



Asylum crisis: how can we respond?

We are really troubled with what is happening in the world in relation to displaced peoples and asylum seekers. 1 in every 113 people in the world currently cannot go home. That's over [65 million displaced people](#). More people have been driven from their homes due to wars and persecution now than at any time since [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees'](#) records began.

Here at Dulwich Centre Foundation we are trying to find local ways to respond to this crisis and we are seeking collaborators. If any of the following projects are relevant to you, we'd love to [hear from you](#)

- **Acknowledging the work of colleagues in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany and Greece**

Communities and colleagues in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany and Greece are among those responding to the largest numbers of families who are seeking safety. If there are any ways we can acknowledge, link with and/or support the work of colleagues in these contexts we would welcome hearing from you. If it would be helpful, we could also document and share stories of initiatives that are taking place in any of these contexts to assist/sustain families in their search for safety, dignity and new lives.

- **Grassroots/peer projects involving asylum seekers supporting one another in relation to 'mental health' and family relationships**

The profound hardships that asylum seekers/refugees experience (both in their country of origin and sometimes also in places where they are seeking safety) can have many effects on people's 'mental health' and on family relationships. We are interested in supporting refugees to respond, in culturally appropriate ways, to their own families, friends and communities. This will involve firstly acknowledging the ways in which asylum seeker/ refugee networks are *already* sustaining each other (see 'Contribution project' below). It will also involve co-developing culturally appropriate forms of narrative practice and offering companionship/support as people engage with these with their own families, friends and communities. It is hoped that grassroots/peer approaches will provide avenues for local support (in addition to those offered by professional services). If you are involved in any similar peer/grassroots approaches we would like to hear from you.

- **Contribution project**

This Australian-based project involves creating a resource to acknowledge the unheralded contributions that people who have come to Australia as asylum seekers in the last 10 years have already made and are continuing to make here in Australia. This includes the community work, acts of friendship and solidarity, that they are engaged with to support other asylum seekers when they first arrive in Australia. It also includes [the activism](#) some are engaged in to try to change current government policies and to protect human rights.

- **Developing culturally appropriate and context appropriate forms of practice**

How can we develop forms of practice that are relevant to those seeking asylum? Narrative practitioners in a range of contexts are trying to develop culturally and contextually appropriate approaches. Palestinian narrative practitioners have developed a range of forms of practice to respond to what they call '[Continuous and imminent trauma](#)' (in contrast to dominant western psychological understandings of 'post-traumatic stress disorder'). In collaboration with the Tamil community in Toronto, a narrative methodology based on the metaphor of Kite flying was developed to [strengthen inter-generational relations](#). In other contexts, some workers have only limited time to meet with asylum seekers in way-stations, refuges, or camps. In response to these contexts, Poh Lin Lee has described the significance of '[Making now precious](#)'. The [Team of Life](#) narrative approach is a cross-cultural invention originally developed for assisting young Ugandan refugees who had been formally involved in war as child soldiers. Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo has been involved in the [Suitcase Project](#) which uses journey metaphors with child refugees, while the [Tree of Life](#) has been engaged with refugees [in a range of contexts](#). [Collective narrative documentation, timelines and definitional ceremonies](#) are also being engaged with in a range of contexts. In coming months, we will include on our website examples from practitioners and communities who are developing culturally appropriate and context appropriate forms of practice.

- **Preventing/addressing racism and religious persecution and enhancing social cohesion**

We hear too many stories of displaced people, those seeking safety and asylum, being subject to racism and/or religious persecution in their new places of residence. Is it possible for narrative practices to be used to support communities to prevent/address racism and religious persecution and enhance social cohesion? How could we do this? We will be including on our website stories of small community projects using narrative practices in Greece, Belgium, [Australia](#) and elsewhere. If you are involved in projects around these issues, we would really appreciate hearing from you.

- **Friendships and partnerships**

In some countries, with so many restrictions in organisations responding to asylum seekers/refugees, it can be very difficult for workers to creatively respond. Some of the most creative projects we have heard about have evolved from friendships, not from professional contexts. In coming months, we will include on our website stories of narrative projects sparked and made possible through friendships.

- **Talking about 'asylum'/ detention in Australia**

Here in Australia, both major political parties advocate mandatory detention and offshore processing for people seeking asylum. This has resulted in [misery, abuse, hopelessness and deaths in detention centres](#). What's more, further punitive policies have resulted in thousands of asylum seekers living in Australia without their claims being processed, or being placed on [temporary protection visas](#) with no hope for family reunions - both of which also contribute to despair. With the Australian community polarised on this issue, how can we start to talk with each other about these issues? We are thinking of creating a discussion paper for people to be able to use to start conversations in their workplaces on this topic. If you have ideas for this publication, please [contact us](#). For examples of previous publications on social issues see: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/comment.

An invitation to you

If you are interested in collaborating on any of these seven themes:

- Acknowledging the work of colleagues in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany and Greece
- Grassroots/peer projects involving asylum seekers supporting one another in relation to 'mental health' and family relationships
- Contribution project
- Developing culturally appropriate and context appropriate forms of practice
- Preventing/addressing racism and religious persecution and enhancing social cohesion
- Friendships and partnerships
- Talking about 'asylum'/ detention in Australia

Please contact us c/o dulwich@dulwichcentre.com.au

Or see our website: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/asylum

**We hope you have a fantastic
4th Europe+ Narrative Therapy and Community Work Conference**

Cheryl White
David Denborough
Poh Lin Lee

on behalf of all the
Dulwich Centre Team

