

My Placement in Australia: A Stepping Stone for the Future

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Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne is the second largest city in Australia. It is the capital in the state of Victoria located in the southern region of the country. Melbourne is a center for arts, commerce, industry, sports, entertainment, and tourism. It is an extremely diverse and multicultural city, with over 35% of its population born overseas.

Australia is one of twenty countries that participate formally in the UNHCR's refugee resettlement program. Australia accepts the third largest number of refugees in the world. Many of those accepted are resettled in Melbourne.

Global Placement

My placement was at the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC). The EMC works with refugees and migrant populations in Melbourne through community development programs. It also provides counseling and family services. Within the EMC I was assigned to work on the Stepping Stones program. Stepping Stones is a program for refugee women to develop new skills and increase their participation in the community. This is achieved primarily by providing them with the support and training to start up small businesses.



Outcomes/Responsibilities

During my thirteen-week placement I participated in numerous activities and had a number of responsibilities. I helped plan and run a celebratory event for a youth engagement program, ran mentor/mentee training workshops for refugee and Australian women, enrolled participants in small business courses, and helped run a Somali women's sewing group. Along with these activities, my main project was to develop and run a 6-week jewelry-making and sales workshop.

Major Accomplishments

I successfully developed and ran a 6-week jewelry-making and sales workshop for five refugee women. This included recruiting participants, organizing class logistics, budgeting, group facilitation, and project evaluation. I also helped plan and carry out an end of project celebratory event for the Youth 2 Youth program as well as ran several mentor/mentee training sessions.

Career Connections

This experience has given me a lot of direction for my career. I would like to continue to do community development work with refugee and migrant populations. I am extremely passionate about this field of work and currently looking for job opportunities in this field.

Skills Utilized/Developed

- Communicate effectively cross culturally with clients and colleagues
- Organizational skills
- Problem solving/critical thinking
- Appropriate use of assertiveness
- Conflict management



Classroom Connections

SW 521: This course prepared me to facilitate small groups and communicate authentically with clients

SW 697: This course taught me about community capacity building and community engagement skills

SW 663: This course helped teach me about budgeting techniques and program development

Lessons Learned

- It is important to be flexible when working with communities, even the best plans can fall through at the last moment
- Always be open to learning from the people you are working with, both colleagues and clients

Advice for Future Participants

- Approach every challenge as a learning opportunity
- Put yourself out there and be willing to step out of your comfort zone
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities and the Alumni Board of Governors for financially supporting my global field placement. I would also like to thank the Ecumenical Migration Centre and my field supervisor Juliana Lobo for providing an amazing learning experience. Last but not least, I would like to thank my Australian adoptive parents Malka Ciddor and Peter Moore.