were able to fully renovate it with donated supplies and volunteer labour. Finally we were able to fully furnish the house with donated goods in beautiful condition.

On the other hand there was major uncertainty in working with our Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) – the body that has the formal agreement with the federal government and can authorise groups in the community to sponsor refugees under its agreement. Both the government and the SAHs have been overwhelmed by demands for sponsorships. Limited information from the relevant government department has been frustrating; we waited for our family to arrive for three months, and had no information. This led to uncertainty and difficulty planning ahead. In late September 2016 we did get some information about our family including photos of the mother and father.

The lack of communication with the family means that we have only basic information about who they are; we have to make many decisions ‘blind’ and hope they are right for the family. It would have been nice to know ways that they would like us to prepare for them, and we would like to register their children in the local school, but cannot do so because we do not have their birth certificates. We know that we need to help our family in a way that does not create unrealistic expectations and that fosters eventual independence but do not know exactly how to achieve this.

From our perspective as a small Canadian ‘community of faith’ group, sponsorship of refugees does not come with a clear road map. Although the good faith from our federal government has been there, unfortunately it has not helped clarify the process nor has it made it easy to progress smoothly with our sponsorship project. Lack of information from government agencies or ministries about the family we intend to sponsor, and the distance from and difficulty of timely communication with our SAH, have made our work complicated and challenging.

The inability to connect directly with our family as we planned for their arrival made it difficult for our team to lay down specific and essential groundwork for their resettlement and has required us to exercise considerable patience. We have, however, found tremendous support and overwhelming commitment, both financially and morally, from our congregation, the church leadership, local businesses and determined like-minded individuals.

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Rethinking how success is measured

Chloe Marshall-Denton

Despite the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program being praised for integrating refugees into the job market faster than government-assisted refugees, there may be limited cause for celebration.

The application form for Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program asks for the applicant’s ‘intended occupation’, to which the applicant is supposed to answer in half a line what he or she intends to do in Canada. This question is almost always met with a blank look. Most refugees have been living in their host countries for years, where they are either banned from working or only have access to low-grade jobs. The freedom to choose, the ability to aspire to something different, has been out of reach for years or in some cases has never been in reach at all.

After careful deliberation, one father writes ‘accountant’ and the mother ‘nurse’, the professions they held before fleeing their country; for their three-year-old child, they select – with a smile – ‘doctor’. What
Resettlement

is written in that box matters. It matters to the family, of course, and it matters to Canada, which tends to measure the success of resettlement by how quickly refugees become productive members of society.

By making employment, and how quickly it is obtained, the main measure of success in refugee resettlement, we reinforce the notion that refugees are a burden. We are saying that the sooner refugees are able to get a job the better: any job, as long as they are able to meet their basic needs. The experience of refugees previously sponsored to Canada emphasises this point. For example, a report published by the Canadian government established that if privately sponsored refugees tend to seek employment earlier, it is often out of a feeling of necessity. One of the main reasons cited by refugees is that they fear becoming a burden on their sponsors.

Despite employment being an important stepping-stone to integration, there are risks associated with refugees being pushed into employment too quickly. The report highlights that half the refugee participants surveyed by the government had not had time to engage in language training, mainly because they started working upon arrival. The participants furthermore indicated that the perceived urgency to work prevented them from learning new skills or upgrading their previous skills, and limited their ability to find employment in a field related to their knowledge and skills. It therefore comes as no surprise that, despite having ‘successfully resettled’ by virtue of having secured employment, these refugees earn much less than the Canadian average for some years after being resettled to Canada.

But, of course, resettlement is first of all about protection. When asked why they want to go to Canada, most refugees are quick to answer that Canada is a peaceful country, a country respectful of human rights and a place where all are treated equally. And protection is where the expectations of Canadians and of resettled refugees converge. Canada is offering a safe home to individuals in need of resettlement, corresponding to refugees’ primary concern for short- and long-term safety. Ironically, while many refugees aspire to contribute to Canadian society and their communities, Canada does not actively stimulate the engagement and strengths of newly arrived refugees.

Canada’s refugee resettlement programme stems from humanitarian considerations,
whereby refugees are selected based on their protection needs over their language skills, education level or overall ability to integrate. Canada does not expect resettled refugees to become the country’s greatest contributors but neither does it sufficiently recognise refugees’ respective strengths and experiences. Instead of solely trying to demonstrate the reduction of the financial burden on Canada, we must also consider and build on the myriad dimensions in which the strengths and experiences of resettled refugees contribute to our society.

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**Expectations of vulnerability in Australia**

Alice M Neikirk

The ability of refugees to gain admission to Australia is increasingly based on perceptions of helplessness, suffering and ‘deservingness’. One consequence is that men in particular are marginalised following resettlement.

The rhetoric and policies of Australia’s major political parties have sought to differentiate between refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are depicted as ‘fake refugees’, particularly because they do not ‘mind the queue’. Their action (getting on a boat) is framed as an indication that they are not the most vulnerable but are capable economic migrants and hence undeserving of sanctuary. Actively excluding asylum seekers is therefore considered a necessary measure in order to provide adequate humanitarian assistance for resettling ‘genuine’ refugees, who have become synonymous with those living for protracted periods in refugee camps and coming to Australia through a managed programme.

After more than two decades in camps, the Bhutanese resettling in Australia represent a global elite of refugees who can access resettlement opportunities. The ability of refugees to gain admission is increasingly based on perceptions of helplessness, suffering and ‘deservingness’. These expectations have had an impact on the way resettlement organisations, local service providers and the general public approached the Bhutanese once they were in Australia. In particular, Bhutanese refugee men (and, in particular, able-bodied men) were seen as vulnerable due to the trauma stemming from past experiences, while women were considered vulnerable due to their gender roles. Men were consistently seen as a barrier to be overcome in order to realise the transformation of vulnerable female refugees into empowered women. These understandings and assumptions regarding the social role of women afforded men few pathways to move beyond their status of vulnerable (but still problematic) refugees.

Trauma morphed into a central feature, with both positive and negative effects, of male Bhutanese refugee identity in Australia. First and foremost, trauma and suffering marked them as deserving refugees and thus welcome in Australia. Several men told me it was important that Australians knew their story, their experiences of torture and the protracted time spent in camps.

“It is really essential for people in Australia to know our history because they will not have information about our background… For example, I have been involved in discrimination on the street. As I was walking along the street someone from a car shouted at me using foul language and they said “you Indian, go back to you country” and made a rude gesture. Therefore it is important.” (Male, in his 20s)

Male interviewees believed that it was through suffering that their admission