



The strengths and needs of the
Ethnic Women's Network Project

A report for the Office of Ethnic Affairs,
Department of Internal Affairs

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Increasing our understanding of ethnic communities can enrich New Zealand's way of life, and increase our appreciation of other countries and cultures... it is also important to make sure people from diverse backgrounds are not confined, or feel disadvantaged or isolated from wider society

(Department of Internal Affairs, Statement of Intent, 2008-2011, p.26)

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1. Rationale for research

The Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) wished to evaluate their existing Ethnic Women's Network Project, specifically examining the strengths and needs of this Project from a variety of perspectives. OEA contracted AUT University's Institute of Public Policy (IPP) to undertake this evaluation so as to report on the project's implementation processes and outcomes and to recommend future policy and operational directions within the context of the Office-wide strategic objectives.

The Ethnic Women's Network has three lead outcomes it works towards, namely that:-

1. The OEA profile will be promoted; relationships between ethnic communities and the Office are strengthened;
2. Inter-ethnic networking is improved. Ethnic women strategically connect to relevant mainstream organisations for support;
3. Ethnic women's access to information and services is improved¹.

This project exists within the context of the Office's strategic objectives, namely:-

1. Strengthening the relationship of OEA with special groups within ethnic communities
2. Direct contribution to OEA "Strength in Diversity" strategic vision and goals of the Ethnic Perspectives in Policy framework
3. To contribute to a strong, self-directed ethnic sector and to promote the advantages of ethnic diversity for New Zealand
4. To foster supportive social Networks within ethnic communities
5. Strategically connect ethnic women to relevant mainstream organisations for support and easy integration into New Zealand society²

The target audiences of the Network are primarily ethnic women. Secondary audiences of the Network are the extended networks which the women themselves belong to or affiliate with, whilst the tertiary audience are organisations that support women's advancement and government agencies working with ethnic communities.

The structure of the report is as follows: In *Section 2*, the policy environment which 'nests' and contextualises this evaluation is outlined. In *Section 3* the **research methodology** is described. The **feedback** from the participants and staff engaged in the Network, and the **observational findings** through attendance at the Network meetings are summarised and reported in *Section 4*. The analysis of the findings and feedback are then placed within the **existing Department of Internal Affairs' strategic imperatives** in the following section (*Section 5*). Specifically, this analysis is framed within the broader

¹ Office of Ethnic Affairs, 2006

² Ibid

departmental outcome pertaining to *strong, sustainable communities / hapu / iwi*. There are four areas which sit within this broader sustainable communities' outcome to which the analysis has been grouped, namely:

- ⊙ People engage with and participate in their communities
- ⊙ Communities are empowered and able to help themselves
- ⊙ Communities are supported by fair and responsive local government and other local groups and organisations
- ⊙ Communities recognise and enjoy the economic, social and cultural benefits of diversity³.

Subsequently, a range of **inter-related themes** are then identified which are deemed to affect the continuous development and extension of the Ethnic Women's Network Project, which are drawn from the desk-based information as well as the Network participants' and staff perspectives. These final **conclusions** summarise the key factors of success and learning for the Project in *Section 6*. The report's eight **recommendations** are found in *Section 7*, with a listing of research **resources** that have contributed to this project being acknowledged in the final section (Eight) *Bibliography*.

³ Department of Internal Affairs, *Statement of Intent 2008-11*, p.6.

2. Policy environment in which Ethnic Women's Network operates

The **Briefing papers for the Incoming Minister of Ethnic Affairs** (Department of Internal Affairs, 2005) provide useful strategically contextual information for the Ethnic Women's Network project's evaluation.

'The Strategic and Legislative Framework for Ethnic Affairs identifies that discrimination against ethnic groups based on nationality, religion, race or colour, ethnic or national origin is prohibited under the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993. The equal employment opportunity provisions of the State Sector Act 1988 also promote equal employment opportunities in the state sector for 'ethnic minorities'. Other agencies such as the Human Rights Commission, including the Race Relations Commissioner, have a role which links closely to that of the Office [of Ethnic Affairs]. New Zealand is party to several United Nations conventions that serve to eliminate discrimination and to protect the interests of minority ethnic groups, refugees, women and children. These conventions include support for economic, social and cultural rights (including the right of indigenous and ethnic minorities to maintain their languages and cultures).

Within this context, the Office contributes to the major challenges by:

- ⊙ empowering ethnic people to participate in all aspects of New Zealand life
- ⊙ strengthening the positive image of diversity by raising awareness of ethnic diversity, and highlighting the contributions and positive benefits that ethnic communities bring to New Zealand
- ⊙ improving the access to key services for ethnic communities
- ⊙ developing a better-informed and more responsive public service that is inter-culturally aware
- ⊙ contributing to sustainable settlement and social cohesion.

It is important to develop whole of government strategies, and for agencies to work together to meet the needs of the community. This collaborative, service-driven approach is acutely important to the work of the Office, which is not an operational agency, and relies on traditional service providers being more effective in responding to ethnic peoples' needs. To facilitate this approach, the Office has developed a strategy to incorporate ethnic perspectives into government policy and services, using these goals and an analysis of ethnic issues to develop a set of policy values and outcomes for ethnic people' (Department of Internal Affairs, 2002, pp.10-11).

'Ethnic Perspective: - The government's Ethnic Affairs framework, Ethnic Perspectives in Policy (2002) is a strategic policy tool that sets out government expectations and provides a whole of government response to the provision of policy advice and services for ethnic communities. The functions are:

- ⊙ identifying ethnic groups likely to be affected by a policy or service
- ⊙ applying a set of government-endorsed high-level policy values and priority outcomes as a reference, to give direction to public policies and service development
- ⊙ fostering an aware and responsive public service
- ⊙ requiring ethnic perspectives to be considered in the preparation of policy, and consultation with the Office where policy is likely to significantly impact on ethnic people
- ⊙ improving the quality of information available to the public by requiring information about ethnic people and the impact of policies and services to be published annually.

Strength in Ethnic Diversity:- The Office is developing its vision of strength in diversity as a strategy to achieve the goals established by government in adopting Ethnic Perspectives in Policy. The Office seeks the following outcomes:

- ⊙ a strong supportive policy and operational environment, backed up by a strong monitoring and evaluation role
- ⊙ strong, self-reliant sustainable ethnic communities
- ⊙ public appreciation of the value (including benefits and opportunities) of cultural and linguistic diversity for all New Zealanders.

Advice and Education for Government Agencies:- The Office is increasingly asked to facilitate other departments' consultations with communities and provide expert advice on intercultural community engagement. This is a positive development as agencies work to improve services for all New Zealanders. The growing demand highlights the need for greater intercultural skills within agencies' (Ibid, p.15).

'Community Brokerage, Forums and Events:- The Office brokers relationships between ethnic communities and central and local government. This service encourages agencies to improve responsiveness of services (often around accessibility of information and language support), and encourages independent community relationships with agencies, promoting community capacity building. There is demand to expand this service to ethnic communities outside Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch (areas in which ethnic advisors are based)' (Ibid, p.17).

The **Department of Labour** commissioned a suite of reports to inform their **Immigration Research Programme** in 2007. Badkar et al examined the patterns of gendered skilled and temporary migration into New Zealand which is highly relevant for the Ethnic Women's Network aspirations:

New Zealand has a long history of gendered migration and this has affected the overall gender balance in the population... over the past 20 years the gender balance of international migration flows has changed considerably and developed in response to a number of factors. These include gender selective demand for foreign labour, economic development and subsequent changes in gender relations in countries of origin and countries of destination. According to the 2003 ILO

report, female migrants constitute nearly 51 percent of all migrants in developed countries and about 46 percent of all migrants in developing countries. In most developing regions females are increasingly migrating independently not just as dependants or family members. Despite a growing significance of the global feminisation of migration, including the feminisation of labour market related migration, this area has attracted little research or policy attention in the New Zealand context. Patterns of gendered migration from our main source countries have received little attention in the New Zealand context, despite the growth in migration from these countries (Badkar et al, for Department of Labour, 2007, p.13).

In New Zealand's 2006 country report to the United Nations about our implementation of the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women**, information was presented directly from the report about our country's responsiveness to migrant and refugee women:

Background (p.6)

Women outnumber men in New Zealand across all ethnic groups except for the 'other' ethnic group. The ethnic diversity of the female population is increasing with numbers of Asian and Pacific women growing the most rapidly. The 'other' ethnic group is used to describe persons who identify with an ethnicity other than European, Maori, Pacific or Asian.

Article 3 Refugee and Migrant Women (p.14)

Paragraph 426 of the Committee's Concluding Comments on New Zealand's last report made particular recommendations in respect of refugee and migrant women. As signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the government has a strong commitment to combating racism in New Zealand in all of its forms. The Government's efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and xenophobia, including against refugees and migrants are discussed fully in New Zealand's 15th, 16th and 17th Consolidated Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. That report also notes strategies and services in place to respond to the educational, health, employment and other needs of refugees and migrants including:

- ⊙ the Office of Ethnic Affairs, established in 2001, which works with all ethnic people, including migrants, refugees and New Zealand-born descendants who identify with their ethnic heritage
- ⊙ the New Zealand Settlement Strategy launched in December 2004 (see below)
- ⊙ the Adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Strategy
- ⊙ Language line: a telephone interpreting service launched in April 2003, which aims to support improved access to government services for people who speak limited, or no English
- ⊙ ongoing development of a strategic framework for Ethnic Action and Responsiveness to Health (EARTH). [There was no publically-available information available about this project when searched August 2008].

In addition, where possible, disaggregated data on the situation of refugee and migrant women, including in employment, health and education, is included under the relevant articles. The availability of such data will be improved in future with the development of the Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand which is surveying the settlement experiences of refugees and migrants to New Zealand, including in the areas of job-seeking, learning English and accessing health services.

The New Zealand Settlement Strategy, launched in 2004, provides the framework within which settlement-related policy and services may be developed. The strategy establishes a government-wide framework to achieve agreed settlement outcomes for migrants, refugees and their families, so that they may achieve the following six goals:

- ⊙ obtain employment appropriate to their skills
- ⊙ are able to access appropriate information and responsive services
- ⊙ are confident using English in a New Zealand setting or can access appropriate language support
- ⊙ are able to form supportive social Networks and establish a sustainable community identity
- ⊙ feel safe expressing their ethnic identity and are accepted by, and are part of, the wider host community, and
- ⊙ participate in civic, community and social activities.

The Settlement Strategy is realised through a wide range of initiatives managed across government. In addition, the Strategy encourages central and local government, community organisations, business and industry, and local communities, to partner each other in providing opportunities and support to migrants and refugees.

Article 9 (p.31)

Men and women are treated equally in terms of their eligibility to migrate to New Zealand under these three streams. However, the Refugee Quota under the International/Humanitarian stream includes 75 places specifically for ‘Women-at-Risk’. The Women-at-Risk subcategory covers refugee women who are without the support of their traditional family protectors or community. These women would usually be outside the normal criteria for acceptance by resettlement countries and are in need of protection from gender-related persecution such as abduction, sexual abuse and exploitation.

Article 10 (p.35)

Research undertaken by DOL into the experiences of refugees found that refugee women find it harder to access English language education than men (Department of Labour. (2004) *Refugee Voices: A Journey Towards Resettlement*. Wellington: DOL).

Article 12 Refugees and Migrants (p.51)

Migrants entering New Zealand must have permanent residence or a work visa that allows a stay of two years or more to be eligible for publicly funded health and disability services on the same basis as residents. Refugees were confirmed under a 1997 Eligibility

Directive to be eligible for these services on the same basis as residents. The main health concerns of refugees as a group are tuberculosis, hepatitis B and sexually transmitted infections. Many refugees, particularly women, also suffer from depression and post-trauma stress. Medical examination of quota refugees on arrival includes initial treatment and referral to health specialists. Refugee-specific mental health counselling services for survivors of torture and trauma are available and some refugee-specific community health education programmes (e.g. on TB, HIV/AIDS) are funded. Dislocation from family is a major mental health issue for refugee families.

Article 16 Violence against refugee and migrant women (p. 79)

Migrant women who leave abusive or violent marriages or relationships while in New Zealand on a visitors work or student permit (i.e. without permanent residence) may be in a vulnerable situation. Returning to their homeland may not be viable if they face being disowned by their families for leaving the relationship. In light of this, women who are the victims of domestic violence may be granted a three-month work permit. At the end of this period, those women may apply for permanent residence under the Special Residence Policy for victims of domestic violence. Under the Special Needs Grants Welfare Programme, a weekly, non-recoverable grant equivalent to the Unemployment Benefit may be paid on the grounds of hardship when a woman:

- ⊙ has entered New Zealand for the purpose of marriage, civil union, or to live in a stable de facto relationship, including a same sex relationship, with a New Zealand citizen or resident, and/or
- ⊙ has lodged an application for residence under the partner policy of the Family Category
- ⊙ her relationship with her partner ended solely or principally due to domestic violence
- ⊙ she is living apart from and has lost the financial support of her partner and
- ⊙ she holds a temporary work permit.

In November 2007, the **Ministry of Women's Affairs** (MWA) held a workshop in Auckland to discuss its **sexual violence research project with representatives of ethnic, migrant and refugee (EMR) communities** (Ministry of Women's Affairs workshop notes, 2007). The workshop was organised with the support of staff from the Ministry of Social Development's 'Settling In' programme. The purpose of the workshop was to hear the views of EMR; ten representatives from EMR communities and advocacy organisations participated. The participants highlighted that sexual violence is a very sensitive issue for women and men in EMR communities. Any initiatives in this area would need to start at a grassroots level. EMR victims do not often report sexual violence to police or approach counsellors in a crisis as they may not trust the police because of pre migration experiences, or because they are afraid of losing face in the community.

Raising conversations about sexuality / sexual violence with EMR communities

The term 'culture' is often misused and degraded, rather than being understood as a values-based word. Participants rejected the view that violence against women is

culturally acceptable in some EMR communities. Instead, they asked what gave men the right to violate women and use culture as an excuse. Challenging communities about cultural tolerance of violence will not encourage discussion, whereas a strength-based approach is more likely to be acceptable. The participants noted that it may be useful to couch the issue as a criminal justice matter. EMR communities want to know about New Zealand laws, and this could help to introduce the topic. They stated that EMR communities need to know that sexual violence is against the law. Refugee orientation programmes are piloting approaches to raising awareness of family violence and sexual violence. These include an initiative by Auckland University of Technology and Refugees as Survivors New Zealand, which is currently targeting women. The programme will be implemented for men in 2008. However, participants noted that Mangere was not necessarily the best setting for a discussion of sexual violence as recent refugees already have quite a lot going on in their first few weeks in the country.

Women from EMR communities often refuse counselling and prefer not to discuss their past. The participants suggested that raising conversations about healthy sexuality may be easier if young adults were targeted. An example of such an approach is the BodySafe programme developed by Rape Prevention Education. For secondary students, it may be necessary and/or appropriate to approach families rather than individual students.

The **Department of Internal Affairs' (DIA) own Statement of Intent 2008-11** provides an excellent overview of the possibilities in which the department can support ethnic women. The Statement notes how New Zealand's ethnic makeup is changing rapidly: "According to the 2006 Census of Population and Dwellings, there are now almost 200 different ethnicities in New Zealand, and approximately 12% of the population identifies with ethnic groups/populations from Asia, Africa, continental Europe, the Middle East, and central and South America. This proportion is forecast to increase to approximately 18% by 2021. Some of these ethnic communities are long standing; others are of more recent origin" (*Department of Internal Affairs, 2008: 26*).

DIA has identified three operational outcomes in its Statement of Intent (2008), with one having direct relevance for the Office of Ethnic Affairs' Ethnic Women's Network Project:

In providing strategic leadership across the public sector, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) has identified **Strong, sustainable communities/hapū/iwi** as one of its key areas of strategic leadership. **Supporting ethnic diversity** sits within this broader aspiration:

"The Department includes the Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA), whose purpose is to help encourage and promote the strength and benefits that **ethnic diversity** offers New Zealand. Through OEA, the Department provides leadership across the State sector, helping to achieve the goals established by the Government in adopting the **Ethnic Perspectives in Policy** framework. In the past few years, OEA has made significant progress towards its goal of **fostering a strong, self-directed ethnic sector**. While continuing to work in this area, the OEA is now focusing on demonstrating the **economic benefits of diversity** and the **innovation that diversity stimulates**. Office of Ethnic Affairs also works to create an inclusive climate, where **ethnic communities are able to participate fully in, and contribute to, all aspects of New Zealand life**" (*Department of Internal Affairs, Statement of Intent, 2008-2011: 8*).

Strong, sustainable communities / hapū / iwi

3. Research Methods

There are different methodologies available for exploring and analysing the Ethnic Women's Network aims and outcomes: the Institute of Public Policy (IPP) approach was multidisciplinary, and was undertaken in three-phases:

1. Secondary data analysis of the existing information available about the Project including:-
 - ⊙ Participant evaluation sheets
 - ⊙ Presenters' and facilitators' notes
 - ⊙ Relevant OEA & DIA documentation such as policies, budgets, proposals, statistics, Statements of Intent, Annual reports, briefing papers. Additionally, other reports, conventions and documentation were sourced from New Zealand and international sources.
2. Structured feedback from:-
 - ⊙ Participants (e.g., via email or fora) and
 - ⊙ Staff (e.g., via focus group or key informant interviews)
3. Attendance, observation or feedback of the three Ethnic Women's Network forums in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington.

The triangulation of these three research methods led to a strong and complementary base of evidence. A thorough interpretation and analysis of this evidence ensured that clear implications for policy advice could be drawn. IPP welcomed this opportunity to contribute towards this important and inclusive work, as it fundamentally utilised a human rights capability approach. Importantly, this evaluative research can support OEA to better plan and respond to ethnic women's and ethnic communities' (self-identified) needs and strengths.

Our findings clearly support the broadening in scope of the Ethnic Women's Networks into a New Zealand-wide delivery of these networks for ethnic women by building upon the excellent platforms of experience and knowledge accumulated through these programmes.

4. Fieldwork – Ethnic Women's Network Summaries

Evolution of Ethnic Women's Network by Office of Ethnic Affairs, since 2003				
Auckland Ethnic Women's Network established 2003	⇒	Wellington Ethnic Women's Network established 2004/05	⇒	Christchurch Ethnic Women's Network established 2007
Coordinated by Office of Ethnic Affairs, Auckland-based staff		Coordinated by Office of Ethnic Affairs, Wellington-based staff		Coordinated by Office of Ethnic Affairs, Christchurch-based staff
Operational				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘Driven’ by Office of Ethnic Affairs, Auckland-based staff ● Agenda and actions determined largely by Office 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘Driven’ by representative Advisory Committee of ethnic community-based women (grass-roots-driven) ● Capacity-building of committee members important ● Protocols in place of how to make decisions and integrate different ethnic community needs ● Committee includes government and NGO reps ie., multi-sectoral ● Agenda and actions determined by Advisory Committee 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘Driven’ by Office of Ethnic Affairs, Christchurch-based staff ● Agenda and actions determined largely by Office
Challenges & Strengths				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large geographical area – north, south, east, west, central areas within greater Auckland ● Travel:- availability and cost issues across and around city ● Largest and most diverse population of ethnic communities, so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ multi-ethnic or ethnic-specific focus could accommodate this ○ Sub-regional networks e.g., ‘Northern Ethnic Women's Network’ could support this ● NGO ethnic infrastructure relatively good ● Operational model promotes ‘top-down’ approach led by government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Smaller geographical area – central city + Hutt Valley, Porirua suburbs north of Wellington ● Travel:- availability and cost issues around greater Wellington ● Small populations of ethnic communities ● NGO ethnic infrastructure emerging ● Operational model promotes independence, empowerment and collaborative community-based approach supported by government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small populations of ethnic communities ● NGO ethnic infrastructure emerging ● Operational model promotes ‘top-down’ approach led by government

Christchurch Ethnic Working Women's Network

“This Network aims to bring together ethnic women of Christchurch to connect, share information and raise awareness on issues around work and employment. Through bi-monthly meetings around focal topics and presentations, the project seeks to empower ethnic women to actively participate in and contribute to the economic well-being of their families and communities. The Network is open to all ethnic women who are working or are actively seeking work. Ethnic women’s issues are wide-ranging, from child-rearing to preservation of cultures to settlement needs to employment. Ethnic women are also diverse in terms in their migration histories, cultural backgrounds, settlement issues, English proficiency, etc. An open-ended Network with a wide range of women whose main common ground is that they are “ethnic” is difficult to sustain over time. Employment is central to most households and to all communities. By focusing on employment and on women who are currently working or are actively seeking work, the project seeks to encourage self-selected women to delve in-depth into the opportunities, barriers and challenges they face with employment in NZ. Through information sharing, networking and support, the project seeks to promote the visibility of ethnic women in the workplace” (Cho, 2008).

The Christchurch meetings focus upon specific topics with presenters, followed by social and professional networking opportunities for attendees. Topics have included:

- ⊙ Employment laws, EEO/HR issues at work
- ⊙ Validation of overseas degrees/re-training
- ⊙ CV writing / interviewing skills
- ⊙ Recruitment processes / how do people find jobs in NZ
- ⊙ Climbing the career ladder
- ⊙ Childcare for working mothers
- ⊙ Domestic/gender role issues for working wives
- ⊙ Networking and joining mainstream professional women’s groups.

Discussion Notes with Oga Cho, Project Manager, May 2008

- ⊙ Network primarily focussed on newcomers
- ⊙ One third of attendees were new
- ⊙ Predominantly attendees were without children at home (younger women studying or older women whose children have left home)
- ⊙ A number of women indicated they had been in NZ 15-20 years
- ⊙ 3 guest speakers chosen to advance knowledge about employment opportunities
- ⊙ Speakers ‘preped’ by coordinator to coordinate their content
- ⊙ All materials and presentations are in English language
- ⊙ Focus is on employment as mechanism of integration
- ⊙ Relaxed and informal with women arriving and leaving throughout
- ⊙ Women’s space welcomed
- ⊙ A space in which ethnic women are the majority very positive
- ⊙ Venue (Holiday Inn on Avon) was centrally located and has professional ambience
- ⊙ Self perception of English language competency a key determinant of participants’ public engagement
- ⊙ Some felt more comfortable participating during informal cuppa-tea-time

- ⊙ Intercultural learning is another focus
- ⊙ Social networking is important but it is not the focus of the Network

May 24th 2008 Meeting: Speakers

Liyang Cai – New Zealand Police officer

Jude Ryan O’Day – Migrant Employment Coordinator, Chamber of Commerce

Ruth Garside - Senior Lecturer at the University of Canterbury in HR Management

Discussion with Network members

The key outcome for the ethnic women attendees was meeting people who had professional responsibilities that could support them in their employment opportunities. They spoke of how ethnic men were better able to focus solely on their employment options when they migrated to New Zealand but that most ethnic women had far more home-based responsibilities to juggle than the men, and therefore could not focus upon a career. The women expressed a desire to learn about other cultures with which they have little contact. They also expressed deep frustration at their own existing professional qualifications not being recognised in New Zealand.

Requests from Network members for future training:

- ⊙ NZ information (education system, spiritual support)
- ⊙ Cultural experiences shared & migrant success stories
- ⊙ Small business mentoring
- ⊙ Workplace discrimination
- ⊙ Local council
- ⊙ English.

Evaluation Summary of May 08 meeting (25 responses)

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. I found the programme worthwhile | Strongly agree (84%) |
| 2. I found the presenters informative and/or inspiring | Strongly agree (80%) |
| 3. I liked the structure of the programme | Strongly agree (88%) |
| 4. I had the opportunity to form new contacts | Strongly agree (76%) |
| 5. I liked the venue | Strongly agree (80%) |

“Very good opportunity to learn and meet people, and more important to inspire”

Wellington Regional Ethnic Women’s Network

This Network focuses upon information, advocacy and networking with the vision being that ethnic women in the Wellington Region are well connected and able to participate in all aspects of New Zealand life. The Network aims to foster ethnic women’s wellbeing, social, economic and cultural advancement through:

- ⊙ Promoting cooperation and collaboration
- ⊙ Sharing information, experiences and providing support to each other

- ⊙ Providing a platform to raise awareness of issues
- ⊙ Ensuring that Ethnic women's issues are advocated for and appropriately factored into government policy development and implementation
- ⊙ Fostering mutual understanding and friendship with the wider community.

Discussion with Winifred Mahowa, Project Manager, July 2008

- ⊙ Very multicultural, with the age range being 20 – 60 years.
- ⊙ Wide range of members including senior professionals, public servants, shift workers, supermarket workers, unemployed women, and students.
- ⊙ Core group with new faces and growing members.
- ⊙ A committee of 8 women members plan the meetings, ideas and events
- ⊙ Now considering the development of an NGO Ethnic Women's Network as it could be more independent. This is because sometimes there are restrictions on what can be discussed because the Office of Ethnic Affairs is a government department and there are sometimes government guidelines of practice and policy which need to be adhered to
- ⊙ Benefit of the Network is the cross- section of cultures at the same place, at the same time; its very multicultural
- ⊙ Agencies take advantage of Network meeting and share information and contacts and reach out into ethnic communities. It gives agencies a greater ability to access ethnic women communities, which is especially important as many agencies are unsure about where and how to access ethnic women.
- ⊙ Concurrently, the ethnic women benefit as they learn about refugee, community law centre, budget advice and other government and non government (NGO) services
- ⊙ The last 12 months has been an employment focus. The new focus is Strengthening Families. Its actually about domestic violence prevention but the committee members wanted to term it more positively for women and their families
- ⊙ The women themselves determined the year's topic.
- ⊙ When the Network was re-launched in 2005 there were over 100+ attendees
- ⊙ Lots of very qualified women in NZ are involved in the Ethnic Women's Network and many are willing to be mentors for other women. Leadership training and mentoring programmes are to begin to support this sustainable initiative.

No Wellington-based Ethnic Women's Network meeting was attended during this evaluation due to the planned meeting being postponed. Thus face-to-face discussions with members could not occur. The subsequent information here is derived from an Ethnic Women's Network meeting in Wellington in 2007.

Evaluation Summary of 2007 meeting (43 responses)

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. I found the information useful | Strongly agree (84%) |
| 2. I found the presentation useful | Strongly agree (72%) |
| 3. I liked the structure of the meeting | Strongly agree (62%) |
| 4. I will share what I have learnt with others | Strongly agree (77%) |
| 5. I would like to attend the next meeting | Strongly agree (84%) |

Auckland Regional Ethnic Women's Network

This Network aims to bring women together to network amongst themselves and discuss issues that are pertinent to them. It encourages them to talk about their own needs, from specific and personal to broader social issues. It also allows migrant and refugee women to share and reflect upon their very different realities. The purpose of this Auckland network is:

- ⊙ Bring women together from diverse ethnic backgrounds under a common theme,
- ⊙ Provide possibilities for networking, support and sharing,
- ⊙ Allow women to address the issues that are specific to them – especially those which may otherwise go unspoken in other forums.

May 2008 - Discussion with Vivien Wei, Project Manager

- ⊙ This Network provides a space for ethnic women leaders not available elsewhere
- ⊙ Most women have family responsibilities hence weekend day format
- ⊙ Priority for diversity of trainers
- ⊙ Trainers always women
- ⊙ Discrete small group supports effective training, easier to build relationships
- ⊙ Project is a trial due to budget restrictions
- ⊙ Some women already doing leadership training in their own communities
- ⊙ Leadership training capped at 20 – application/selection process coordinated by committee of five people
- ⊙ Most members have at least 1 tertiary qualification
- ⊙ All materials and presentations are in English language
- ⊙ Need to increase networking time and discussion time
- ⊙ Need to invite more ethnic women trainers

Comments on the sort of trainers preferred in the future:

- ⊙ Ethnic women who inspire, empower; success stories
- ⊙ Women leaders (government, corporate, education)
- ⊙ Those working with ethnic peoples
- ⊙ Trainers with practical experience

Future aspirations identified in Auckland

In a 2006 evaluation of the Auckland Ethnic Women's Network (Neale, 2006), which at that time focused on community-based enterprises, the attendees noted a number of areas in which they wanted to learn more. These included:-

- ⊙ Case studies / presentations from migrant and refugee groups who are already successful in the community;
- ⊙ Where to go for business information;
- ⊙ How ethnic women can access education – minimum money or free - so they can improve their language;
- ⊙ Discussing what role women can play in both family and community, and balancing these duties;
- ⊙ Craft work – show more of what we can do in future plans;
- ⊙ Structured information on agencies working in the social sector.

Additionally, the women in this 2006 evaluation wanted more interactive discussions on topics, a greater role in running the Network, and more meetings.

March 15th and April 19th, 2008 Auckland Leadership Training: Trainers

Edit Horvath – Director of Active WorkLife Solutions

Marilyn Waring – Professor, Institute for Public Policy, AUT University

Requests from Network members for future training:

- ⊙ Self care; work/life balance
- ⊙ Mental health
- ⊙ Spirituality
- ⊙ NZ systems; working with local government
- ⊙ NZ employment law
- ⊙ NZ government, MMP
- ⊙ Human rights
- ⊙ Organisational development; funding; leadership
- ⊙ Working together, ethnic communities
- ⊙ Cultural protocols of NZ cultures (Maori, Pacific Island, Asian etc.)

Evaluation Summary of March and April 08 meeting (27 responses)

Overall I found the training to be worthwhile	Strongly agree (74%)
The training was informative	Strongly agree (70%)
The training was well facilitated	Strongly agree (74%)
We had enough time to answer questions	Strongly agree (48%)
An opportunity for me to form new Networks	Strongly agree (74%)
How valuable did you find the trainers coaching?	Found it just right (89%)
How useful did you find the interactive sessions?	Found it just right (81%)

“It is great to have this kind of training to empower women”

May 31st, 2008 Ethnic Women’s Leadership Training: Presenter:

Roseann Gedye – Public Speech and Presentation workshop

Notes on May 08 training by Researcher

- ⊙ Venue (Novotel & Hotel Ibis) was centrally located and has professional ambience
- ⊙ Women’s space is very welcoming
- ⊙ Presenter of a high calibre
- ⊙ High level of networking and information sharing at tea breaks
- ⊙ Interactive style of learning was liked – immediately useful
- ⊙ Some women noted that this training was part of their professional development
- ⊙ Participants were leaders in their communities with diverse professions
- ⊙ Many women are involved in volunteer governance work

5. Analysis of the Project in the Department of Internal Affairs' context

There are four immediate outcomes underpinning attainment of “*strong, sustainable communities/hapu/iwi*”, namely:-

- ⊙ People engage with and participate in their communities
- ⊙ Communities are empowered and able to help themselves
- ⊙ Communities are supported by fair and responsive local government and other local groups and organisations
- ⊙ Communities recognise and enjoy the economic, social and cultural benefits of diversity⁴.

This evaluation of the Ethnic Women's Network Project is aligned with these four immediate outcomes.

People engage with and participate in their communities

Active participation is an important component of strong, sustainable communities. People who participate and engage in their community are more likely to have a sense of belonging to that community. This engagement has the potential to contribute to the growth of our economy and overall sense of wellbeing. A growing number of communities across New Zealand contain a large number of new migrants, and refugees and these people need to be aware of the opportunities to participate in and contribute to their local communities and councils (Statement of Intent 2008-11, p.17)

Strong communities and a clear understanding of their relevance to the wellbeing of ethnic women were found to be major themes emerging from all three Ethnic Women's Networks.

The concept of community in this setting was shown to be expansive. On one level the women of these Networks were attached to a very specific community by their individual ethnicity, but the act of coming together within the Network is shaping a new community of some intercultural significance. Highlighted by Network Project Managers was the reality that a new community based on commonality between new immigrant women in New Zealand, was itself another community. This new community was an effective mechanism for the provision of information necessary for integration by immigrant women into their new host community.

⁴ Department of Internal Affairs, *Statement of Intent 2008-11*, p.6.

Leadership programmes such as those run in the Auckland Network are working to increase the skills required for interactions with the host community at all levels. The wide range of ethnicities, cultural norms, ages, professions, and proficiencies with English evidenced in each Network demonstrated the Office of Ethnic Affairs' capacity to understand and respond to the articulated needs from across the very diverse range of women members.

Attendance and observation and feedback from the three Ethnic Women's Network fora in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington confirmed the programme's contribution to participation and engagement in the community. The Network builds bridges for women to access decision makers, resources, and government agencies. Information for members to advocate, promote and influence decision-making was important learning at fora, including techniques about planning, governance, prioritising and operational management. Coming together as group of women to speak about issues was noted as having an increased effectiveness for the women, rather than utilising an individualised approach – the notion of collective voice was very powerful. It became clear to the network members that they can contribute towards relevant policies in their new country. For example, 18 Wellington Ethnic Women's Network members met with Ministry of Women's Affairs' researchers who were examining sexual violence:

The Network members' dialogue was robust and diverse perspectives were given, including recommendations on how to assist ethnic women experiencing sexual violence. The Ministry of Women's Affairs acknowledged the value of this input from the women and there was consensus that the Network members be invited to relevant consultation meetings (Project Manager, August 2008).

Through information sharing, networking and support, the project promotes the visibility of ethnic women in various places, including their workplaces, through their voluntary workplaces, and into their ethnic communities and families. Additionally, the women were very interested in meeting one another, and being exposed to the many different cultures which they brought to meetings. Within the Network a mutual understanding and friendship with the wider community is fostered and this aligns with members expressed desire to learn about other cultures with which they have little contact.

Clearly, there are multiple gains for the Ethnic Women's Network members and their many communities from the informational sharing approach adopted by the Office of Ethnic Affairs.

A key ingredient of this information sharing approach has been the utilisation of neutral space for ethnic women to meet, learn and work towards full integration into New Zealand life. Discussions with Network Project Managers reinforced this message; importantly, the women themselves have been clear regarding this need for neutral space. They enjoy their meetings, and that they are specifically for women. Many come from male-dominated cultures and therefore creating a women's space where men cannot take over is welcomed. In particular there is a desire to strengthen women in many ethnic

communities who have experienced being treated as second class citizens in their countries of origin. The need for a support base and the ongoing provision of information for ethnic women is highlighted in *The Action Plan for New Zealand Women*:

Migrant and refugee women are identified as a high risk group for social isolation and mental illness, especially those from traditional cultures and religious backgrounds, and those who do not speak English (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004, p.23)

Ethnic women have very specific needs to address in order to enjoy full participation in their communities, and acknowledgement of these barriers is the first step in inviting their participation. The Ethnic Women's Network has played a major role in this acknowledgement by providing a forum and safe space in which to begin this process. In turn, members of the Network have been able to feed back into and support their own community groups. For example, close to 100 ethnic women participated in the International Women's Day celebrations in Wellington recently, with substantial networking and information sharing occurring between attendees, as well as with the National Council of Women (NZ) and the Pan Pacific and South East Asian Women's Association representatives at the celebrations. The strengthening and expansion of this critical mass of expertise is exciting and can only be beneficial in New Zealand's public policy realm.

While the Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch Networks are seen to be providing vital support for ethnic women's community participation in those centres, some capacity building is increasingly needed in other New Zealand regions where the network is thus far absent. The Department of Internal Affairs' acknowledgement and commitment to other regions is noted:

Looking out three years we will extend the range of capacity-building services to ethnic communities in the Bay of Plenty, the lower North Island and Nelson/Marlborough. This will assist in enabling ethnic people to participate effectively in New Zealand society and interact with host communities (Statement of Intent 2008-11, p.27).

Integral to this capacity-building roll out is the expansion of the Ethnic Women's Network. Inclusion of new Networks in additional regions as part of this intention will be a positive step towards ensuring a growing engagement by ethnic women and their communities with host communities. The work of the Networks to date has created an ideal platform from which to learn and expand with both personnel skills and transferable knowledge being available to support this proposed expansion. It has been beneficial that Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland have each developed different foci and utilised different approaches in the inception and growth of their respective Networks. This has meant that the Networks have not been captured by particular groups, and provides a menu of options for future provincially-based Ethnic Women's Networks. The women themselves are very interested in mentoring other ethnic women to this end. A national Ethnic Women's Network meeting where national and local strategies could be discussed

and learnings shared has been suggested for the future also to aid this regional development. This idea is further pursued in the following section.

Communities are empowered and able to help themselves

Empowerment is a vital component of a strong, sustainable community. Empowered communities are able to identify and access resources that best meet their own needs, to make the most of economic opportunities and have a strong sense of identity. They are able to identify a vision and plan for their own economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing. They are also able to access the resources they need to create positive changes and to look for collaborative solutions to identified problems (Statement of Intent 2008-11, p20).

Each Ethnic Women's Network is operating to provide a particular platform for empowerment of its members and in turn, the communities they represent and contribute back to. Attendance at meetings, member evaluations, and discussions with each Project Manager showed an alignment with this desired outcome of empowered communities. While the three Networks share goals and outcomes related to empowerment, each operates with a particular focus for meeting this immediate outcome. Information to support personal and community-based leadership, mechanisms for capacity building, and social development emerged as focal points in the Networks. In Auckland the focus is leadership; the Wellington focus is strengthening families; and for Christchurch, it is about employment. Each of these aspirations is explored here.

The Auckland Network's commitment to leadership training was found to be central to the empowerment of ethnic women. It is unique as an ongoing mechanism for leadership learning at no cost to its members. The Network Project Manager noted only one other similar example – a singular 2-day ethnic community leadership programme that was run by Auckland City Council in 2007. No specifically relevant training by Auckland City Council has been offered since, nor identified for the future. Some leadership training does exist for women but without an ethnic focus and this at a cost beyond the reach of the ethnic women involved in the Network.

The Network's role in creating a strong vision and leadership within ethnic communities was observed at a recent Network Leadership Training programme held in Auckland over 2 days. The two speakers invited presented on Leadership & Organisational Management and Strategic Development, and on the New Zealand Government System and Women and Empowerment. From the evaluation results the participants felt the workshop's content, delivery, and facilitation was very positive and they welcomed the opportunity to respond and interact with the presenters on the topics.

In conversation with Network Project Managers it was noted that ongoing training opportunities are achieving long term outcomes that contribute to sustainability in communities. Many of the women are leaders in their communities with diverse

professions, and many undertake governance and operational work outside of their paid work, for example, as treasurer of their ethnic community organisation(s). Additionally, other women are now doing leadership training in their own community; running similar training and becoming trainers themselves. Also, there have been invitations extended from Network members to the leadership trainers/presenters so as to introduce their extended ethnic communities to this knowledge and skills. For example, Korean women members wanted to know much more about tertiary education and invited a senior government official to address their particular community's meeting. Islamic women requested a leadership role model to attend Fatima's Day – the first-known instance of a non-Islamic woman in New Zealand to address the attendees at this preeminent celebratory day for Islamic women globally.

The Network addresses the specific needs of ethnic women to seek solutions, source information, and access resources. For example, in Christchurch 'navigating the system' and accessing, accumulating and (re)directing resources towards their communities and groups through existing government funding channels was a topic requested for the Network seminars. Subsequently, this resulted in agency referrals for the women as well as the women understanding and embedding the 'networking culture' of New Zealand with their respective communities. Some women even gained employment through meeting other women at the Ethnic Women's Network meetings.

Discussions with the regionally-based Project Managers identified their strong commitment to coordinating a national conference as a further mechanism in which to empower ethnic women. The Wellington-based Network already utilises an operational model whereby a representative grouping of members determine the yearly agenda and meeting content. This could be replicated so as the women members identify their preferred conference:-

- locality,
- venue,
- dates,
- themes,
- content,
- contributors (state sector, NGO, business, cultural etc),
- style of delivery (plenary, panels, keynote speakers, posters etc)
- outcomes

The three regional networks are gaining strong momentum and further localities are being determined in which to site provincially-based networks. The existing and future Ethnic Women's Network members would become more skilled and knowledgeable whilst working alongside the Office of Ethnic Affairs Project Managers in visioning, developing and facilitating such a conference.

The Ethnic Women's Network has an extremely diverse membership. Therefore, an important aspect of empowering ethnic women through this Network is the growing interaction with local and government organisations within New Zealand, and to that end

finding ways to influence how they are represented. For example, the Wellington-based Ethnic Women's Network already has a number of connections to government agencies who utilise Network meetings to share information, resources and contacts and to reach out into ethnic communities. This government-initiated activity supports the purpose of the Network to ensure that ethnic women's issues are advocated for and appropriately factored into government policy development and implementation. Agencies already working alongside the Wellington Network include; Ministry of Health, Department of Internal Affairs, Settlement Services, Department of Labour, Refugee and Migrant Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Social Development, National Council of Women, and Wellington City Council.

The Network programme always concentrates on 'real-life issues' and situations for ethnic women and their communities, for example;

- ⊙ What are your rights and responsibilities in New Zealand?
- ⊙ What does the Tenancy Tribunal, the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission or the Families Commission do?
- ⊙ What is a Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) and what are local government obligations in respect of consultation with communities?
- ⊙ If local government asks 'what is the best way to consult with women in your communities', what would you advise?

Fundamentally, there is no other mechanism that ensures that ethnic women are sufficiently recognised in the policy-making process, and that they are being provided with resources, information and learning with which to become empowered and through which to fully enter into New Zealand life. The Ethnic Women's Network enables ethnic women to help themselves and their extended communities in their new host country. As the Department of Internal Affairs has itself noted in its conclusion to this immediate outcome:

Providing information and advisory services to communities enables them to build strong leadership and vision, form effective partnerships and be more aware of the resources available to them. Looking out three years we will ... build leadership and intercultural awareness within ethnic communities so as to contribute to their cohesion and resilience, by creating and developing bridges across communities (Statement of Intent, p.21).

Communities are supported by fair and responsive local government and other local groups and organisations

We will continue to provide policy advice on diversity, including that associated with ethnic communities to Ministers and other agencies, and promote the development of evidence-based policies for the ethnic sector and the use of

evidence to understand the broader impact of diversity on New Zealand communities (Statement of Intent, p.27).

A number of links are being forged between the Ethnic Women's Network and local and central government agencies, with requests from members for information on topics necessitating more contact with the state being registered in each Network. Topics addressed in network meetings have included; running small businesses, employment law, writing Curriculum Vitae, understanding central government, public speaking, human rights, and creating a new career in a new country. In many cases these requests have been met with robust presentations at Network meetings. Further documentation from Network meetings show requests for other information on a wide range of topics to be enlarged upon at future meetings. These topics have related to support structures within the community, central and local government, such as:

- ⊙ Childcare for working mothers
- ⊙ NZ systems; working with and understanding local government
- ⊙ Information about the education system
- ⊙ Spiritual support
- ⊙ Organisational development, funding, leadership
- ⊙ Self care including work/life balance
- ⊙ Mental health
- ⊙ Cultural protocols of New Zealand cultures (Maori, Pacific Island, Asian etc.)

The Network has played a central role in bridging the gaps between their members and local government. Additionally other community-based groups and government departments have sought to engage with the Ethnic Women's Network members. Perhaps more telling is the emphasis placed on this immediate outcome by Network members themselves. A key aspect of the three Networks is the exchange of strategies that work between participants; opportunities to explain how 'systems' work through external speakers demystifying New Zealand processes e.g., health, recreation, education etc. Consequently, the establishment of a 'team of ethnic experts' has been grown through the Network who are available for the consultative roles that Ministry of Women's Affairs, Office of Ethnic Affairs and all local councils require for their consultative and policy development processes.

Therefore, work by the Network with the Electoral Enrolment Centre and the Electoral Commission on ways to encourage members of ethnic communities to participate more actively have been mooted and will be welcomed by the women. Internal Affairs itself has noted the following:

International studies show that ethnic minority participation in elections is usually lower than that of their host community counterparts (Statement of Intent, p.18).

Creating and sustaining strong links between the Network and local government raises the question of access. The importance of access to ethnic groups by local government and

other organisations was discussed in interviews with Ethnic Women's Network Project Managers. The nature of a Network as a structure for ethnic women to meet together results in the creation of a powerful conduit for local and central government and community group information to be transferred to their respective communities. The following mechanisms already exist:

- ⊙ The Ethnic Women's Network database
- ⊙ ESOL home tutors meetings
- ⊙ ACCESS radio ethnic women's show
- ⊙ Community Centres
- ⊙ Word of mouth
- ⊙ Aotearoa Ethnic Network (electronic)
- ⊙ Settlement support co-coordinators

Two clear examples of the Network's role in securing community and local government support in response to requests from their members can be seen in recent programmes held in Christchurch and Wellington. Three Christchurch based speakers who could advance the attendees knowledge about local employment opportunities were invited to the meeting. Ruth Garside, Senior Lecturer at the University of Canterbury in HR Management spoke about employment rights and the law. Liying Cai, NZ Police, spoke about how migrating to a new country and how this can open up new career horizons. She also talked about the challenges she faced as an Asian migrant female in a Caucasian male-dominant police academy. Jude Ryan-O'Dea, Migrant Employment Coordinator from the Chamber of Commerce held a mini-workshop on CV and interview preparations. One of the key outcomes for the attendees was that they could meet people who had professional responsibilities that could support them. The Police officer and the Chamber of Commerce representative were specifically charged to work with migrant populations. The subsequent participant evaluations demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the programme in meeting their needs.

This Christchurch employment focus reiterates the existing departmental adoption of this issue, as reflected in its Ministerial briefing papers (2005):

Employment barriers may be partly attributed to employers' inexperience with different cultures. Improving intercultural competence should improve both public sector employment opportunities, and enhance agencies' service responsiveness. It will also lead to better public sector EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] outcomes through improving recruitment techniques and retention (Department of Internal Affairs, 2005, p.16).

Responding to Network members' requests to discuss domestic violence, the Wellington Network invited speakers from the Families Commission, the Ministry of Social Development outlining the DVFree campaign, as well as support organisations for families to access. This led to a brainstorm of further topics for the Ethnic Women's Network to discuss such as the immigration implications for victims of domestic violence, violence in the home and increasing the women's knowledge of community-based help

and support services. The Wellington Project Manager noted that the women were already benefitting from their new knowledge about the community law centre, budget advice services and other government and community support services available to their families.

Building stronger relationships between ethnic women and local government and other community organisations will require the expansion of the Ethnic Women's Network to act as an ongoing support and bridging mechanism. In addition to the value of a Network brokering exposure to these external host community groups, a reverse gain is made with access by host community groups to often-perceived 'closed' ethnic groups. Building and supporting this two-way relationship will be vital to local government and community organisations being responsive to their diverse communities' needs and strengths.

Communities recognise and enjoy the economic, social and cultural benefits of diversity

New Zealand is becoming an increasingly diverse nation, a trend that is only likely to continue into the future. We think of diversity in the broader sense, which includes consideration of the needs of people in a wide range of situations. Diversity in this context includes considering ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality and location as a basis for looking at the issues and priorities for people across the country... We want to make sure New Zealand benefits, and is seen to benefit, from the increasing diversity of our population. For this to happen we need to ensure that people from different backgrounds and situations, including those from ethnic communities and new migrants, feel valued by the wider community (Statement of Intent, p.26).

As previously noted, a number of links are being forged between the Ethnic Women's Network and local and central government agencies. However, responsiveness by the state sector in their policy statements to ethnic groups is currently somewhat generic; ethnicity is predominantly framed around issues of *access to existing services*, for example, through the provision of language services:

Inland Revenue is offering Language Line, a free interpretation service featuring 39 languages; to customers whose first language is not English (Inland Revenue, 2007).

The *Action Plan for New Zealand Women* (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004) is a whole-of-government plan to improve women's lives in the home, workplace and community. It includes actions to help improve outcomes for migrant women:

- © Implement the Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages Strategy to assist migrant and refugee women to gain the English languages skills they need to participate in employment (Action 1.1.3).

- ◎ Implement outcomes of pilot telephone interpreting service in support of improved access to government services for people who do not speak English or who speak limited English (Action 3.1.3).

However, these actions do not really begin to embrace ethnic women's aspirations to enjoy their economic, social and cultural diversity, but rather to sustain the status quo of government service provision, but in a different language.

Fundamentally, the state sector has yet to grasp a more proactive public policy approach in giving consideration to ethnic women's needs and strengths within their service delivery and strategic work. This is reflected through the fact that most government agencies categorise the ethnicity of the New Zealand population by European, Maori, Pacific, and "Other". This blunt categorisation does not help ethnic communities to experience the recognition and enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural diversity. For example, in the highly-quoted annually produced *Social Report* by the Ministry of Social Development, virtually no population data is desegregated into ethnic data-sets. The population is generalised under the four headings of European, Maori, Pacific, and "Other", with only some sub-sectional analysis categorising 'Asian'. The section on Language Retention has the most comprehensive breakdown of ethnicity, with the populations defined as Asian being specified (Ministry of Social Development, 2007, p.83).

Similarly, the Human Rights Commission's EEO Census of Women's Participation (2008) uses statistics from Statistics New Zealand where the ethnic breakdown is only European/Pakeha, Maori, Pacific Peoples, and "Other". In the same report a table of figures captured by the NZ Police which profile women in the police force adds a category for "Asian" (p.58).

Opportunity exists for lateral and responsive thinking by local and state government towards ethnic peoples, particularly ethnic women, outside the provision of language services. For example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs website provides a Nominations service CV template useful for ethnic women as a resource. Similarly, links with the Ministry of Pacific Affairs would facilitate greater understanding of cultural practices from other ethnic groups living in New Zealand, which would respond to a request made by Ethnic Women's Network members themselves. And within the Office of Ethnic Affairs itself, an opportunity exists to increase its profile in the area of information provision for other agencies through supplying an online repository of Masters and PhD theses by ethnic women, which contain very valuable learnings for ethnic peoples and can sit alongside government funded refugee and migrant studies.

Refreshingly, the Inland Revenue Department has begun to adjust its services:

One implication of increasing diversity is that different ethnic groups may have different service requirements. Currently, we reach diverse communities and respond to population change through our various liaison officers. They assist tax agents and businesses, deliver education seminars and work with various

community groups. We are also responding through our current Valuing Diversity Strategy, which recognises the value that can be gained from having different cultural perspectives in our workforce. The strategy helps us understand community perspectives, educate customers appropriately, and make sure people can meet their obligations and receive their entitlements (Inland Revenue, 2006).

The Ministry of Economic Development's BIZinfo is a nation-wide one-stop business information service that provides free access to information about assistance and is available to small to medium-sized businesses. It is delivered by 46 local, regional and national providers throughout New Zealand "with some courses focusing strongly on enterprises owned or managed by Maori, women and Pacific peoples" (Ministry of Economic Development, 2008). This service has been requested already by ethnic women and the Ministry of Economic Development would do well to canvas their opinions and ideas in developing this services' delivery more fully to meet ethnic women's business needs.

There are a range of other strategies which impact upon ethnic women and their communities. Many of these documents carry an immigration and settlement focus, such as the *New Zealand Settlement Strategy* (2004), a whole-of-government framework to achieve agreed settlement outcomes for migrants, refugees and their families, and its consequent *Settlement National Action Plan* - led by the Department of Labour.

The Department of Internal Affairs itself also provides a range of information and advice throughout New Zealand's communities. This is undertaken through such services as the Community Advisory Service, regional Ethnic Advisory Service, and through regional funding forums.

These services help communities to develop their own visions and the capacity to collaborate and to access appropriate resources. As part of this community development approach we are commonly involved in joint work programmes with other agencies (Statement of Intent, p.20).

Clearly, the Ethnic Women's Network can support this existing departmental output, through utilising its extensive communication channels into a myriad of extended community and workplace networks. The extension of the Network will enable this important departmental priority to flourish.

6. Conclusion

The Ethnic Women's Network Project has very successfully and effectively met its project outcomes. The Office of Ethnic Affairs' profile has undoubtedly been promoted, as the women connect closely with the Project Managers, and with the business of the Office. The women have been significantly strengthened through their involvement with their Ethnic Women's Network. Importantly for the women, they have learnt a lot about themselves and each other, and have appreciated the opportunity to learn about other cultures living in their new country. Additionally, involvement in the Network has supported the women's relationships with their extended communities as they have become more informed and empowered through the Network meetings. These extended communities include their families, their own ethnic communities, their paid workplaces, as well as into their voluntary spheres of work.

This strengthening has permeated still further into the women's relationship and sense of connection and belonging with the host country and with New Zealand's government and community-based institutions. The women's insightful contributions into strategic public policy debates have been noted by various agencies as being of high value in progressing their understanding of issues. The ethnic women members have also generously assisted many agencies including New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and other central government departments, local councils, and various community organisations to successfully navigate into ethnic communities, and this has been of huge benefit for those agencies and their associated work outputs.

The Ethnic Women's Network clearly supports one of the Department of Internal Affairs' key outcomes: *strong and sustainable communities, hapu and iwi*. Within that outcome, the Network contributes to each of the four intermediate goals, namely community engagement and participation; being empowered; contributing and being supported by local government and other organisations; and experiencing a growing recognition of their social, economic and cultural diversity within the wider New Zealand context.

These multiple gains for the Ethnic Women's Network members, for their many communities, for the Department of Internal Affairs and for other government and community agencies are attained through the excellent information-sharing approach adopted by the Office of Ethnic Affairs Network Project Managers. This project's approach provides a very sound platform from which to expand the network into other regions and localities around New Zealand, as already indicated in the Department of Internal Affairs' Statement of Intent 2008-11.

7. Recommendations

- ⦿ That the programme be consolidated and rolled out into a full Project Programme across New Zealand
- ⦿ That the Ethnic Women's Network expansion occurs in the Department of Internal Affairs-identified regions, namely the Bay of Plenty, the lower North Island and Nelson/Marlborough areas, and that the expansion occurs into other localities such as Otago, the Hawkes Bay and Whangarei
- ⦿ That the expansion continues to utilise proven processes whereby the women members determine the local priorities for training and learning, and that an interactive learning style be sustained
- ⦿ That the Ethnic Women's Network Project Managers continue to place emphasis upon ensuring that the meeting forums are safe, enjoyable and stimulating for the members. This will include the need to ensure sufficient discussion time for participants with speakers and trainers, as well as connecting with other members
- ⦿ That the Project needs to provide financial support for women's transport costs in each locality so as to ensure equitable access for all ethnic women
- ⦿ That the Project continues to embrace trainers and speakers who are themselves from ethnic communities, as the role-modelling of these women is powerful for the members
- ⦿ That the Project explores existing mentorship programmes available (e.g., Ministry of Economic Development, YWCA, The Youth Mentoring Trust) and identifies what mentoring training Network members want to learn
- ⦿ That a national conference / hui be hosted by the Department of Internal Affairs for ethnic women after the regional expansion of the Project has begun. The conference specifics such as time, place and focus need to be determined by the expanded membership of the Ethnic Women's Network in partnership with Office of Ethnic Affairs.

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