lodging is very costly: JRS helps with this: it owns 2 apartments in these cities, sends refugees there for 8 months so they can work and save money to be able to pay rent later.

In Rome JRS provides guarantees to landlords re refugee tenants: only 1 in 2 landlords will accept refugees; it is a good model but very intensive, takes a lot of time.

There is minimal assistance or interest in refugees from business.

New projects:

- Professional training of 25 refugees to run settlement services; 6 refugees now are paid workers with JRS; the course is 600 hours and includes work experience; the refugees don't get paid to do the course, but are provided with board and lodging by JRS; the course is accredited, and delivered in liaison with the regional training office.
- An EQUAL project, funded by EU is about to start in Sicily and in Trento in North Italy; building accommodation with 30 beds.

* * *

'Integ.r.a – integrazione richiedenti asilo' – integration for those asking asylum: work preparation for refugees: Marilisa

An Equal project, funded by EU and the State, with partners in France and Germany for transnational sharing of information. The project started in 2002 and has funding until 2006. In Italy it has 35 partners – 8 municipalities, 25 organisations and academic institutions. It liaises with the Ministry of Labour and

Welfare. The aim re work is to help refugees into professional training by formalising their refugee experience. In each of the municipalities a local Integ.r.a office has been set up. The role of the central office in Rome is to develop 2 data bases – 'national thematic tables' - , one re access to the labour market, the other re housing, and to support local Integra offices by promoting best practice. The data base helps local offices to compile refugees' skills audits and resumes, and holds data on refugees' past education, professional history, housing history.

The project works with state and with non-government organisations (ngo's); except for short term casual work asylum seekers are not allowed to work unless they gain refugee status. It is not hard to find businesses to take refugees in the north as they need workers, but it is very hard in the south as there is high unemployment. Two workers follow the refugee through the process, 1 from the employer who does the interviews and audits, and one from Integra; the focus is on manual work, eg OHS issues. Training is done mainly by the ngos, in small groups, from 6 to 16. The project provides both the work skills and the Italian language skills which refugees are required to develop, and also includes resume preparation.

Meeting with Daniele:

Each commune / municipality decides how many asylum seekers to take and if they want to provide integration services themselves or hand it over to an ngo. They offer a maximum of 30 places per course. Communes have to offer housing and Italian language, free health care, schooling, but not university; some scholarships, access to free legal advice, information re work opportunities etc. CIT runs a project for torture survivors.

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Servizio Sociale Integrazione (SSI): Anna Adamczyk

Social Service Integration is the only lay project in Rome helping refugees. It gets funding from the Rome Comune, Lazio region, Equal Opportunity Office, UNOP, UNDP, EU and donations. It works very much with volunteers; as with most agencies there are a few paid staff and many volunteers. SSI liaises with other agencies, eg Caritas, eg on human trafficking, and with the Evangelical Church; networking is crucial.

The project provides first Italian language programs, then skills auditing; they help refugees get their home country qualifications recognised via Italian embassies in their home countries. There are many professional courses available for refugees, which often include work experience; courses are generally about 600 -700 hours of training: the Government pays the provider. Such courses have been run for the last 10 years. Of the last group of 20 refugees who did the course, only 1 has gained work.

Most refugees do 'black' work, ie illegal, to support themselves. Many African refugees have qualifications from Eastern Europe countries, but these are often no longer relevant and the courses no longer exist. Often they refuse to do new courses. Many Indians work in the dairy industry in south Italy; Ethiopians and Eritreans from former Italian colonies often work in tomato production. Some Government funds are available to help refugees start businesses; one success story is of a male physiotherapist from the Congo who set up a co-operative with 8 others who trained as physiotherapists; they now all work for a hospital.

SSI are going to try to set up a new co-operative in January 2005, they will lend 70% of costs to start up, no interest to pay. They also work with Victims of Torture with micro-projects, eg to buy computers. They are trying to collate data from all agencies assisting refugees, and are advocating for refugees to carry a log book with them so agencies can learn of other agencies' contact with the refugee. SSI advocates with schools re refugee students; there is much popular disquiet re the large increase in the number of refugee students, eg in some schools 40 to 50% of students now are 'foreign-born, increased from 8% a few years ago.

OIM – Organizzazione Internazionale Migrazione: helps asylum seekers being repatriated, eg with loans to set up businesses, eg Kosovars returning to their home country.

* * *

Conclusion: Italian Refugee Initiatives Potentially Useful in Australia:

Employment generation:

- Cultural mediation; training refugees to run settlement services for new refugees; this supports the principle of empowerment, ie of service providers seeking to recognise and build on their clients' experience and strengths
- live-in assistants for the elderly; like Italy and most first world countries, Australia has an increasing proportion of elderly citizens; this Italian concept builds on long experience with 'au pairs', ie low-cost live-in assistance for families with children provided by foreign-born young single women; lacking this, the concept would need to be proposed here; the advantage for the refugee is that while such work is low-paid, it comes with board and lodging, the chance to acquire local language skills and knowledge, and time to prepare for seeking more career-oriented work
- relevant for migrants rather than refugees: training for import / export businesses where the migrant can use their home country contacts and knowledge

Tools

- format of skills audit and of a resume for refugees used by many services
- concept of log book for refugees to carry with them to provide a record of assisting agencies and their actions; there is a similar issue here of refugees using a number of agencies, with duplication of data gathering; the challenge would be getting consensus from agencies re the data required

Resources in English Acquired:

'Europe Land of Asylum': Reception and social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in 3 European capitals – Berlin, Rome, London (2004)

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THE NETHERLANDS

While I was in Holland, the Dutch film maker Theo Van Gogh was murdered by a second generation Moroccan Muslim in protest against Van Gogh's public criticisms of Islam. He had made a film critical of Islamic treatment of women, with a woman Member of Parliament (MP), who is a former refugee and former Muslim. Van Gogh had also just finished a film about the murder in 2002 of MP Pim Fortuyn, Holland's first political murder (NB by an animal rights activist). A wave of protests and attacks eg on mosques and Islamic schools across Holland has followed, with much public debate about refugees and their integration into Dutch society. There was also much comment in other EU countries, with some criticism of Holland.

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EMPLOOI: Henk Nijhuis, Co-ordinator

Emplooi is a very successful non-government national employment program for refugees, which uses a pool of about 100 retired executives as volunteer mentors / coaches, based in local job centres, each working with between 10 to 25 refugees on job-seeking, and generating between 500 to 600 jobs each year; 1 year it was 1000. These jobs are mostly in small or medium businesses, and often follow work experience placements. In 2003 the 4 largest job areas were welfare, administration / information, metal / electrical work, and marketing. The Government subsidises employers 60% of the basic wage for taking on registered job-seekers for up to 12 months.

Emplooi started in 1989 as a small project run by the Refugee Council, with 15 retired entrepreneurs mentoring 1 to 1, and grew rapidly due to demand from refugees. It became independent of the Council in 2001, with 1 staff member working across both. Emplooi head office focuses on labour market policy. Most of the funding is still via the Refugee Council from the postcode lottery, foundations and local government.

The key difference with the usual mentoring programs is that because these mentors are retired, they can offer more time. They are asked to commit to a minimum of 2 days per week – many do more – based in local job centres, with the paid staff referring refugee clients to them. 70% of the refugees are referred in this way; 30% find their way to the project via the net. The coaches cost about 50E (A\$100) per month

each to support. Mentors' ages range from 55 to 70 years. Mentors are in 9 loose regional teams with a nominated head, who calls meetings about every 6 to 8 weeks. The regional leaders meet in head office every 2 months. Once a year all participants meet, largely for a social event. The regional team leaders join working parties on, eg publicity, IT etc. The mentors' age and status is much valued by the refugees. Their ability to pitch to local employers is key. Due to public antipathy toward refugees, their refugee status is not raised re human rights or compassion. They are presented to employers as 'skilled newcomers'. Emplooi posters targeting employers: 'when you are the best in your field but you can't get a job'; and How a competent refugee can become a good colleague'. Local-born unemployed have not expressed resentment about the program.

About a quarter of those who volunteer to mentor and who complete the compulsory 3 day initial training drop out in the first 6 months, the rest remain for an average of 4 to 5 years. Turnover is about 25 per year. 75% are male because of the targeting of former executives. They try to target more women.

Annual Recruitment and Training of Coaches:

Advertisements are placed in national newspapers, eg 'Looking for business idealists'. Applicants send in resumes, are interviewed by phone, then face to face. Regional leaders are part of this. Coaches' personal networks are crucial. For one month new coaches are trialled working alongside experienced coaches.

The 3-day training is held in Amsterdam 3 or 4 times a year, 1 day per week for 3 weeks.

Day 1: information about refugees, their legal status, unemployment issues

Day 2: is run by the mentor with the best record of placing refugees in jobs, focussing on building relations with local employers, lobbying for work experience placements, etc.

Day 3; cross-cultural communication using trainers from the Refugee Council and a refugee actor for role plays.

Head office has excellent IT capacity with very sophisticated data bases. Soon coaches will have chat rooms to share their experience with each other. .

Governance of Emplooi: Chair of the board is an ex-member of Parliament; members include the chair of the national employers' association, 2 refugees, the ex-manager of the employment office.

Role of Coaches:

- Refer refugees to job vacancies
- Help them prepare applications, resumes, and for interview
- Accompany them to interviews to provide feedback after on their performance
- Provide career advice, eg to give up unrealistic goals such as trying to find work in the field they worked in previously
- Sometimes to assist re gaining recognition of home country qualifications
- Arrange work experience, mock interviews, shadowing, etc, for the refugee to experience job competition

Mixed gender of mentoring pairs is rarely an issue.

Coaches only speak Dutch; they refuse to speak English.

Head office projects:

- lobbying for free training by the media industry, and by the association of stone masons.
- producing a monthly newsletter for coaches with tips, labour market information, etc
- trying to access refugees as soon as they sign on with social security
- seeking job contracts eg the national tax office took 20 to 25 refugee trainees each year for 5 years; now has ended as tax office is downsizing.
- Emplooi would like funding to develop professional language courses for the 70,000 unemployed 'oldcomers', that is, immigrants and refugees who have lived in Holland a long time but lack Dutch language skills.

Staff have good access to Members of Parliament and advocate for refugees re labour market policy. They also liaise with unions, but their main focus is employers. A former prime minister is an ambassador for Emplooi.

The strength of Emplooi is that it is decentralised, enabling the use of mentors' local networks. Head office intends to work more on regional projects.

Meeting with Mentor Herman Nijland, The Hague: formerly a senior executive with an oil company who for some years worked internationally, a year after retirement he got bored, and joined Emplooi because of the appeal of working with people from other cultures. "Most satisfying is the refugee's gratitude, and the little victories, eg with social security, or opening a door for a refugee. "

His perception of the skills coaches need: dealing with refugees' often low expectations; and with the disappointment coaches feel due to employers' closed attitudes; also long patience; eg he got Social Security to agree to a refugee with an MBA to do a placement in a big engineering company; this took many phone calls over months.

Coaches work in tandem with local community centres: the Government has delegated many services for refugees to these centres, eg housing, social issues. The Emplooi form on the refugee is much broader than the Social Security form. Herman works one morning a week at the Re-Integration office, ie job-seeker centre, liaises with staff, advocates for the refugees, mediates when problems arise. Very few refugees miss appointments. He keeps job centre staff informed about what he is doing.

80 to 90% of the refugees he works with are from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan. 80% have post-school home country qualifications. He also visits employers and advocates for refugees.

Case studies of refugees he has worked with:

- Jobs gained, eg with a media company, Social Security.
- helping a couple to set up a sandwich business; this requires Social Security to agree to fund them professional advice costing about 2000E (\$4000A.). Social Security also provides small loans to start businesses but these are very competitive.
- one refugee has chemical engineering training but no experience; he arranged for him to do work experience in a laboratory, but he missed the appointments. So he suggested the refugee give up on that field and try something different; this was very successful – he now owns a taxi firm.
- a woman teacher tried for years to find teaching work, but only native Dutch speakers are wanted; Herman found out that Ikea requires reception staff to speak English; the refugee's English is excellent, and she now has a job there.
- one refugee has no formal education but long experience repairing cars; Herman visited a local car repair business and persuaded them to give the refugee work experience

He attends meetings of a regional club for minority businesses; organised a workshop for local refugee groups with one member who employs 20 people.

The hardest thing is to keep the refugees positive. He reminds them of their successes; most have never had positive feedback.

Meeting with Mentor Cees Appel, regional town:.

Cees works at both the job centre and the local community centre. He goes to refugees' homes; has 50 clients, has been with Emplooi 2 years. Backgrounds of his clients – painters, pharmacist, garage worker, farmer, finance, IT.

He finds the clients' work experience much more important than their qualifications. He starts with a detailed discussion of their experience, then looks at opportunities in the labour market. He does his own job search of newspapers – national, regional, local – and web data bases. He has worked with about 150 refugees. The challenge is with those who have no experience of a competitive workplace.

He helps the refugee to write an application for an advertised job, rings the workplace for more information, takes the refugee to visit the workplace, does role plays. Half of his clients are recent arrivals, half have been in Holland for a number of years.

He visits businesses and speaks to managers, eg, in Human Resources. He shows them his summary of the refugees he is working with re their experience, education, language level. He has placed 63 refugees

in jobs, and has helped some to start their own businesses, eg pizzeria, driving school, exporting used cars to Africa – very lucrative. The commune can be asked to guarantee loans of up to 28,000E (A\$48,000) – to pay back over 10 years; this requires developing a business plan which is assessed externally.

All the local big companies come together at the football club each week. Cees made a presentation at one of these and made lots of contacts. He tells employers refugees have much potential – will grow the job. 10% of those he places lose the job. He visits the refugees within their first month in the job, talks to both the refugee and supervisor, and provides feedback.

Best success; a refugee who said he could drive trucks. Cees took him to the local driving school where professionals tested him and said he was excellent. He sent their report to the job centre, and persuaded them with much difficulty to fund the refugee driving lessons so that he could get a Dutch licence, rather than spend the money paying him unemployment benefits. Now he is an international truck driver.

Visit to Asylum Seeker Reception Centre: Cees took me to visit the centre on the edge of the small town. It is unfenced, houses up to 80, and consists of portable buildings comprising houses, a small school, community room, health centre, etc. Residents were coming and going on bicycles.

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Visit to Refugee Centre, Amsterdam; spoke with planning committee

A new initiative by the commune: they have given a 7 storey tower in the outer suburbs where refugees live, for use by refugee groups, with a paid co-ordinator, equipped training rooms, computers, etc. I went to a planning meeting. The concept of a venue where all refugee groups can come together came from the refugees themselves. Funding is guaranteed for 4 years. A valuable opportunity for refugee groups to bridge historic divides between them and to develop a unified voice re advocacy.

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Utrecht Refugee Council: Annemiek Harberink

The Council provides a range of services to asylum seekers, including pro bono legal advice and courses such as Dutch language and culture, and work preparation. A new law gives 3-year temporary visas for asylum seekers from specified regions, eg South Iraq, with work and study rights. The Dutch Government provides education and childcare for refugees, but there are huge wait lists. Coaches paid by the Government help refugees re study. Refugees have to comply, to study Dutch and Dutch society, which takes 1 to 1 ½ years, then they have to pass an exam of 4 levels, and reach at least level 2. This is required to achieve citizenship – 'inburgering'. Immigrants will be deported if they can't pass the exam after 5 years.

Draft legislation is currently before Parliament to make refugees responsible for their own integration. One aim is to stop men, often second generation migrants from Morocco and Turkey, bringing in non-Dutch-speaking illiterate wives from their home countries. The draft legislation requires such applicants for migration to learn Dutch and about Dutch culture in their home country and to pass the exam before emigrating. A new report shows intermarriage as key to integration.

Non-Dutch-speaking long-term immigrants who have citizenship and are unemployed, are now also obliged to learn Dutch and to be part of the Integration program. In part this is designed to get immigrant women out of their homes and into Dutch society, and to educate about the Dutch attitude of gender equality. With a 'carrot and stick' approach, those who refuse to comply are fined. It seems that most are welcoming the opportunity, though there are some accounts of men paying the fine to avoid their wife doing the program.

Job-seekers are ranked in level of challenge; refugees are ranked level 3 and are eligible for 18 months' support. Municipalities receive about 5000E for each level 3 client, and receive a bonus if the job seeker is placed sooner. Refugees are penalised if they do not comply with the required plan and must report weekly to the job centre. As an incentive they can now work for up to 3 months and continue to receive benefits; this sometimes results in ongoing work.

Refugee Council Mentoring Program: refugees are matched with Dutch volunteer mentors trained by community centres, on the basis of geography and gender; each pair then works out how often to meet, where, etc; most pairings last 6 to 12 months. There is less support now from these centres.

Traineeships for Refugees; 3 – 6 months: funded by the EU Social Fund, this is a joint project with Germany, Sweden, Finland; they are developing the methodology. The Council advises re pathways for refugee, and has to accept all referrals, including long-term unemployed. It has to persuade organisations to offer refugees, traineeships, eg hospitals, schools, businesses. In 2003 they worked with 129 refugees; 2004 with a much smaller number. Organisations taking the refugees are not given cultural information. The Council runs work preparation course for refugees, eg on employer expectations / role plays; evaluation is done with employers and the refugees;. Council facilitates feedback of employer to refugee; employers often complain about refugees' language skills.

Dutch Refugee Council, Amsterdam; Erna Lensink

A study found that refugees have more contact with Dutch than migrants do because of refugees' higher education levels and because of their contact with Dutch volunteers. Asylum seeker numbers were much reduced in 2004, from 40,000 to 10,000. Most now come from Eastern Europe. Few are allowed to stay, but repatriation is very difficult. From 2005 asylum seekers waiting repatriation have to live in reception centres, where they have freedom of movement and are provided with some classes. Asylum seekers can wait for 10 years for a decision re their applications for refugee status: 39,000 are currently waiting. They are allowed to do only short term casual work, and have to pay to study. If allocated a temporary refugee visa, they have to move where a municipality offers housing.

The Refugee Council has 130 staff in head office; most funding is from the postcode lottery which the Council helped start. They raise about 1 million E a year (A\$2million). They also get a very small grant from the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Integration. The Council is preparing to shrink as asylum seeker numbers have greatly reduced. Migrants have to have jobs to come to. The Council wants to work more internationally, eg it has a project with Sudan. The Council uses many volunteers, eg in reception centres: their core business is social coaching of refugees. The Council trains volunteers, does publicity, runs a help desk, and liaises with universities re research.

Refugees may get 3 or 5 year visas, then their situation is reviewed: regardless of how long they have been in Holland, they can be sent back if they are deemed no longer to be at risk re their home country. Foundations help refugees with forms, housing, coaching, etc.

The Dutch Integration Act 1998 (copy and evaluation in English collected by writer)

This restricted asylum seekers' access to work and study; it has been used as a model by other EU countries. There is an issue of asylum seekers avoiding learning Dutch which is mandatory; many arrive speaking English. Municipalities are funded by the Ministry of Justice to run language programs. The integration program lasts one to five years; it includes allocating refugees with 'coaches' who monitor their progress and can impose penalties. Evaluation showed the integration program needs to provide refugees with more opportunities for language practice, eg conversation. Integration agencies were privatised in 2000.

Originally the Integration program was only for migrants; the Council lobbied for refugees to be included so as to have access to assistance re language and job-hunting. There is no Government assistance specific to refugees. About 200,000 asylum seekers have been recognised as refugees over the last 25 years.

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University Assistance Fund(UAF): met with 3 staff: Ndo Ntoane, Yapf Higmans, Ingrid

UAF is a very effective scheme running for over 50 years which assists refugees to study at university or technical college by providing holistic assistance re fees, living allowances including crèche fees, mentoring, counselling, assistance to find work. 60% of the money provided is a gift; 40% is an interest-free loan to be repaid once the graduate starts work (as with the Australian HECS scheme).

UAF is funded by donations and by the postcode lottery set up by Amnesty and UNHCF, which also operates in UK and Sweden. Set up by UNHCR and Amnesty, it is very lucrative: 50% of the money raised reaches the charities; UAF gets 500,000 Euros per yr, (about \$A1 million).

UAF started in the Cold War in 1948 when many academics fled East Europe and Dutch university staff donated money for them. It has helped over 25,000 refugees. Currently it has 40 paid staff. There are similar programs in the UK and Germany. Holland has 11 universities and 3 technical colleges. UAF uses former refugee alumni to help new ones; it holds networking days where people self-sort into pairs, and provides some training. Refugees have to compete for the assistance via interviews, the appeals process is done in conjunction with Amnesty. Only 15% of loan recipients default. 80% of the graduate refugees used to find work within one year, this has dropped to 65% due to the economic downturn. Many students do placements, including technical students. In 2003 262 graduated – 72 doctors; 50% most years are teachers. There are increasing numbers of refugees from East Europe, in particular Chechnya and Anatolia.

UAF fund-raising:

The Dutch resist US-style fund-raising; to date it has been very local. Sponsorship is not liked as this requires gratitude from refugees. Donors are provided with stories of individuals but no contact details.

In 2003 UAF approached business for the first time. Most Dutch universities contribute to the UAF fund. There are also 27,000 individual donors: 600 have signed up for 5 years; there are no ongoing funds from government.

UAF publishes a newsletter on who is doing what now, with detachable business cards of refugee graduates. Postcards depicting refugees' work and with their contact details are also circulated. UAF is shifting to a more integration focus, to assist the refugee students become Dutch citizens. In 2003 for the first time donors were asked to volunteer to coach re Dutch language and job placements; there was a small response from about 70.

Telemarketing is being tried: 23% of donors have signed up to make automatic payments; 38% renew. They are also trying the strategy of direct approach eg in the street, like the Red Cross, but this is expensive to administer; in feedback donors called for more transparency.

Counselling:

All the refugees taken on by UAF are assigned a counsellor. The first support is to learn Dutch, with UAF paying costs; refugees have to pass the exam in Dutch. Masters courses are now available in English: this is increasingly so throughout the EU. There is also a move toward building a common university accreditation structure throughout the EU based on 60 credits points.

UAF advises refugees re study options; most study medicine, or health and technical courses to reduce the language challenge. The refugee students tend to be older and to have very different life experience compared with local students. Support is provided one on one throughout the student's whole course, including referral advice re legal and housing issues. Extra support is provided in the first year as this is the hardest; social events are run on a regional basis using experienced refugee students. Many Latin American students have eventually returned home after studying in Holland: research shows the more integration achieved a refugee achieves in the country of emigration, the more successful the repatriation.

Job Support:

This program was started in 1994 as refugee graduates were having trouble finding work; one issue is generally they come from societies where competition for jobs does not exist. Refugees are coached in self-advocacy, writing job applications and resumes, interview skills, managing chat with interviewers or workplace colleagues, networking, meetings. There is an annual program of 3 workshops: the first on preparing a portfolio; the second on preparing for work experience in the Dutch context; the third on preparing a personal development plan. If a refugee misses a workshop, there is follow up. Workplace visits are organised.

Mentoring: refugees are matched by field of professional study with ex-refugee graduates working in that field: most graduates are happy to mentor; a large bank with a staff mentor program has been approached to mentor refugee students.

The Dutch Government has a program to integrate minorities, and is keen to work with UAF.

Students are helped to find part time work, and course-required placements. Age is a bar for some work areas re refugee graduates, and re full-time study – bursaries are available only up to age thirty. The EU funded a project for older refugee tertiary students, focussed on, eg, assisting them to cope with loss of

status; strategies include building esteem via self skills audits, and developing career plans. Results so far are very positive. It is important for refugees to be flexible about changing professional fields, eg one female refugee engineer made a successful change to childcare. An EU-wide competency-based resume is being developed.

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Conclusion: Dutch Refugee Initiatives applicable in Australia

Employment generation:

- Emplooi model using 100 retired executives based in job centres 2 days a week to mentor case loads of refugee mentees; 500 to 600 gain jobs each year; very cost-effective
- UAF assistance for refugee tertiary students; NB requires funds
- Community venue for all refugee groups

Resources collected in English:

- UAF: brochure on assistance for refugee students
- research re establishing a fund for refugee education and employment in the EU:
 - Feasibility study re Italy
 - Refugee Contribution to Europe (Nov 2002)
 - Overall Summary (Feb 2004)
 - Resource Project: Refugees' contribution to Europe: Netherlands (2004)
- Report on network meeting of Employment Practitioners (2000)
- Integration of Newcomers Act (1998)
- Evaluation of this Act by Price Waterhouse Cooper (2003)

DENMARK

Tom Pedersen, Mentor Coaching Program

This is a non-profit enterprise with a very successful record in training workplace supervisors to mentor challenging trainees mostly aged 18 to 25. Some are refugees, some are ex-offenders or former drug users. The program has links with 20 local governments to train young people. Tom's role is to re-socialise them. Mentors receive 2 days training, a month apart; one aim is to convey to the mentors how different the young people's view of the world is, and why. Successful mentees are used in the training. The Government pays for 3 hours a week mentoring per pair.

Traineeships: companies only get the Government subsidies if they guarantee jobs after the traineeships end. Government negotiates with eg McDonalds,; young people study, then do work experience. Now employers value their staff gaining a new view of the world. The local government offices do the matching. Tom doesn't often get to train the mentees – only half a day. The mentor does monthly reports on the mentee, using a scale to estimate progress. At annual conferences the mentors report what skills they need to develop, eg handling mentees' post-traumatic stress. Now a Swedish program has started, using his approach.

Approach taken re fostering rapport between mentor supervisor and mentee trainee:

- mentors discuss what a young person gets out of crime, eg identify, excitement, respect from peers, material reward, etc; need to provide these same rewards legitimately for the young person to change behaviour.
- young people's need to identify, to become part of a group, eg mentees receive tee-shirts with the company logo; thieving stopped at a building site when the company hired the young people doing it as guards, gave them company uniform etc.
- being non-judgemental, eg about uses drugs: they should be referred to professional help without criticism
- sensitivity to different kinds of learning style; many young people are kinaesthetic learners, ie, learn best hands on, and will appreciate commendation such as a pat on the shoulder

Cultural difference should be recognised; eg:

- most refugees are used to being very directed at work, and are not used to taking initiative; the mentor supervisor should get the refugee mentee to write down what they need to do.
- different attitudes to alcohol; it is regarded as part of the Danish way of life
- individualistic versus group norms: Danes think 'I' and refugees think 'we'.
- the Comune wanted Somali women to work with old people, gave them bikes to travel there, but Somali women don't cycle.

With the ageing Danish population there is an urgent need to train more young people; 40,000 workers are expected to retire in 2005. Each company gives Tom the profile of where the work opportunities are. The program only works if the young people are given work they value, eg IT, security. They didn't want to work in the building industry where there are jobs, so their parents were approached and lobbied about the benefits. Comunes favour businesses which hire young people.

The Copenhagen commune is funding mentoring education, and mentoring meeting time. It also provides trainees with assistance to write their own 'resource profiles'.

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Copenhagen: EU-funded diversity and business mentoring project: Nina George

Background: 50% of 'new Danes', ie, refugees and migrants, are unemployed. The Government says it won't take any more until these people are in work. At present migrants can come if they have skills in IT or medicine. There is a three year period for integration: less if the immigrant is coming to marry a Dane – have to be over 24, have finance, never to have received social welfare benefits, and is required to lease a flat of a certain minimum size. Iranians who came to Denmark in the 1980's say they used to be seen as heroes and now are seen as enemies. The general view now of migrants is that they are 'ripping off' the Danish system. In 2002 there was a large increase in asylums seekers to 12,000, but in 2004 this has dropped to about 5000. Acceptance rate of asylum seekers used to be about 80%; now it is about 20%.

Housed in the Refugee Council's office and part of the Integration network, the project works with companies who pay for presentations on the benefits of diversity. The project does not receive any Government funds. The concept came from an engineer, and the project was set up by 5 private companies to create options to importing IT skills from India. 70% of the funds come from members of the association; they also do other projects.

The project works with managers. The company's recruitment process is reviewed to ensure there is no discrimination. To meet EU directives on diversity requirements, companies now have to prove that they do not discriminate, so they are rushing to set up processes.

The project also runs customer focus groups for businesses, looking at the benefits of expanding the customer base to refugees and immigrants, seeing these groups as a source of getting new ideas and as good for globalisation; shifting the perspective of difference from being a problem to being a resource. This is a challenge to the traditional Danish view of sameness and equality. The project uses the UK and Canada as examples of successful diversity. Holland used to be seen as good example but no longer.

Another project is supporting the Danish Red Cross 'Want2Work' which advocates for asylum seekers to have work and education rights.

The Mentoring Element; Susie Skov

An initiative of the Danish Junior Chamber of Commerce (JCC) in 2001, this is funded by EU with some business donations. Small groups of 10 to 12 mentoring pairs have been set up all over Denmark in about 12 towns. Most of these groups initiated contact with the project, usually via unions or local government. Of the last group of 12 refugees, 8 have gained jobs. Most of the refugee mentees have gained Danish qualifications, and been in Denmark more than 2 years. Second generation immigrants and refugees, ie offspring born in Denmark, are also eligible for the program. One mentee, an ex-professional runner, taught his mentor running. The pair still train together.

Process: the project worker oversees the first 2 meetings of new pairs. She is setting up a website for participants to share their experience. They ask mentors to commit to meeting for 6 months; some

continue longer. Mostly mentors meet their mentee after work, often for 2 to 3 hours, go for walk, practise Danish etc. Some mentors rematch. Some mentors take their mentee to visit their workplace. The mentoring training is not accredited: this would not add value to it. The aim is that the paid role won't be needed after 2 years and that the JCC will continue it.

Induction is a whole weekend, conducted by a professional trainer. Matching is by gender, and age. There are a few mixed gender pairs. People mingle on the weekend, tell the co-ordinator their preferences, she then does the matching. Mentors come from, eg Rotary.

Phillips has asked to join the project, to get their staff trained in mentoring: staff can meet in work time. Novel Nordic, a multinational medical company well known for its diversity policy, was started by a lawyer with a human rights perspective. Often US customers demand to see proof of diversity goals.

Denmark is highly unionised. The project also provides training for union officials in diversity. Anti discrimination legislation came in 5 years ago. The unions provide insurance, ie unemployment benefits – for their members, which are more than Government benefits. Union members can receive benefits for up to 4 years, and also career counselling.

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Danish Refugee Council: Mentoring program

Volunteers are used to help refugees get settled and develop networks. No distinction is made between migrants, refugees and second generation. The sole paid worker sets up self-managed groups which meet new refugees and provide language tutoring. Red Cross looks after asylum seekers: they often get 7 year visa, then may be sent back. Refugees come mostly from North Africa, Middle East, former Yugoslavia. This targets young people aged 16 to 25 and focuses on education pathways. Sometimes the project works with schools. Most mentors are aged 30 to 40, are career-focussed, and mostly from business. There are 85 mentors in Copenhagen and 60 in west Denmark. Mentors have no training; the project worker meets with a new mentor for about 1 hour. Fortnightly meetings with mentees are suggested. The project worker speaks to both the mentor and the mentee after their first meeting, to check that the matching seems suitable; the pair then proceed to arrange more meetings. The worker contacts next after 3 or 4 months. Mentors don't meet each other. Mentors help their mentees look for training or work experience placements. They are helpful re 'new Danes' coping with the Danish education system, eg having to give your own opinion. A typical mentee has finished language training and needs to sort out what to do next.

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Conclusion: Danish Refugee Initiatives usable in Australia

- Mentor Coaching, Tom Pedersen: effective targeted training for workplace supervisors to mentor trainees, eg refugees, and young people from troubled backgrounds
- Diversity and business mentoring project: promoting the benefits of diversity, and refugees as potential new customers

Resources in English

- Reports on cultural mediation (between employers and refugees), EQUAL project 'The Direct Way to Employment for Refugees and Immigrants'
- 'Integration: a joint effort', Danish Refugee Council

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SWEDEN

Magnus Axell, employment program of Stockholm Comune,

This project was selected by the EU in 2004 as 1 of the 8 best vocational refugee projects: he spoke at the Berlin conference July 2004.

The program works solely with refugees in the Integration program, ie language program for new arrivals, tailored to the workplace – takes 18 months, Swedish language classes with a vocational slant from start. The program was redesigned from an unsuccessful 2 hours a day language class, in conjunction with employers who need workers, eg cleaning companies, working with the aged,

hospitality. Teachers are trained to teach this specifically, with coaches who teach about ‘real life’ workplaces, eg the extreme importance of punctuality to employers. Coaches work with case loads of about 12 refugees and their mentors. Mentors who volunteer to work with the refugee trainees receive 3 days training. The refugees start at the language school, then move into the work-focussed program when there is a place available. The refugees must accept to train for wherever jobs are available regardless of their background. If they refuse, they lose benefits.

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Malmo, ‘Towns Together’ national project: Lise Thomsen
‘ethnic diversity creates competitive advantage’ – slogan on poster of African refugees in workplace

Malmo is a regional centre in the south of Sweden. This project is funded mostly by the EU with some funds from Swedish local government, and is located in Sweden's 3 largest towns – Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo. The purpose is to increase awareness among business of ‘new Swedes’ as potential new customers. Government, communes, Swedbank, employers, Red Cross, ethnic groups and Rotary etc are partners. A partner project in Holland focuses on finding jobs for ‘new Dutch’. 35% of Malmo inhabitants are ‘New Swedes’, ie, migrants, refugees, second generation with both parents born abroad. 1 in 9 Swedes is a ‘new Swede’. Collecting data is very difficult as privacy laws forbid asking about birthplace.

Case studies about how the project works:

- a large bank was finding it very costly to work out complaints about bills and service with new Swedes; after meeting with the project worker, the bank decided to hire new Swedes with the language skills to improve customer service
- commercial opportunities re ‘new Swedes’, eg at Eids, the festival at the end of Ramadam – Muslims buy food, clothes, to celebrate; also re funerals – Muslims must bury in 24 hours, wash the body
- Best way to advertise to reach refugees is via radio; Western Union asked the project to analyse foreign-born people’s use of media; this was carried out by interviewing ‘new Swedes’ in venues they use, eg cafes, restaurants
- 30% of those waiting on public housing list have foreign names: they like different style furniture, home decoration, painting, etc to Swedes; the project tells companies this.
- Project with Red Cross: all foreign-born staff working there were interviewed and their feedback given to management
- focus groups are organised with businesses, eg, Ikea designers and refugee women who said they want large low sofas as they have larger families, and want to sit cross-legged; in another focus group a major dairy company learned from refugee women who eat much yoghurt that they had not recognised the company’s packaging of yoghurt as it comes in small containers.
- Helsingbore project: to help refugees show their skills when all their work experience is outside Sweden; this entailed 6 months preparation at university and mentoring,

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Stockholm, outer suburb of Rinkly:
Study Centre for ‘new Swedes’, and ‘Our Future’ project:

Very successful intercultural project at Rissne – ‘be aware of the water you’re swimming in / be curious’. The project won Sweden’s Integration prize.

The study centre is funded by the Government and the commune. It provides free information in 14 languages about how to study, introductions to academic study and helps ‘New Swedes’ eg to apply for courses, for loans etc; staff work with students’ parents to inform them about the Swedish education system, clarify expectations etc. Goal is to work with whole family. Teacher training is provided. Swedish students volunteer to tutor the refugees.

Mentor program: they work with unions, employers, Confederation of Swedish Enterprises, academic association. Matching is by professions; businesses take refugees for trial periods, almost all stay on; refugees are also helped to set up businesses. They argue the benefits of cultural diversity and use success stories: they don’t appeal to pity, but stress refugees’ skills. Employers are sought to be social mentors for

newly arrived foreigners; they meet fortnightly, get good stories in the media. The centre is working with publishers on a book of refugees' stories.

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Swedish Integration Board, Norrköping, south Sweden: Bjorn Wendin

The Board is national but has no enforcement powers. Its role includes research; they disseminate best practice and try to persuade. It acts as a 'knowledge authority', not policy maker. It monitors the reception of immigrants; works with unions, teachers, employers, teachers – how to develop best practice. Board has 2 billion K to promote integration (\$A400,000). Programs include one for Roma / gypsies.

State authorities have to report on gender and ethnicity, businesses only on gender. In the 1990's many refugees came from the former Yugoslavia. The Integration program is 2 years. There used to be more work placements for refugees, subsidised by communes. About 400,000 Muslims now live in Sweden. The Board gets funds from the EU to repatriate asylum seekers. More are coming from East Europe; about 30,000 asylum seekers arrive each year. In 2002/3 6000 were accepted and the rest repatriated. The 500 refugees selected offshore are chosen solely on Humanitarian purposes; some countries select those likely to succeed in finding work.

One project helps refugees starting own business, eg a Mexican imports furniture from Mexico and is very successful. Unemployment centres help people start businesses. The tax office now employs staff from different countries to translate information and to achieve more compliance.

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Conclusion: Swedish Refugee Initiatives potentially useful in Australia

- Language training vocationally oriented to industries needing workers
- Towns Together project: building diversity awareness for business

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LONDON, UK

TimeTogether: Refugee Mentoring: Sarah Arnold:

Time Together is the largest national mentoring program in the UK, with a well-resourced web site. Its success was influential in the UK Government making mentoring part of the refugee integration strategy. The project recently received funds from the Home Office to set up offices in another 3 cities, making the total 6. www.wearewhatwedo.org; re a book on Time Together published by WH Smith

Most of the 2000 volunteers are women; some come from Reach, an association for retirees; most come via the web. A skillsbank has just been just launched; all volunteers do a skills profile online, so they can access each other's; the aim is to develop it so that employment agencies, eg Job Centre Plus can also use it.

Training: is run for groups of 12: 6 hours for mentors, 3 hours for mentees, then the 2 groups come together for 2 hours to watch the 'Time Together' video, then do small group work on roles, responsibilities; half an hour to chat over tea; then mentees sit at tables and mentors shift round each to talk to all mentees. Mentees are given mentors' bios – skills, gender, age, address. Gender ratio of mentees is about 50 / 50. After, mentees give their preference re matching; mentors also fill in preference sheets. The trainers match, check with the mentor, then give the mentor the mentee's telephone number, then contacts the mentee. The first meeting is at the project office.

There are joint social network meetings every 6 weeks for both mentors and mentees, sometimes with speakers. Separate meetings don't work in London as travel is such an effort. Twice a year there are big social events, eg a picnic in park, or in the project office.

Photos; they gave 8 refugees throw-away cameras to record what integration means to them, and published the results.

UK Refugee Council: Mentoring Program: Chris Badman

Funded by the EU Equals budget, refugees come to the mentoring after vocational training: recent cuts mean only 1 vocational course is still running. 91 mentors were recruited in 18 months; Most mentors find the program via web; they are asked for 6 months' commitment to meet 1 hour a week - most do more. The biggest problem is mentees missing meetings. Only 5 mentors have dropped out. 22 refugee mentees have gained jobs. The Social Entrepreneurs Network helps refugees start businesses.

Training: a corporate trainer covers generic mentor skills; Council does refugee information and role plays; training is held on Saturdays, and is mandatory. Mentors are advised to ask refugees to summarise to them what they have just heard, to check understanding. Monthly support meetings for mentors are held at night, with speakers, eg from employment agencies.

Volunteers Abroad have asked to be involved in working within UK with refugees as they have experience in refugees' home countries. The Council has run training for them, eg countering media's anti-refugee stories.

Lunches with speakers have been held for employers; employment opportunities exist in finance, construction and retail. Funds are being sought from the EU to work with employers to provide work experience for refugees. The Sunrise program to be launched 2005 is for asylum seekers who get refugee status. A conference is being held March 2005 on mentoring, for mentees and mentors. The Government has made mentoring part of the national integration strategy for refugees. More corporate support is needed.

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Evelyn Oldfield Unit: Lyn Gillet;

This unit fosters refugee community development by assisting fledging organisations, running training in community skills, researching and promoting best practice, holding conferences, etc

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Employability: Sarah Hayward

A resettlement program is just starting. Asylum seekers have lost work rights. Sarah works on policy, and to engage employers. Many of the refugees they work with are very discouraged. Need for more research – UK does not collect data on departing refugees. Research for Department of Work 2002 showed many refugees are not using Government and community services. A skills audit of refugees is on the Home Office web; 30 – 40% are skilled.

Sarah works with the Department of Work to get refugees to use job centres (still run by the government) but there is no monitoring of what refugees do after they get refugee acceptance. They have just started tagging benefits to refugees. Some politicians are positive about refugees – 'we need their labour', eg doctors, teachers, construction, fire fighters. There are issues of adapting their skills. Department of Work says special funds for refugees is not acceptable.

Good practice:

- developing partnerships between job centres, city and employers, eg in Midlands 24 refugee groups have united to form an advocacy group.
- Refugee Resources in Oxfordshire has been evaluated; they work with job centres, employers and language schools
- Bridges project in Glasgow: they need migrants: Institute of Contemporary Scotland website 'gossip' for health professionals – works well.
- A bus company approached refugee groups re employment, but foreign licences are not recognised.
- Need for refugees to carry with them a log book of what they have been doing re job-searching, and also a portfolio re skills; cf Metropolis project in Sweden.
- 'Refugees into Jobs' is a successful West London project.
- Need to change language from 'refugees' to 'newcomers' because of public hostility;
- 'Diploma disease': problem of refugees doing course after course as they can't get work; need to involve employers in training, to make it more vocationally relevant.
- In a research project interviewing employers working with refugees, half refused to be named.

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Retas: Refugee Education Training Assistance Scheme: Hernan and Kona Katembwe:

Funded by EU, Retas is independent of the Government and so can advocate re refugees. They have a specific focus on health professionals, eg doctors. They work well with the doctors’ association: about 80 foreign doctors are now registered, mostly from Iran and Iraq. One has set up a business training refugee doctors. Foreign doctors have to pass part 1 of the exam to be able to shadow practising doctors. They have to pass the IELTS language test 7/10, then do the medical exam. It is very competitive to gain the first position. The UK Government is still advertising aboard for doctors.

Retas has links with IELTS teachers, and with the university association which controls medical teaching. CAEs run preparation courses for the medical exam – 'PLAB '. Praxis works with refugee nurses.

Retas wants to develop a parallel program for refugee engineers, but the work opportunities are all in the private sector; talks have been held with the engineers' professional association, and funding obtained: it will run in 2005.

Mentoring: pairs negotiate frequency of meetings, Retas runs the training – half a day each for mentors and for mentees at same time; assessment sessions are individual.

Retas also offers a general work training, and runs a work preparation course which includes mentoring and work experience, but only in the volunteer sector – not in business.

One mentor, a retired marketing executive, ran a global line to 30 businesses seeking work experience for refugees: only MacDonaldis replied. The UK media is very hostile toward refugees. Retas trains refugees to work in Retas. There are also 2 week courses on job searching, including mock interviews. Courses are not accredited. Refugees say Retas is very friendly, warm. Retas wants to do more with the media, to get positive stories in.

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Conclusions: London refugee initiatives potentially useful in Australia

- Time Together mentoring program; resources, eg their video, online skillsbank; success in getting mentoring part of the national integration strategy
- Employability: advocacy and research re refugees
- Evelyn Oldfield Unit; fostering refugee community development
- Retas: integration of refugee doctors

Resources from UK

- Time Together: reports, training material
- UK Refugee Council: reports, mentoring training material
- Evelyn Oldfield Unit: reports on the development of refugee communities
- Retas: Guide to mentoring refugee doctors
- “Employing Refugee” (Employability)
- Report: 'Refugee Integration', from conference 2003
- Government report: 'Working to Rebuild Lives'; towards a refugee employment strategy’

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CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Overseas Refugee Initiatives Potentially Useful in Australia

USA

- Intercultural Communication Institute re content and delivery of intercultural training in mentoring and employment preparation: potential to deepen understanding between people of differences races, creeds and cultures

Netherlands

- Emplooi model using 100 retired executives based in job centres 2 days a week to mentor case loads of refugee mentees; 500 to 600 gain jobs each year; very cost-effective
- UAF assistance for refugee tertiary students; NB requires considerable funds

- Community venue for all refugee groups to come together for training, to develop advocacy, etc

Italy

- cultural mediation and training refugees for work in refugee settlement services; this supports the principle of empowerment, ie of service providers recognising and building on their clients' experience and strengths
- live-in assistants for the elderly; like Italy and most first world countries, Australia has an increasing proportion of elderly citizens and aged care is a growth sector; this Italian concept builds on long experience with 'au pairs', low-cost live-in assistance for families with children provided by foreign-born young single women; lacking this, the concept would need to be developed here; the advantage for the refugee is that while such work is low-paid and requires the refugee to live away from their community, it comes with board and lodging, the chance to acquire local language skills and knowledge, and time to prepare for career-oriented work
- training for import / export businesses where the refugee can use previous country contacts and knowledge
- format of skills audit and of a resume for refugees used by many services
- concept of log book for refugees to carry with them to provide a record of assisting agencies and their actions; there is a similar issue here of refugees using a number of agencies, with duplication of data gathering; the challenge would be getting consensus from agencies re the data required

Denmark

- Mentor Coaching model: effective targeted training for workplace supervisors to mentor trainees, eg refugees, and young people from troubled backgrounds
- Diversity and business mentoring project: promoting the benefits of diversity, and refugees as potential new customers

Sweden

- Language training vocationally oriented to industries needing workers and developed in conjunction with those industries
- Towns Together project: building diversity awareness for business: refugees as consumers

UK

- Time Together mentoring program; resources, eg their video, online skillsbank; success in getting mentoring part of the national integration strategy
- Employability: advocacy and research re refugees
- Evelyn Oldfield Unit; fostering refugee community development
- Retas: integration of refugee doctors

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Re Mentoring:

- that a national centre of excellence in intercultural mentoring be established with government, business and community support, to document and promote best practice training and resources, including refugees engaged in mentoring both as mentors and mentees
- that mentoring programs be resourced for long-term co-ordination, evaluation and development of training resources, to enable participants – mentees and mentors – to gain maximum benefit, such as mentees strengthening their learning by eventually becoming mentors themselves; especially important for refugee community development
- that mentoring programs engaging people of different cultures and life experience be recognised for their value in building cross-cultural understanding, knowledge and tolerance, both in the community and in workplaces
- that Government recognise the value of mentoring for refugees to assist in settlement, by making mentoring part of national policy

Re Entry into Employment Pathways for Refugees:

- that Government recognise the cost effectiveness of the Emplooi model which uses retired executives to mentor, by encouraging and facilitating adoption of it, eg, promoting the concept in the business sector, encouraging employment centres to offer desk space to the mentors, etc
- that work experience in workplaces be recognised by Government and employment centres for its value in preparing job seekers for employment and facilitated, instead of, as is sometimes the case, disallowed;
- that the good will many employers and employees feel towards disadvantaged job seekers such as refugees, be utilised more effectively by rewarding, eg with publicity, tax credits, efforts such as offering work experience, or allowing staff work time for mentoring meetings
- that the increasing demand for skilled tradespeople be responded to by facilitating entry for mature job seekers such as experienced refugees, with targetted training and work experience
- that TAFES and universities provide assistance for refugees students into graduate employment, in recognition of their disadvantage in lacking networks; eg via the *Given The Chance* model of matching with professional mentors and work experience.
- that asylum seekers be allowed to study TAFE and to do work experience, rather than nothing while they wait to hear the outcome of their application to stay here, given the years this can take
- that refugees on temporary visas be allowed to study full-time and the full range of lengths of courses, and retain benefits; the current cap of 9 months is unrealistic to gain work skills
- that the traineeship system be expanded with increased incentives for employers, and targetted places for refugees

I will work towards the above by promotion and advocacy within the Brotherhood of St Laurence, welfare agencies, refugee communities and agencies, government at national, state and local levels, employer bodies such as the Business Council of Australia, Rotary, Chambers of Commerce, business and professional associations, employment providers, education providers, etc:

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