



New Arrivals: A Sporting Chance

Lutheran Community Care, Kilburn, South Australia

This project also relates to:

-  Women
-  Families
-  Youth
-  Education
-  Health

A *Sporting Chance* was developed in 2005 to help integrate newly arrived refugee families into their community through sport and recreational activities. Through exercise and organised sports, participants are introduced to their local community and have an opportunity to contribute. The refugees build networks and make friends, thereby easing social tensions and reducing racism. The refugees' health is improved through physical activity.

The South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport funds the program. Initial funding was for 2005–07 but funding has been extended for a further 12 months. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's *Settlement Grants Program* provides funding to conduct related activities for this target group.

Newly arrived refugees and migrants do not always get the opportunity to participate in the larger community. Racial tensions can exist with the arrival of new communities in Australia. Furthermore, the media can contribute to negative images of some communities.

This project attempts to address some of the racism refugees in Adelaide's northern suburbs have experienced by developing links between them and local sports organisations to encourage the refugees' participation in sport and recreational activities.

Identifying a need and consulting refugee and sporting communities

Many programs currently exist to assist newly arrived communities in South Australia to build skills and adapt to their new surroundings. However, Lutheran Community Care identified a need for a program that specifically addressed

the integration of refugees and migrants and helped them become active members of local communities.

Lutheran Community Care held consultations with members of a range of different communities to discuss their experiences and needs and to come to understand of each other. Through these discussions, sport was identified as way to bring refugees, migrants and the broader community together.

Initially, the process of building relationships with sporting organisations was slow and participation from the community lacked enthusiasm. Shortly after the project began the South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport provided funding that facilitated subsequent consultations with sports teams, and allowed the project to take off.

Lutheran Community Care created a network that included:

- local new and emerging communities
- Adelaide Crows Football Club
- African Communities Organisation of South Australia
- Broadview Bowling Club
- City of Port Adelaide Enfield Council
- City of Prospect Council
- Enfield Athletics Club
- Enfield Harriers Little Athletics
- Enfield Tennis Club
- Kilburn Football and Cricket Club
- the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia
- North Adelaide Football Club
- Prospect District Cricket Club
- South Australian National Football League.

The project started with basketball, football and cricket. Eventually soccer was added and it quickly became the most successful part of the program.

The project

The project consists of a number of sports and recreation programs, namely:

- **Professional soccer training program:** Professional soccer training was organised for 20 young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan as well as some Australian-born youth.

A ten-week soccer program started in August 2007 and sought to develop the skills of different groups to prepare them for trials to play in local soccer clubs in the upcoming season.

- **Water familiarisation swimming program:** Swimming lessons were held at Parks Community Centre in Adelaide during school holidays. Fifty-nine young people from refugee backgrounds attended.
- **Family fun days and sport and recreation introductory activities:** Between 2005 and 2006, five introductory activities were offered to 200 new arrivals. Four of the activities involved hands-on activities with sports coaches from local clubs. Two family fun days were organised involving tours to the AAMI Stadium in Adelaide where refugee new arrivals were introduced to professional Australian football.
- **School holiday programs:** 'Come and Try' days were held at Kilburn Football and Cricket grounds, attended by 40 young people.
- **Football clinic:** The South Australia National Football League trained 20 newly arrived refugee youths.
- **Family Sports Days and Family Harmony Day:** These events were held during Harmony Week in March 2006 in collaboration with Lutheran Community Care's Refugee Services and were funded by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Coaches from Basketball SA Refugee Program, the South Australia National Football League, African community leaders, local families and the Kilburn Football and Cricket Club officials gave presentations to 110 people.

- **'African Women's Wisdom – 40+' come and try lawn bowls:** Older African Women attending this monthly group are given the opportunity to exercise together and make friends through new experiences. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship provides the funding.

Achievements

The project has helped build strong ties between sports organisations and newly arrived migrants and refugees. Barriers have been broken down on both sides. The South Australian Office of Recreation and Sport Project Officer, Laura Perdue, said.

At first the clubs were reluctant to have these players. By building relationships slowly and introducing people from other cultures into their organisations, particularly Africans, their attitude gradually changed.

The professional soccer training program was very successful. Of the 45 participants who received professional training, 17 were registered to play at a premier league level. The success of the soccer players from refugee backgrounds has also boosted their status and image in the media and therefore the broader community.

The water familiarisation swimming program has been a great success and has inspired other organisations dealing with refugees to develop surf lifesaving programs aimed at them.

Newly arrived families often do not have adequate resources to participate in these programs. Football club members did not realise that some of the parents cannot give \$2 for a game or turn up for football practice because of the cost of transport. According to Laura Perdue:

Building this cultural awareness helped to open the minds of club members. These are people that are front bar, beer-drinking blokes. If you can just get the two groups to interact, they will understand each other. They realise they have a lot in common. Whether you are from Africa or elsewhere and your skin is dark or light, we have the same aspirations for our children and hopes for our community.

Several project participants have successfully found places on local teams and have become valuable members of the clubs. Many sporting clubs have become passionate about these partnerships. Project coordinator, Joe Tungaraza, said one of the highlights of the project had been providing people with opportunities to engage and try sports they have never heard of. In doing so they are meeting people in their community as well as in the broader community.

Challenges

The biggest hurdle to the successful running of this project has been getting good attendance at the events, mainly because transport is a problem for participants.

While the program did not expect to attract many females, the response has been even lower than expected. Males participating in the project outnumber females considerably, with only one female currently taking part in the soccer program. Program organisers have made efforts to attract more female players and this will be a key area to target over the next year.

Lack of parental participation is also a problem. Focus groups with the parents have been organised with the aim of encouraging active contributions to their children's activities and also linking up parents with other members of their community.

Initially local sporting organisations were reluctant to open their doors to the refugees. Lutheran Community Care approached the project with a real awareness of the need to address these barriers. Networks were created through dialogue and community events, and sports organisations began to see the benefits these programs could have for their sporting teams.

Key factors in the project's success

The leveraging of existing relationships made a real difference. The South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport was keen to work with Lutheran Community Care on this project because the organisation already had a good track record of engaging with the African and Afghan communities and working with the families. Relationships had been established and the groundwork had been done to get the new arrivals to participate on a regular basis.

Ongoing monitoring and feedback from community organisations has been crucial to the continued success of the project.

Key messages and advice for setting up a similar project

Reaching out to newly arrived communities is not always easy. The football clubs knew they were here but did not know how to reach them or even if they wanted to play. It was a matter of linking the different groups and building relationships.

There are many traditions in local sports clubs, so it is important to find the right partnership and the right people to push the agenda. When parents know the president of the club and know the coach and vice versa they develop enough trust to allow their children to become involved.

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Profile > Richard and Marcel

Josephine and her sons, **Richard** and **Marcel**, arrived in Australia in late 2005 from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Richard and Marcel initially became involved with the Sporting Chance program by asking a group of Afghani youth playing soccer in their local park if they could participate.

Soon after, the two boys registered for the Sporting Chance soccer program, conveniently located close to their home. A week later they were in practice, only one month after arriving in Australia.

Soccer was not a new sport for Richard and Marcel. Both boys had played soccer in school in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but never in a formal soccer competition.

Soccer is Marcel's favourite sport and he recommends the program to his friends. He said:

I wanted to play, and got in. It went well. I was confident I would get into the team because I am good. I play left field.

The boys' mother, Josephine, said she is very happy to hear her boys telling her about their games.