



# Health in a New Home 2024 Highlights

## Overview

Health in a New Home will be the world's first study to examine multi-generational health and health service use in whole populations. This project will significantly advance knowledge in refugee health by leading a national longitudinal population-based data linkage study and mixed methods research.

Guided by an advisory panel of people from refugee backgrounds, and a translation panel of people from peak body organisations and health services, this study is shedding light on the health needs, service use and outcomes of refugees across generations.

It's been a busy year for the Health in a New Home project. This report provides an overview of what we've been up to, including our research activities, conferences and events and our publications.

### Phase 1

National data linkage study, humanitarian entrants since 2001, by visa type

### Phase 2

Mixed methods health asset mapping:

- National survey
- World cafes
- Bi-cultural workers

### Phase 3

Participatory planning process, co-creation of a road map for planning refugee health care and health promotion

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# Our research activities

## World Cafés

Refugee communities across Sydney and Melbourne will be invited to participate in 'World Cafés', an innovative qualitative method that provides structured knowledge sharing between community members.

## UTS Humanitarian program undergraduate students

We held our first World Café with UTS humanitarian scholarship students to explore what supports and boosts their community's health and wellbeing. The event was facilitated by Om Dhungel, FAICD a leadership consultant, trainer, mentor and expert on strengths-based approaches to community engagement. Om's guidance made it a truly enriching experience, sparking meaningful discussions, and creating a warm, inclusive environment.

## Newly arrived refugees

We adapted the World Café method to facilitate two focus groups on the experiences of newly arrived refugees. The focus groups were conducted in Farsi and Pashto, facilitated by Mujgan Tahery, CEO and founder of the Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre. Uniting Circle is dedicated to fostering inclusivity and cultural understanding within diverse communities through a range of services and support.

## Planned World Cafes

- December 2024: LGBTQIA+ community (national online):
- Q1 2025: Afghan community (NSW)
- Q1 2025: Karen community (VIC)
- 2025 TBC: Iraqi, Kurdish, Assyrian and Chaldean communities (NSW)



## Cross sectional survey

Our national online health assets survey developed by PhD student, Temesgen Muche Ewunie will map the socio-demographic characteristics and individual health promoting and protective factors of refugees. The survey will be available in English Arabic, Swahili, Farsi/Persian, Burmese & Assyrian. We will begin disseminating information in Q1 2025 through communities guided by the advisory panel members, and via social media networks.

The survey will determine opportunities to develop individual supports and flourishing communities.



## National data linkage study

The national data linkage study of existing national datasets will describe the hospital-based healthcare, medication use, and morbidity and mortality outcomes and project the future health service needs of resettled refugees and their children. We will link deidentified data in states with the largest population of refugees (NSW and Victoria).

Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) ABS data set:

- Medicare data
- Pharmaceutical benefits scheme
- Hospital (including Emergency Dept) admissions
- Mental health services
- Cancer, chronic diseases, drug and alcohol use
- Perinatal services
- Births
- Immunisation register
- Deaths
- Notifiable conditions

# Conferences and Events

## Australian Bhutanese Multicultural Event

Chief Investigator Professor Angela Dawson and Om Dhungel, FAICD had the pleasure of attending the Australian Bhutanese Multicultural Event at Memorial Hall, St Mary's. The event celebrated intercultural collaboration, bringing together a diverse community to honour Bhutanese heritage and culture. The event featured vibrant performances alongside guest acts from diverse cultural groups.



## FECCA Conference

Chief Investigator Dr Abela Mahimbo and Project Coordinator Evie Heap were delighted to attend the 2024 Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) Conference. Held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, the event was an inspiring and enriching opportunity to network, learn, and engage.

This year's theme was "Our Experiences. Our Future", which highlighted the strengths and challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Australia. The program featured an impressive line-up of keynote speakers, panel discussions, hands-on experiences, and invaluable networking opportunities.



# Conferences and Events

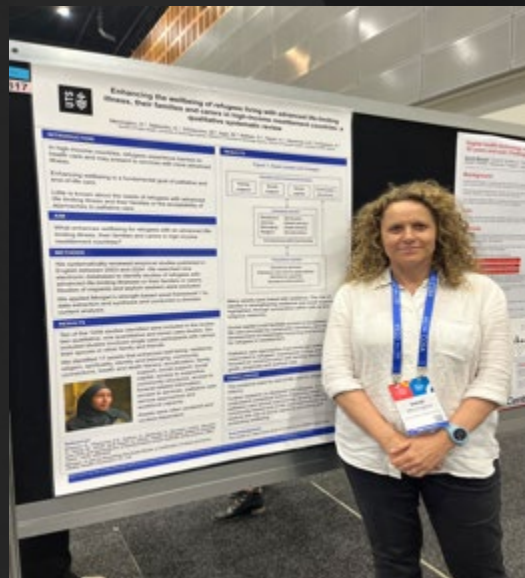
## ACSA Award Night

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Heidi Merrington was honoured to attend the Afghan Community Support Association of Australia (ACSA) Community Achievement Award Night. Held in Blacktown Bowman Hall, the event honoured those for their hard work, contribution & service to the Afghan community. ACSA provides counselling, support and other services to the Afghan community and local community in Blacktown NSW who need support.



## COSA Annual Scientific Meeting

Dr Heidi Merrington presented her poster at the 2024 Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) Conference in the Gold Coast. Heidi's systematic review "Enhancing the wellbeing of refugees living with advanced life-limiting illness, their families and carers in high-income resettlement countries: a qualitative systematic review" aims to fill gaps in understanding the needs of refugees with advanced life limiting illness and their families and the acceptability of approaches to palliative care.



# Conferences and Events

## Visit from Dr Sarah Yeo

UTS had the privilege of hosting Dr. Sarah Yeo from the University of Arizona. Dr. Yeo's work focuses on healthcare access and utilization among refugee populations in the United States and South Korea. Her visit marked the beginning of an exciting collaboration aimed at enhancing the uptake of cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination among refugee communities in both Australia and Arizona.

During her visit, UTS PhD student Fantu Mamo Aragaw presented her research on the epidemiology of cancer and its relationship with the uptake of the cancer care continuum among refugee populations in Australia. Her work provides critical insights that will inform our collaborative efforts.



## Sudanese Australian Health and Well-being Association (SAHWA) Cultural Day Celebration & Launch.

Chief Investigator Angela Dawson was honoured to attend and present at the Sudanese Australian Health and Well-being Association (SAHWA) Cultural Day Celebration & Launch of SAHWA. SAHWA presented their work plan for next year, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Sudanese Australians and provide an opportunity for the community to support each other and improve social isolation. SAHWA works to improve health outcomes, including issues facing the Sudanese community, particularly women and young people.



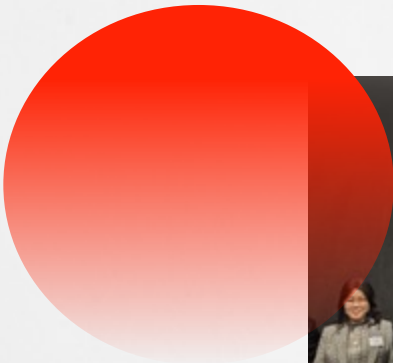


# Conferences and Events

## Refugee Communities Association of Australia (RCAA) NSW chapter launch

Chief Investigator Professor Angela Dawson and others were honoured to attend the launch of the Refugee Communities Association of Australia (RCAA) NSW Chapter at Parliament House. It was a wonderful and inspiring event and an opportunity to reflect, celebrate and acknowledge the resilience, outstanding achievements, and contribution of refugees in Australia.

RCAA is a peak national body that is led by refugees, with refugees, for refugees, with the vision to provide a national voice for the people of refugee background with lived experiences and the organisations representing them.



## Visit to Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre

Dr Heidi Merrington and Project Officer Evie Heap had the privilege of visiting Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre with CEO and founder, Mujgan Tahery. With a passion for social justice and community development, Mujgan has dedicated her career to empowering individuals from various backgrounds through education, support services, and cultural programs. Inclusivity, community engagement and collaboration are at the heart of what Uniting Circle do. They offer a range of services tailored to the diverse interests and needs of refugees and new arrivals. Health in a New Home is collaborating with Uniting Circle to conduct focus groups facilitated by Mujgan with newly arrived refugees on what supports their community's health and well-being.



# Our Papers & Media

1. Health of refugees settled in Australia over time and generations: a transformative mixed methods study protocol. *BMJ Open*  
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/14/9/e083454.full>
2. Refugees in Australia are miles behind in health and wellbeing outcomes. Here's why. *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/refugees-in-australia-are-miles-behind-in-health-and-wellbeing-outcomes-heres-why-235652>
3. Health Assets Among Refugees in Australia: A Systematic Review. *BMC Public Health* (accepted)
4. Measurement tools used to assess individual health assets among refugee populations. A scoping review. *Health Promotion International* (accepted)
5. Enhancing the wellbeing of refugees living with advanced life-limiting illness and their families in high-income resettlement countries: a systematic review. *Palliative Medicine* (under review)
6. The health status of refugee children upon arrival in high-income countries: a scoping review. *Journal of Migration and Health* (under review)
7. Global burden of cancer among refugees: A systematic review and meta-analysis *International. Journal of Cancer* (under review)
8. Interventions to increase cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination uptake among refugees in high-income countries: A systematic review (*Protocol in development*)
9. Supporting students from refugee backgrounds to thrive in higher education- in development (*Protocol in development*)
10. Participatory approaches with refugees in high income countries: a systematic review.

# Our Panel Members

The Health in a New Home panels provide expert advice to guide the prioritisation, communication, dissemination and implementation of the study findings across all phases of the project.

## Advisory panel

The Advisory Panel comprises of people with a refugee background, community leaders and representatives from peak bodies.

### **Nasiba Akram-Haidari OAM (Chair)**

Nasiba is the Founder and Director of Yassna foundation, the founder/Director of Project Humanity, Deputy Chair of Refugee Community Association of Australia, member of the Soroptimist International of Hornsby, and member of Afghan Australian National Council



### **Om Dhungel, JP, FAICD, MICDA, MBA, B.Sc. Engg**

Om Dhungel is a consultant, trainer and a mentor and a practitioner of Strength-Based Approach to refugee settlement and community engagement.

An author and an Honorary Adjunct Fellow at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Om combines his cross-sectoral professional expertise and rich lived experience to help shift thinking and create the momentum for change. Om is passionate about helping individuals and organisations in exploring and unleashing their full potential. A Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, he serves on different Committees and Boards including the NSW Health Ministry, NSW Police, Multicultural NSW and Blacktown City Council.



### **Tina Dixson**

Tina Dixson (she/her) is an academic, activist and social policy professional. Her doctoral research focused on the lived experiences and narratives surrounding the forced displacement and violence faced by queer and trans women. Her academic journey delves into various fields, including trauma theory, gender studies, migration studies, and queer theory.

In 2012, Tina, along with her partner Renee Dixson, was compelled to leave Ukraine due to their impactful work in advancing LGBTIQ+ human rights. They found a new home in Australia, where Tina has been actively involved in the co-founding of the Forcibly Displaced People Network. Her contributions extend to numerous projects addressing issues of LGBTIQ+ displacement, both within Australia and on the global stage. Currently, Tina works for the ACT Government in the areas of social policy and inclusion.

## **Basim Alansari**

Basim Alansari's journey began as a child refugee seeking asylum with his family, finding stability in Australia on a temporary protection visa. He navigated the challenges of Australian policy at the time, initially accessing education as an international student due to restrictions on domestic student entitlements for humanitarian refugees. Overcoming multiple uncertainties, he emerged as a respected leader in Australian healthcare.

Raised in a lineage of Iraqi scholars and poets, Basim's upbringing cultivated fluency in Arabic, Persian, and English. His academic pursuits encompass Management, History, Philosophy of Science, Bioethics, Medicine, and International Public Health, reflecting his diverse intellectual interests.

Basim leads with a modern, multidisciplinary approach, shaping advancements in healthcare and disability sectors. In addition to his executive roles, he actively engages in governmental committees, community boards, and university advisories.

His journey epitomises resilience, cultural depth, and the transformative impact of education, inspiring and advocating for diverse communities.



## **Abolhassan (Freidoon) Khavarpour**

Freidoon has a long-standing career in community work and public health in Australia. He was Senior Lecturer, Honour Programme Coordinator and Head of Discipline, School of Indigenous Health Studies at the University of Sydney for more than two decades. He taught at undergraduate, supervised students at postgraduate level and researched in various areas, pertinent to the Indigenous issues.

Freidoon was member of Cabramatta Migrant Resource Centre, Trans-Cultural Mental Health Centre and chaired the management committee at North Ryde Community Aid & Information Centre (NRCA).

Freidoon has several successful grants and publications in areas of Aboriginal health and culturally and linguistically diverse community (CALD).

## **Daniel K Apat**

Daniel K Apat is the Multicultural Health Youth Program Officer at Multicultural Health Services, Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD). His role involves project work, delivering evidence-based health programs, and providing demographic and health data, with a particular focus on the health issues and needs of youth from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and refugee backgrounds. His work contributes to and informs WSLHD's Multicultural Health planning and strategy. Daniel collaborates across WSLHD and partners with non-government organisations, government agencies, and CALD and refugee communities to promote health and improve access to health services.

Daniel himself is a former refugee from South Sudan, having migrated to Australia in late 2005 on a humanitarian visa. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Western Sydney University (WSU), a Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology from Murdoch University (MU), a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment from National College Australia, and a Master of Social Work - Professional Qualifying from Southern Cross University (SCU).

With diverse professional experience, Daniel's particular interest lies in mental health and the general wellbeing of CALD young people, informed by his lived experience as a refugee.



# Translation Panel

The Translation Panel comprises of diverse representatives' people from peak body organisations, health services, settlement services and community services in Sydney and Melbourne.

## Cathy Preston-Thomas (Chair)

Cathy Preston-Thomas (MIntSocDev, MIntLaw) is the Deputy Director of the NSW Refugee Health Service. She has been involved in various aspects of the refugee sector for nearly 25 years: in community development, policy, project management, research, and training.



## Nathan Burbridge

Nathan Burbridge brings nearly two decades of leadership experience in the government and non-profit sectors to the Translation Panel, focusing on services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and other vulnerable groups. Educated at Western Sydney University and the University of Sydney, Nathan has played influential roles at the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre (WSMRC) and SydWest Multicultural Services Ltd, where he led initiatives to improve program delivery and significantly expand home care services. His efforts in enhancing home care service health outcomes, including the development of the care workforce and strengthening allied health support for clients, demonstrates his commitment to providing responsive and sustainable solutions for CALD communities. In addition, Nathan has contributed his expertise to the boards of the Sydney Zoo Foundation and BREED Australia Incorporated. At the Sydney Zoo Foundation, he focused on enhancing community connections to the environment, promoting educational and conservation initiatives. At BREED Australia, Nathan centred his work on improving the mental health and resilience of young people through education programs; furthering community engagement that align organisational goals with community needs. Nathan's extensive experience in strategic program management, community service, and enhancing health outcomes makes him an invaluable member of the Translation Panel. His background equips him to offer expert advice in guiding the prioritisation, communication, dissemination, and implementation of the study findings, aligning with the panel's objectives to transform health service approaches for refugees and their communities.



## Delaram Ansari

Delaram (She/Her) is the Research, Advocacy and Policy Manager at Multicultural Centre for Women's Health focusing on issues that impact the health, wellbeing and safety of migrant and refugee women. She is a mixed-methods public health researcher, trainer, and human rights advocate with extensive experience in intersectional feminist research, policy, and practice. Delaram is currently leading various health equity projects relating to mental health, violence against women, and sexual and reproductive health of migrant and refugee women in Australia. Delaram has a Master of Public Health, specialising in Health Policy, Systems and Practice with a focus on Gender and Women's Health.



## **Desiree Leone**

Dr. Desiree Leone is a Team Leader at Multicultural Health Services in Western Sydney Local Health District. She was a drug and alcohol counsellor and researched and taught in this area. Desiree is interested in improving the health of vulnerable populations including refugees and asylum seekers and LGBTQ+ communities.

## **Jasmine Phillips**

Jasmine Phillips is a community development and engagement expert and a qualified interpreter. She has extensive experience working in Australia and internationally with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, specifically refugees and people seeking asylum. Jasmine is passionate about community-led, strength-based, intersectional practice and cultural safety.

Since 2017, Jasmine has worked at cohealth where she developed and continues to lead the bicultural program. Through this role, Jasmine has worked in collaboration with bicultural workers from diverse refugee backgrounds to develop the professional standards for bicultural work, policies, tools and training to build sector capacity to employ bicultural workers in ways that are culturally safe, and community led. Jasmine and her team also host a network of over 250 bicultural workers from across Victoria and offer targeted capacity building, peer support and reflective practice for these workers.



## **Jorge G. Aroche**

Jorge G. Aroche is a clinical psychologist and the Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). Jorge has worked with migrants and refugee survivors of torture and organized violence since before 1989, when he joined STARTTS. He has led the organization since March 1997, through some of the most challenging times for refugee services in Australia, helping STARTTS grow from a dozen staff to more than 300, assuming a truly state-wide role and becoming a world leader in this field in the process.

Jorge is a member of the Executive Committee of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) and was President of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) between 2016 and 2020. Previous posts include that of Secretary General of the International Society for Health and Human Rights (ISHHR) (until 2012), and Vice President of the IRCT (until 2012). He has also been appointed to a number of positions in government advisory bodies and NGO boards.

In addition to his executive role Jorge continues to be actively involved in clinical and research activities at STARTTS and has presented widely on clinical and settlement issues for traumatised refugees on national and international platforms. He has also authored and co-authored several articles and book chapters on these topics.



# Our PhD Student Achievements

## Fantu Mamo Aragaw

Fantu is a PhD student in Public Health at UTS and worked as a lecturer and a researcher at the University of Gondar in Ethiopia. She holds her BSc in Public Health and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Gondar, Ethiopia, with a strong passion for research engaging in several national health research projects.

Fantu has successfully completed her Stage 1 assessment and a systematic review on the epidemiology of cancer and its relationship with the uptake of the cancer care continuum among refugee populations in Australia.



## Binyam Minuye Birhane

Binyam Minuye Birhane is a PhD student in Public Health at UTS. With over ten years of research experience, Binyam excels in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, data analysis, and data linkage.

His research focuses on improving child health, early life adversities and impacts across the life course of people from refugee backgrounds in Australia using a national-based longitudinal data linkage study.

Binyam has successfully completed his Stage 1 assessment and a scoping review on the extent and type of evidence on the health status of refugee children arriving in high-income countries.



## Temesgen Muche Ewunie

Temesgen is a PhD student in Public Health at UTS. Temesgen has experience working in health facilities as a clinician, and later at Dilla University as a lecturer, department head, and director of the Food and Nutrition Research Centre (FNRC). He graduated from Haramaya University in Ethiopia with a Bachelor of Public Health and a Master of Public Health in Nutrition.

His research focuses on individual health assets (health promoting and protective factors) among refugee populations resettled in Australia.

Temesgen has successfully completed his Stage 1 assessment and a scoping review on the available measurement tools that assess individual health assets of refugees.

