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**THE LONGEST JOURNEY**

**The Resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean Refugees in  
Auckland**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree  
of Master of Philosophy in Social Work  
at Massey University.

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the resettlement experiences of a group of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees who had been resident in New Zealand for at least six to eighteen months. It was expected that such individuals would have passed through the initial stages of coming to terms with a culture totally alien to their own and would be established, to a greater or lesser extent, within their local areas. In documenting the refugees' experiences, the research focus was on the degree to which their requirements had been recognised and fulfilled. The research design actively involved the refugees in the identification of their resettlement needs, both long and short term. An assessment was also carried out as to the extent to which their requirements had been met by current service provision.*

*The major area of unsatisfied need was in the area of helping family, a traditional expectation. Providing assistance to family members takes two forms - the remittance of money to Ethiopia, Eritrea or the countries of first asylum, as well as the making of applications for family reunification. In reality, both these options have required that the resettled refugee be in receipt of his/her own income rather than welfare support or receive aid from sponsors or other family members in the United States. Most of the refugees involved felt shamed by their incapacity to fulfil these cultural expectations with regard to their family responsibilities. Associated with the desire to help one's family was the need to improve oneself - to learn English, to take courses in order to qualify for higher status, better paid job opportunities and so become independent of the unemployment benefit or other welfare support. This was a goal expressed by both men and women. For men, if married, the desire was to be able to provide their wives and children with the opportunities to have a good education and to live in peace and security.*

*In considering Zucker's (1983) framework for the problem areas in refugee resettlement, it appears that most of the refugees studied are coping reasonably well with cultural adjustment on a personal level. Most are operating independently within New Zealand society, they have come to terms with a new culture and to some degree most are starting to improve their social status. Only the most disadvantaged with regard to English language ability still have problems in this area. For the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, their major concerns with resettlement lie in the systemic management and philosophical areas. The lack of supportive Government policy towards the resettlement of refugees in this country, particularly in regard to the provision of access to English language classes and criteria and assistance for family reunification are reflected at community level by the fragmentation of services and a lack of resources.*

*Refugee policy presently seems to proceed on a piecemeal basis without strategic planning. To hasten and ease the adaptation of refugees to New Zealand society, the writer would urge the development of a comprehensive strategic plan which would address areas of need such as education and entry to the workforce, would have a commitment to cultural appropriateness, and which would include a range of formal and informal provisions.*

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