

**Building a New Life in Australia:  
A Longitudinal Survey of Humanitarian Migrants**

***Position Paper***

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# Introduction

## **Background**

This Department of Immigration and Citizenship position paper is prepared as part of the development work for the Building a New Life in Australia Longitudinal survey of Humanitarian Migrants (Building a New Life). The paper provides a point-in-time summary of DIAC's current position with respect to a number of the project's technical and conceptual issues. As with all studies of dynamic social and economic phenomena, the positions put forward are subject to change as the survey unfolds and circumstances change. As such, the paper's content should not be treated as prescriptive.

The remainder of the introduction provides a brief overview of the survey's history and a summary of key events to date. The paper then addresses the main issues of interest, which although related, are demarcated for presentation into three sections:

1. Who (which migrants) the study is focussed upon;
2. What issues the study is interested in; and
3. How it is expected these issues will be addressed.

## **History**

Building a New Life emerged from a review of existing DIAC surveys and data holdings in 2010. This review identified a knowledge gap related to humanitarian entrants, with the most recent longitudinal humanitarian data collected more than a decade ago. As such, because DIAC has a commitment to research on the policies and programs for which it is responsible, there was deemed a pressing need to instigate a new longitudinal study of humanitarian arrivals. The DIAC Executive committed \$7.5 million over five years to implement the study.

## **Current Status**

Since the study was proposed in 2010, and funding committed in June 2011, a number of key milestones have been passed. Of primary note were the inaugural meetings of two advisory groups, each of which has a slightly different role.

- The Survey Reference Group was established as a stakeholder group to provide oversight of the survey direction and progress, particularly on issues and themes of interest.
- The Technical Advisory Group will provide more specific advice about survey research design, longitudinal methodology, questionnaire design and related technical issues.

The membership of both groups encompasses different branches of DIAC, other government departments, academia, and refugee related advocacy and service groups. The groups have been assembled to ensure a broad range of perspectives, experiences and expertise are drawn upon.

Two background papers have been commissioned from ANU researchers. Both papers were presented to the advisory groups for feedback and discussion. Draft reports were submitted to the Department in late 2011 and feedback provided early in 2012.

- Dr Siew-Ean Khoo investigated key research questions for the study and identified core themes of interest including conceptual frameworks of settlement, how to measure successful settlement and approaches for identifying degrees of vulnerability.
- Professors Matthew Gray and Adam Graycar focussed on the technical and design elements of longitudinal survey approaches with particular emphasis on the challenges related to surveying refugees and following them over time.

The contents of these two papers and related discussions at the advisory group meetings have heavily informed this position paper.

# Who? (Which Humanitarian Migrants)

## ***Introduction***

Although Building a New Life has been developed to focus only on humanitarian migrants, within this group there are a number of demarcations which could determine specifically which migrants to include. This section of the paper outlines DIAC's current view on who might be included in the study and how they might be selected. Possible variables include their personal characteristics, backgrounds and pathways to settlement, and current contextual circumstances. First however, the proposal to recruit a cohort of non-humanitarian migrants for comparison purposes is considered.

## ***A Comparison Group***

Earlier proposals for Building a New Life suggested that a comparison group of potentially vulnerable non-humanitarian migrants may be recruited to the study. By recruiting a sample of family and skill stream migrants who share characteristics with humanitarian migrants in terms of background (humanitarian like migrants), there may have been a capacity to compare the outcomes of humanitarian migrants to those with similar levels of vulnerability but who have taken different pathways to settlement.

This approach has been revised in the light of feedback from both advisory groups and the commissioned academic papers. The consensus was that Building a New Life is specifically being developed to collect data and address issues related to humanitarian migrants. It was thus suggested that the limited resources available should be focussed on this objective. Furthermore, it was recognised that the humanitarian migrant stream is fundamentally different to other migrant streams on many levels including the reason for the program, the characteristics of the arrivals and the pathways to settlement. Importantly, it was noted that non-humanitarian arrivals come to a very different set of circumstances (e.g. families already here or employment arranged) and thus the conceptualisation of and capacity to measure successful settlement would vary dramatically.

Rather than expending funds on the recruitment of a non-humanitarian cohort, it has now been deemed preferable to seek alternative means by which to compare the data collected. This could include comparisons with data from social surveys conducted by the ABS, the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Australia survey (HILDA) and with other surveys conducted by the Department of Immigration.

## ***Primary/Secondary Applicants***

Previous longitudinal surveys of migrants conducted by DIAC have recruited only primary applicants and when possible, spouses. It has been decided not to adopt this approach and allow inclusion of all eligible humanitarian arrivals. While the primary applicant method is useful for securing information about the migrating unit as a whole, it is recognised to provide limited capacity to understand the experiences of different members of the unit. It was also noted that the personal characteristics of the primary applicant may be quite different to the secondary applicants (e.g. in terms of age, gender and education).

Although the exact approach will be determined in conjunction with the appointed research manager, it is expected that for any single migrating family unit, one participant (probably the primary applicant) would provide the key interview about their own and their family's experiences whilst others from that unit would be asked to provide more individually focussed interviews about their own experiences. These additional interviews from the same migrating unit will provide valuable information on family dynamics and will be a cost effective way to collect additional data by securing multiple interviews from a single household visit.

## ***Age***

For the purposes of this study, it has been agreed that the focus should be upon adult migrants. While children and youth are important arrival cohorts within the humanitarian stream, it is also recognised that

the issues they face, their experiences after arrival and their capacity to settle, will be very different to those who arrive as adults.

However, despite not including children in the study, consideration needs to be given to the demarcation point for inclusion as an adult and exclusion as a child. Ideally the approach adopted would align with DIAC policy related to humanitarian migrants and correspond with circumstances in the wider Australian community. This however is not straightforward given that the age used to differentiate children from adults varies across states and for different purposes. Within DIAC for example, 18 is the age at which the Minister ceases to be the legal guardian for unaccompanied minors arriving in Australia but 15 is the age at which humanitarian migrants are eligible for certain DIAC funded services. In the wider policy environment similar differences exist. For example, while 18 is the age Australians in any state are permitted to drink alcohol and to vote, the age of consent for sexual activity varies (16 in some states and 17 in others) and the school leaving age also varies by jurisdiction (15, 16 or 17).

Given the above, who to include in the sample frame in terms of age is not straightforward. There are arguments both for and against having a wider or more limited age range of respondents. For example, from a sampling perspective, including the widest possible range of participants (e.g. 15 or older) will increase the pool of potential participants by around 10%. It will also enable observation of the experiences of young migrants as they make the transition into adulthood. From a questionnaire design perspective, it may be better to exclude those still eligible to attend school (i.e. 15-17) given the different range of questions they may need to be asked.

Given all of these issues, DIAC's current stance is that it would be preferable to retain the current project's focus upon those aged 18 or older, but to explore opportunities to establish a study focused upon those in the younger age group in the future, particularly given that almost one third of humanitarian migrants are aged under 18 years<sup>1</sup>. Such a study could be implemented as a stand-alone project or potentially be nested alongside the current study. Either way, such a project would seek a more suitable conduit through which to advance understanding of the specific needs of this cohort of humanitarian migrants.

### ***Gender***

Ideally DIAC would like to recruit a sample which reflects the gender characteristics of humanitarian arrivals and is sufficiently large for both groups to enable appropriate data demarcation and analysis. There are however a number of factors which may complicate this. The first is the large numbers of single males which are currently arriving through the onshore stream. As such, a purely randomised sampling approach may recruit to the study significantly more males than females. It is also recognised there may be difficulties in recruiting females from certain cultural backgrounds due to problems with access through traditional patriarchal channels.

Given the above, it may thus be necessary to adopt approaches which ensure sufficient numbers of females are recruited to the study. Options are varied and could include the establishment of gender quotas; recruiting a cohort of households in which a female is the primary applicant; recruiting a cohort specifically from the women-at-risk stream; or using the telephone to reach females when necessary. All approaches will be explored in conjunction with the appointed survey manager and where possible pilot tested. The aim will be to ensure that no sub-groups of female humanitarian migrants are systematically excluded from the survey.

### ***Nationality/Birthplace***

Given that the source countries of humanitarian migrants constantly changes (depending on circumstances occurring in Australia and internationally), the cohort recruited will necessarily reflect those arriving at the time of recruitment. As such, their nationality characteristics may not reflect past or future

<sup>1</sup> During the 2011 calendar year.

arrival cohorts. While it is suggested by some that the characteristics of humanitarian visa recipients at present (and in the immediate future) is likely to be an anomaly, there is no certainty as to when changes might happen or what changes will occur. As such, it is not deemed necessary to make any special provisions in the recruitment methodology to accommodate the characteristics of current, past or expected future cohorts. DIAC recognises that the sample drawn will be a point-in-time snapshot of humanitarian arrivals and that all subsequent data analysis and conclusions needs to acknowledge this.

However, given that there is likely to be a number of dominant groups represented in the population, there may be methodological and logistical merit to stratifying the population and confining recruitment to selected groups. Primarily, by recruiting participants only from the major arrival groups there may be efficiencies available in the interviewing process through the use of bilingual interviewers or dedicated translation staff. It is also recognised that nationality is likely to be an indicator for a range of other variables including pathways taken, extent of trauma and personal skills/education to name just a few. Such an approach however is open to criticism for systematically excluding smaller arrival groups. DIAC's current view is that smaller arrival groups should not be systematically excluded from the survey. Not only would their exclusion reduce the overall representativeness of the cohort, it would also negate the capacity to examine the role of larger as opposed to smaller local diaspora on settlement outcomes.

### ***Major Humanitarian Pathways***

From the perspective of DIAC a critical dimension of interest is the migration pathway through which persons arrive. There are three key groups – offshore (those arriving through offshore-based resettlement schemes such as referrals from the UNHCR), irregular maritime arrivals (IMA) (those arriving by boat without visas) and onshore (those who arrive on other visa classes and then seek asylum)<sup>2</sup>. Previous longitudinal studies have not differentiated humanitarian migrants along these lines. Differences of interest are varied and include:

- The range and level of services provided by DIAC (e.g. offshore arrivals have access to AUSCO pre-arrival programs);
- Pre-settlement experience of IMAs (a period in detention centres or community detention) as opposed to offshore arrivals who enter the community immediately;
- That the entry pathway may be a proxy indicator of a range of background vulnerability variables such as extent of trauma or time in refugee camps; and
- That some of those granted visas through the onshore stream may have spent considerable time in Australia before entering the humanitarian stream (e.g. international students who do not wish to return due to political problems emerging in their home country).

From DIAC's perspective, it is important that all three arrival streams are adequately represented in the sample. If the nature of the sample population means that stratification or over-sampling of some groups needs to occur to ensure this, then that is an approach which should be taken. The specific details of how this occurs will need to be determined in conjunction with the contracted research manager.

Additionally, within these major arrival streams there may also be value in demarcating the sample population by visa sub-class when sufficient numbers exist. For example, within the offshore stream the refugee, global special humanitarian and women-at-risk sub-groups may be considered for stratification or over-sampling at the recruitment stage.

### ***Bridging Visas and Community Detention***

In addition to the migration streams and visa sub-classes noted above, a further significant question is whether to include in our sample those who have not yet been granted permanent protection visas (e.g. those on bridging visas [BVEs] or in community detention). There are strong arguments for and against the inclusion of such migrants.

<sup>2</sup> In the year 2010-11, 13799 humanitarian visas were granted with approximately 8900 going to those from offshore pathways, 2700 to IMA arrivals and 2100 to other onshore recipients.

In terms of those migrants on BVEs, given that DIAC has an interest in the outcomes of all persons entering the community under the humanitarian program, all sub-components should arguably be covered in Building a New Life. Additionally, from a methodological perspective, recruiting migrants to the study when they enter the community (as opposed to when they receive permanent protection) would be preferable. This is because migrants in such circumstances could spend months or years living in the community during which time they are likely to pass through major settlement and adjustment transition points (e.g. language, housing, employment). Excluding them from the study until such time as they are granted permanency would undermine this methodological objective. On this same basis, the inclusion of persons in community detention settings could also be warranted. Given their lack of permanency, a range of factors may render both groups different from permanent settlers including the services and programs they have access to, and their capacity to make long term plans. Such differences are of enormous policy interest.

There are however a number of complications around the inclusion of BVE and community detention migrants which need consideration. Primarily is that there is no certainty that persons in these circumstances will eventually gain permanent protection rights, and thus may be lost to the study. Furthermore, including such persons in the study may breach ethical practices by providing false hope of a positive decision. Finally, a substantial proportion of such persons may already have spent considerable time in the country, namely those non-IMA onshore arrivals who are placed on BVEs while their status is determined.

There are however approaches by which to mediate these concerns. For example, while past experience suggests the numbers not eventually gaining permanency will be small, there are differences within the cohort which may warrant demarcation for sampling purposes. Notably, during 2009-10 almost 89% of all IMAs were eventually granted protection visas whereas just over 50% of non-IMA onshore arrivals were approved for protection<sup>3</sup>. Restricting BVEs participants to IMA arrivals would therefore reduce the chances of losing participants after recruitment.

As such, given the arguments outlined above, DIAC's current position is that while there is substantial interest in understanding the impact of these pathways upon settlement outcomes, it is agreed that the current study should remain focused upon those who have been granted humanitarian protection visas. However, we intend to seek additional funding for a concurrent study designed to explore issues related to people currently on BVEs or in community detention. People included in this study who do gain permanent protection status would then transition across to the main study cohort.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2011). Population Flows: Immigration Aspects 2009-1010 edition. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

## What? (will the study do)

### **Introduction**

In an overall sense, the Building a New Life study is expected to provide a broad ranging evidence-base to assist policy development and program improvement for humanitarian migrants. In particular it is expected to increase the knowledge base around factors that aid successful settlement and identify barriers that hinder positive outcomes. However, to guide a successful long-term research project, there is a need to identify more specific agendas and research questions. This section outlines some of the key issues and questions that DIAC is currently using to guide the study development.

The section is divided into the three broad headings of: research questions, dependent variables, and independent variables. It seeks to clarify the key issues of interest to the study and provide a more specific understanding of what DIAC expects to get from the study. While it is recognised that the Survey Reference and Technical Advisory Groups will play a role in refining these issues further, the following discussion provides a foundation upon which refinements can take place.

### **Research Questions**

As acknowledged in the previous section, DIAC has a keen interest in understanding how different migration pathways affect settlement outcomes. While there are also interests in the role of personal characteristics and historical backgrounds on settlement outcomes, it is the pathways to settlement, particularly those elements which occur immediately prior to and after the migrant has arrived in the country which will be a critical focus. These are elements of the migration and settlement process for which DIAC and the broader tiers of government in Australia can exercise some influence upon.

Siew-Ean Khoo's background paper<sup>4</sup> reviews issues of potential interest to the study and suggests three sets of key research questions<sup>5</sup>, namely:

1. the major settlement outcomes in terms of social and economic engagement, English language, personal satisfaction and how they change over time, what factors affect their change, and their relationships with each other;
2. the access to and use of government and non-government services in terms of the extent to which they are contributing to the outcomes; and
3. how these outcomes differ according to the visa class and migration pathways pre-settlement.

As such, to address the above range of issues and themes, there is a need to consider both the outcomes of the migrants in terms of their settlement success (or not) over time (dependent variables) as well as the wide range of variables which might affect those outcomes along the migration and settlement journey (independent variables). Within both categories, there exists considerable scope for interpretation and inclusion of issues which needs refining to ensure the study is both relevant and manageable. This refinement will occur in conjunction with the survey manager over coming months and be advised by the two reference groups. The remainder of this section outlines and discusses some of the key issues.

### **Successful Settlement and Dependent Variables**

Within this domain, it is necessary to consider more precisely what settlement outcomes we are interested in and how to measure success (or not) over time. These are the dependent variables of the study and they need to be derived from our understanding of successful settlement. However, successful settlement is not a straightforward concept given that both words are subjective and can be interpreted differently depending upon the perspective from which they are considered.

<sup>4</sup> Khoo, S-E. 2012. Key Research Questions for a Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and other Humanitarian Migrants. Paper prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1 for a more detailed outline of these three sets of questions.

In her background work prepared for this project, Khoo<sup>6</sup> provides a useful discussion of these issues. As such, they are not detailed in depth here. Her key point is that successful settlement can be considered from the perspective of the migrant themselves as well as from the viewpoint of the host (country). From a migrant’s perspective, this can encompass notions of living comfortably, intentions to stay in Australia, personal wellbeing and satisfaction with their life. From the perspective of the host, which is perhaps best considered through the lens of DIAC, successful settlement has usually been seen in terms of social and economic participation and related outcomes. Table 1 which is adapted from DIAC’s Conceptual Framework for Understanding Settlement Outcomes, provides a useful overview of the key dimensions for understanding settlement success from both a migrant’s and host’s perspective. Each dimension is discussed further below.

**Table 1: Conceptual Framework for Understanding Settlement**

Perspective	Key Settlement Dimensions	Example Settlement Indicators
Host	Social participation	- English proficiency - Participation in education, training and community life
Host	Economic well-being	- Employment, income and debt - Housing and satisfaction with accommodation
Host and Migrant	Independence	- Ability to access/use community services - Ability to make choices (about own life)
Migrant	Personal health and wellbeing	- Physical and mental health - Level of personal confidence (self esteem)
Migrant	Life satisfaction and personal happiness	- Sense of personal happiness - Sense of belonging and being treated well by the community

Note: A more extensive list of possible dependent variables of interest is contained in Appendix 2.

### ***Social Participation***

This is a relatively broad domain and can most easily be summarised as participation in social aspects of Australian community life. Whether this is through volunteering, sport and recreation, religious or school groups, education and training, or a range of other fields, may vary from individual to individual and group to group. A specific sub-dimension of this domain is expertise in English language. As argued by many, Khoo included, proficiency in English language is likely to be a critical precursor for engagement with many of the other social and economic dimensions of settlement. It is thus an important variable which needs to be addressed within the scope of this survey.

### ***Economic Well-being***

DIAC views economic indicators as one of the key useful measures by which to gauge settlement success. However, it also recognises that economic outcomes do not reflect the policy objectives of the humanitarian program and nor are they the only measurement of success from either a migrant’s or host’s perspective. Never-the-less, such measures, particularly those related to labour force participation and economic self-sufficiency are likely to provide useful insights to wider success in overall settlement outcomes. As such, DIAC’s position is that there will need to be a set of questions in the survey specifically focussed on economic outcomes.

### ***Independence and Self Reliance***

Arguably independence is one of the most critical domains by which to gauge settlement success. Attaining a level of independence and a capacity to access services, to negotiate social and economic systems, and to have the knowledge to seek and secure appropriate assistance when required, is a critical

<sup>6</sup> Khoo, S-E. 2012. Key Research Questions for a Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and other Humanitarian Migrants. Paper prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

dimension of settlement success. It is indeed a core objective of the DIAC agenda to help migrants to build skills and eventually attain self-sufficiency. Such a notion ties closely with the work of Amartya Sen<sup>7</sup> which highlights the critical importance of human functioning and capacity to function as a precursor for wellbeing. Khoo links this to the concept of successful settlement arguing that having the capacity to function (i.e. through knowledge, skills, accessibility etc.) will be necessary to attain successful settlement.

A useful concept to guide this understanding is the notion of 'literacy'. Aside from its standard definition (ability to read and write), literacy is a term increasingly applied to other concepts to describe the capacity of individuals and populations to engage successfully with various elements of society. For example, health literacy, financial literacy, legal literacy and digital literacy are some examples<sup>8</sup>. As such, while measuring 'outcomes' in terms of social and economic participation will provide some indication of success, it may not necessarily indicate independence or capacity to be independent. As such, in addition to measuring actual outcomes, there could also be value in measuring levels of literacy or capacity for a range of elements deemed necessary for self-sufficiency in Australian society.

### ***Personal Health and Wellbeing***

The personal physical and mental wellbeing of migrants is a critical domain of interest to the study. In particular the study will need to identify and monitor changes to health and wellbeing of the participants over time. Variables within this domain would best be based upon recognised and validated tools designed to gauge personal health and wellbeing. Results can then be compared across different sub-groups in the study, over time for the same individuals, but importantly with benchmarks from data collected in the wider migrant and non-migrant population.

### ***Life Satisfaction and Personal Happiness***

In contrast to measures of personal wellbeing, personal happiness is likely to encompass more subjective and personal experiences of life in Australia. As a 2010 study by ASRG<sup>9</sup> identified, the notion of 'living comfortably' was an important indicator of success from the perspective of migrants, in contrast to the usual DIAC understanding based on social and economic participation. Within this domain, issues such as intention to stay in Australia, whether expectations have been met, what their intentions for the future are, family related matters (reunion/separation/remittances) and their general satisfaction with life might be canvassed. Issues related to the host community and their level of welcoming might also be included here (level of welcoming, experienced racism etc.). It is recognised by DIAC that humanitarian migrants differ from non-humanitarian migrants in that they have been forced to migrate and thus the decision to remain in Australia is not always a choice. Many would like to return home, but cannot do so for safety reasons. As such, care will need to be taken to factor this into understanding of the findings.

### ***Independent Variables***

On the other side of the research equation are the independent variables, those that have a role in influencing settlement outcomes of humanitarian migrants. These can encompass a vast range of issues which are both too numerous to include in a questionnaire survey and also to outline in detail here<sup>10</sup>. Rather, specific domains are identified and some examples highlighted and discussed. It is recognised that it will not be possible to examine all possible variables and their permutations in this study. Rather, with the help of academic experts and the two study advisory groups, the most critical variables of interest to DIAC and which are recognised as most likely to be important factors will be incorporated into the study.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Khoo, S-E. 2012. Key Research Questions for a Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and other Humanitarian Migrants. Paper prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

<sup>8</sup> For example, to successfully engage with the Australian health system to secure appropriate, timely and cost-effective treatment for any given condition requires an individual to have a certain level of health literacy. The lesser the health literacy, the poorer the outcomes are likely to be.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Survey Research Group, 2010. Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals: Report of Findings. Prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

<sup>10</sup> A more detailed list of independent variables of interest is contained in Appendix 2.

### ***Policies, Programs and Services***

A key role of DIAC and its many policies, programs and services is to help facilitate the successful settlement of migrants through their equitable involvement in Australia's multicultural society. Underpinning this is the notion that all Australians, regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds, should be able to participate in all types of economic and social activities, and to access the services they need. Achieving this with humanitarian migrants is in many respects more challenging than for other groups. Aside from the standard issues faced by all migrants to Australia (e.g. learning to navigate health and education systems), humanitarian arrivals tend to have a wider range of personal disadvantages due to the circumstances which led to their refugee status (e.g. loss of family members, loss of homes and possessions, disrupted education). This group of migrants are thus eligible for and receive a far greater level of service delivery than other groups. These include pre- and post-arrival services (e.g. AUSCO and AMEP), services provided through detention centres or community detention, and the ongoing assistance provided to a range of migrants through the contracted settlement service providers nationwide.

In addition to DIAC funded services, there are also a wide range of mainstream services with which humanitarian migrants are likely to engage and thus are also of interest to this study. These include large Commonwealth services (e.g. Centrelink, Medicare), state and local government agencies (e.g. schools, libraries, utility providers) as well as private sector (e.g. banks, medical clinics) and other non-government organisations (e.g. charities, religious groups).

However, despite interest in the role of all such services on settlement outcomes and success, it is recognised that this study is not a forum through which to conduct detailed analysis or evaluation of the role of any individual services or even types of services. Rather, the study will have a broader perspective and provides a forum to understand the use of services by this group, gauge insights to their needs and requirements, identify gaps in service provision, and identify areas warranting more detailed and specific research attention. All such information will, both directly and indirectly, inform the development, improvement and targeting of broader policies and programs for future humanitarian arrivals.

### ***Personal Characteristics***

Variables of interest within this domain encompass the historical and personal characteristics of the refugees. These are fixed and include their demographics, socio-economic characteristics, their historical experiences (such as employment, education, health and wealth) and other similarly personal life history until they entered the migration pathway. While some of this data can be acquired through records held by the Department, most will need to be asked of the participants during the survey.

### ***Past Context including Pathways and Migration Experiences***

Of particular interest here is the pathway taken on the migration journey, particularly the types of experiences encountered (e.g. refugee camps, boat journeys), the assistance (and hindrance) they received in transit, and related factors on the migration journey. This would include pre-settlement DIAC programs and time spent in detention centres, on BVEs or in community detention settings.

### ***Current Circumstances***

The current circumstances encompass all factors which may influence the settlement outcome after arrival in the settlement community. These can include aspects related to the particular community into which they are settling (e.g. rural or urban, high or low socio-economic status), elements of their particular family and ethnic community (e.g. whether they have family members living here already) and importantly, the services available and utilised after arrival. Within this domain there is a need to incorporate both migrant/refugee focussed services, including government programs, but also to consider other sectors (e.g. banks). DIAC recognises that all such services play a role in the settlement experience regardless of whether they are targeted to migrants or not. To this end it is acknowledged that study participants will not always be cognizant of the relationships between specific services and who funds those services (Federal, state, local) and thus the approach adopted will need to be mindful of that.

## How? (Methodological Details)

### ***Introduction***

In general terms, the approach for this study is to recruit and interview a cohort of humanitarian migrants about their settlement experiences and outcomes. Following the initial interview, those same participants will be reinterviewed at regular intervals for a number of years to track their progress. DIAC recognises that there are many technical dimensions to conducting a complex survey such as this, all of which need to be considered and answers arrived at prior to commencement. These include such things as the size of the cohort, the recruitment window timeframe, duration of intervals between survey waves, the recruitment methodology and the study locations, among other things. DIAC also recognises however that many specific methodological details such as this can not be conclusively addressed prior to the appointment of a survey manager and data collection agency. This is because many issues will be influenced by the methodological approaches put forward by the research agency which in part will be based upon their internal expertise, available resources, logistical capacities and associated costs. Despite this recognition, it is possible to outline some of the issues warranting attention and DIAC's current view on these.

### ***Sample Size***

The straightforward position is that as large a sample as possible should be recruited, within the constraints of the budget and available population. To this end it is agreed that data collection is more important than data analysis, particularly given that data will be made available for analysts to utilise in the future. As such, resources will be directed to increasing the sample size whenever appropriate.

In terms of the sample population, DIAC recognises there are limitations on the sample size which can be achieved given the population of interest. This is because during any given year, it can be anticipated that approximately 14,000 individual humanitarian migrants will be granted permanent protection visas. However, a sizeable proportion of these persons would be expected to be children and thus ineligible for inclusion, thereby diminishing the pool of potential participants. Secondly, many migrating units contain multiple applicants (one primary and multiple secondary). On the basis that sampling is based around migrating units rather than individuals (discussed previously) it can be estimated that only a few thousand migrating units will settle in Australia on humanitarian protection visas during any 12 month period. Based on past experience a portion of those migrating units invited to the study will not be contactable or will decline to participate, further reducing the pool of potential inclusions.

As such, DIAC recognises there will be a need to put considerable resources and effort into converting as many humanitarian visa recipients into active study participants as possible, so as to ensure a sufficient sample is recruited to enable the analysis to which DIAC aspires.

### ***Recruitment Timeframe/Window***

In their background paper prepared for this study, Gray et al.<sup>11</sup> suggest that it would be preferable to keep the recruitment window as narrow as possible and as soon after arrival as possible to enable increased analytical power. As they point out, the wider the window of recruitment and the longer the delay after arrival, the lesser will be our ability to detect impacts. However, as noted above, given that there are a limited number of humanitarian migrants settling in the country every year, there will be a need to recruit from a relatively wide window to ensure that our sample size is sufficient for conducting the analysis required. DIAC thus recognises that a wide recruitment window will be necessary and that the need for a sufficient sample size over-rides the benefits of confining recruitment to a narrow window. Furthermore, logistical requirements related to the resources of the data collection agency and interviewer/interpreter availability will also have a bearing on the approach. For example, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants

<sup>11</sup> Gray, M., Graycar, A. and Nicolaou, L., 2012. Design Options for the Building a New Life in Australia Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and Other Migrants. Prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

to Australia (LSIA) adopted a staged approach to accommodate the resources of the appointed data collection agency. The approach adopted for Building a New Life will be negotiated in conjunction with the appointed survey manager and factor in methodological, logistical and budget constraints.

### ***Recruitment Location***

At present, this is perhaps the most difficult aspect of methodology development on which to form a solid position. There are clear methodological, logistical and budgetary reasons to limit the number of sites in which participants are recruited but simultaneously there are strong arguments in favour of including a number of sites. Regardless of how many sites are eventually included in the survey, DIAC is of the view that the survey needs to extend beyond metropolitan areas. The details of the approach adopted will ultimately be determined in conjunction with the contracted survey manager and take into account budgetary, methodological and logistical issues.

At the very least, recruitment of participants will need to occur in both Sydney and Melbourne. Recent data<sup>12</sup> suggests that more than 50% of humanitarian migrants settle in Melbourne or Sydney. Excluding either of the two major cities would thus reduce our potential sample population by 25%. Additionally, including both major cities ensures that our sample will reflect the environments in which the majority of the humanitarian group resides. As outlined earlier, the contextual environment into which refugees are settling will inevitably play a role in their settlement outcomes. A further 30% of humanitarian migrants settle in Brisbane, Adelaide or Perth. As such, it would be prudent to include at least two of these locations, if not all three, for the same reasons that apply to including both Sydney and Melbourne.

Extending recruitment to locations beyond these five major settlement locations is less straightforward. Given that these locations account for approximately 20% of humanitarian arrivals, there is a natural argument to recruit 20% of our sample from beyond the major cities. This approach would also provide an opportunity to gain insight to whether differences in outcomes are evident between major metropolitan and smaller regional centres. This is of particular interest given that some research suggests better outcomes are achieved in regional areas<sup>13</sup>.

However, a complicating factor for recruiting from regional areas is that these persons are scattered across a number of centres (at least 20 locations) with relatively small numbers arriving in each location. As such, to secure a sufficient sample size with which to enable sufficient comparisons with metropolitan settlers would necessitate recruiting in a number of locations. Extra costs are likely to be associated with recruitment in regional areas and thus a lower total sample size overall due to the limited budget would be a trade-off. Furthermore, given the small numbers of eligible persons in regional areas, there is no guarantee that a large enough sample of regional respondents with which to conduct meaningful analysis could be recruited.

### ***Recruitment, Follow-up and Retention Strategies***

It is well recognised by all stakeholders that DIAC administrative data should be used for generating the sample. As outlined earlier in this document, the intention of DIAC is to randomly recruit a sample from all eligible migrants regardless of whether they are the primary visa applicant or not. This approach was put forward by Gray et al.<sup>14</sup> in their discussion paper and has been endorsed by DIAC and the advisory groups.

Also suggested by Gray et al. and agreed to by stakeholders, is that participants should remain in the study unless they specifically ask to be removed. This means that persons who move interstate from their

<sup>12</sup> Calendar year 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Survey Research Group, 2010. Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals: Report of Findings. Prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

<sup>14</sup> Gray, M., Graycar, A. and Nicolaou, L., 2012. Design Options for the Building a New Life in Australia Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and Other Migrants. Prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

original location or those who for whatever reason are not able to complete any given wave of the study, should continue to be followed up in subsequent waves.

A critical issue for longitudinal studies is the recruitment and retention of participants over a potentially long period of time. Strategies to maximise participation and minimise sample attrition over time are numerous and include the use of peer interviewers (to recruit participants and promote the study<sup>15</sup>), incentives (e.g. cash payments or gift vouchers), regular communication (e.g. newsletters and websites) and community engagement initiatives (e.g. public forums or information sessions). To this end, DIAC has requested that tenderers outline their approach for recruiting and retaining participants in the study.

### ***Mode of Data Collection***

Based upon advice received from academic experts and the study advisory groups, DIAC is of the opinion that face-to-face interviews will be most appropriate for this cohort of migrants, particularly for recruitment and the first wave of interviews. The benefits of face-to-face interviewing for building rapport, gaining trust and securing long-term commitment are well recognised. It is thus the aim of DIAC to conduct as many waves as possible using face-to-face methods, within the constraints of the budget. However, it is recognised that budget limitations may force the use of telephone methods on occasions. To this end, based upon advice received in the advisory groups, telephone surveys would be minimised and preferably utilised in the later rather than earlier waves of the study. The eventual mix of face-to-face and telephone interviewing will in part be influenced by the costs associated with each approach and will be finalised in conjunction with the successful tenderer.

### ***Language***

It is recognised by DIAC that a large proportion of interviews will need to be conducted in a language other than English. To this end, it is agreed that bilingual interviewers will be preferable to the use of interpreters. Where interpreters are utilised it will be preferable to use in-person rather than telephone services. However, it is recognised that budget and logistical issues will play a role in the final decision and the approach taken will be finalised in conjunction with the appointed contractor. Regardless of the eventual approach adopted, consideration will need to be given to the potential sensitivity of issues in the questionnaire and thus the need to ensure interviewers are well trained and skilled in dealing with complex cultural circumstances. A balance will need to be achieved to prevent vicarious trauma for participants whilst minimising bias in the survey results. Furthermore, given the possibility that some interviewees may be known to the interpreters or interviewers (particularly in ethnic groups with small local communities) there will need to be careful consideration of how to deal with situations in which interviewee privacy could be an issue. Although previous studies (e.g. LSIA) have sometimes used family members to interpret interviewer questions, this approach is not deemed appropriate for this study given that participants are likely to be asked about potentially personal and sensitive issues.

### ***Number of Waves/Interval Duration***

DIAC is not currently committed to any specific number of waves in the study or intervals between waves. Although the report prepared by Gray et al.<sup>16</sup> suggests that waves be either annual, or approximately 14-15 months apart (if ensuring that the final wave of the study occurs a full five years after participants arrive in the country is important), DIAC is not committed to either approach. Rather it is recognised the five year study window and allocated budget will place a limitation on the number of waves achievable but that the final decision will need to be negotiated in conjunction with the research manager.

In addition to budgetary and time constraints, there will also need to be consideration of the burden on respondents (not too frequent), the need to keep the cohort engaged and thus involved (not too long

<sup>15</sup> Peer interviewers do not actually conduct interviews but serve as liaison persons on behalf of the research team.

<sup>16</sup> Gray, M., Graycar, A. and Nicolaou, L., 2012. Design Options for the Building a New Life in Australia Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and Other Migrants. Prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

between waves), and the methodological considerations with respect to measuring change over time. Given that the study is interested in measuring change over time, the intervals between waves need to factor in the timeframe with which changes might be expected to occur.

### ***Questionnaire Items***

While it will ultimately be necessary to develop a questionnaire instrument which covers the issues of interest in sufficient detail to enable the key research questions to be addressed, there are a number of issues which need to be taken into account to achieve this. These include:

- **Comparability and compatibility:** When possible, the survey should make use of items which will enable comparisons with, and are compatible for integrating with other data sets.
- **Validity:** When possible, the survey should make use of items which have been validated in a similar context or population.
- **Longitudinal:** Being a longitudinal study, questionnaire items should be designed to take full advantage of this. Items which do not exploit the power of longitudinal surveys should be avoided.

### ***Administrative Data Linkage***

The issue of attempting to do too much with this study is recognised by DIAC as a risk. As such, a clear objective will be to secure as much data as possible about the study participants from other sources, and link that data to the records generated in the survey for each individual. This has both methodological and cost benefits through minimising the number and range of questions asked of participants and arguably may provide more accuracy in some fields.

Possible administrative data sources include the various branches of DIAC, other federal agencies and state departments. Within DIAC the Humanitarian Entrants Management System (HEMS) could provide valuable information on the backgrounds of study participants, the Adult Migrants English Program (AMEP) could be a source of information on language training, and Australia's Cultural Orientation program (AUSCO) may yield information about pre-arrival program participation of interviewees. While data holdings of non-DIAC organisations are likely to be more challenging to secure access to, there is a vast range of possibilities which should be explored including health service engagement data from Medicare, higher education and training information held by DEEWR and the payment of benefits through Centrelink.

While there will be challenges to overcome in securing such data for use in the study, particularly from sources external to DIAC (i.e. ethical and legal hurdles, including the permission of the participants) the value of the study could be enhanced dramatically with the inclusion of a broad range of linked data.

# Appendix 1

Three proposed sets of research questions<sup>17</sup>:

**1. Humanitarian migrants' settlement outcomes in relation to their English language proficiency, housing situation, labour force participation, use of qualifications, income, health, community engagement, citizenship and level of satisfaction with life in Australia.** Specific research questions are:

- How do these measures of settlement outcomes change for refugees and humanitarian migrants during the first few years of their settlement and with increased duration of residence in Australia?
- What are the factors associated with positive or negative changes in these measures during the settlement period? Factors that should be examined include:
  - demographic, social and economic characteristics and health status, including age, sex, marital status, country of birth, religion, English language proficiency, education, qualifications, occupational skills, pre-migration employment history, physical and mental health;
  - migrants' residential location, particularly between capital city and regional areas;
  - family situation and resources;
  - social and ethnic networks and engagement with the community;
  - linkages to the country of origin;
  - pre-migration experiences including employment experience in country of origin;
  - the migration process (e.g. context/reasons for migration, offshore/onshore visa, time spent in refugee camps and/or detention, country of location, time spent in transit countries);
  - frequency/duration of use of community and government resources (e.g. specific settlement support programs, other settlement services such as AMEP, mainstream government programs [Medicare and Centrelink], and migrant resource centres); and
  - prevailing economic and labour market conditions in the communities of settlement.

**2. Access to and use of government and non-government services, welfare benefits and their effectiveness in contributing to migrants' successful settlement.** Specific research questions are:

- Which humanitarian migrants are more likely to access government and non-government support services and government welfare benefits?
- Which types of services and benefits do they access and use?
- At which times after arrival are services accessed, for how long and how frequently do they use them?
- Do their access and use of these services change during the period of settlement and in what ways?
- Which patterns of service use are associated with improved outcomes during the settlement period?
- What is the level of use that is associated with a significant improvement in outcomes?

**3. How do settlement outcomes of humanitarian migrants differ by visa subclass?** Specific questions are:

- Do migrants in the different Humanitarian visa subclasses differ in their settlement outcomes?
- If so, what are the factors that contribute to their different settlement outcomes?
- How does duration of residence affect their settlement outcomes? Do they have different time trajectories to reach a specific level of outcome?
- Do different pre-migration experiences/pathways have an effect on settlement outcomes?
- Do they differ in their access to and duration of use of support services during the settlement period? If so, in what ways and is there a differential impact on their settlement outcomes?

<sup>17</sup> Khoo, S-E. 2012. Key Research Questions for a Longitudinal Survey of Refugees and other Humanitarian Migrants. Paper prepared for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

## Appendix 2.

### *Possible Dependent Variables*

#### **Social Participation**

- English proficiency
- Education participation
- Community engagement
- Sport and recreation

#### **Economic Wellbeing**

- Employment/labour force participation
- Income
- Use of qualifications
- Housing tenure, security and suitability
- Satisfaction with housing
- Welfare dependence

#### **Independence**

- Ability to access/use services
- Self sufficiency
- Ability to make choices about own life
- Knowledge of rights
- Literacy: health, financial, legal rights

#### **Personal Wellbeing**

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Self esteem/confidence

#### **Personal Happiness**

- Residential intention
- Citizenship intention
- Life satisfaction

### *Possible Independent Variables*

#### **DIAC Policies and Programs**

- Detention/community detention
- Services – AUSCO, AMEP etc.
- Settlement service providers

#### **Personal Characteristics**

- Demographics: Gender, age, marital status, religion, birthplace, family situation,
- Socio-economics: Education, work history, personal wealth
- Language proficiency
- Pre migration experiences: Persecution, trauma, health, loss of family, loss of possessions
- Reasons for migration
- Expectations

#### **Past Context including Pathways and Migration Experiences**

- Humanitarian stream and visa sub-class
- Pathways to settlement: Refugee camps, detention, transit countries
- Access to and use of settlement services (e.g. AUSCO)

#### **Current Circumstances**

- Residential location: State, metropolitan, rural
- Characteristics of location: socioeconomic status, ethnic make-up
- Linkages to country of origin
- Accepted by the local community