

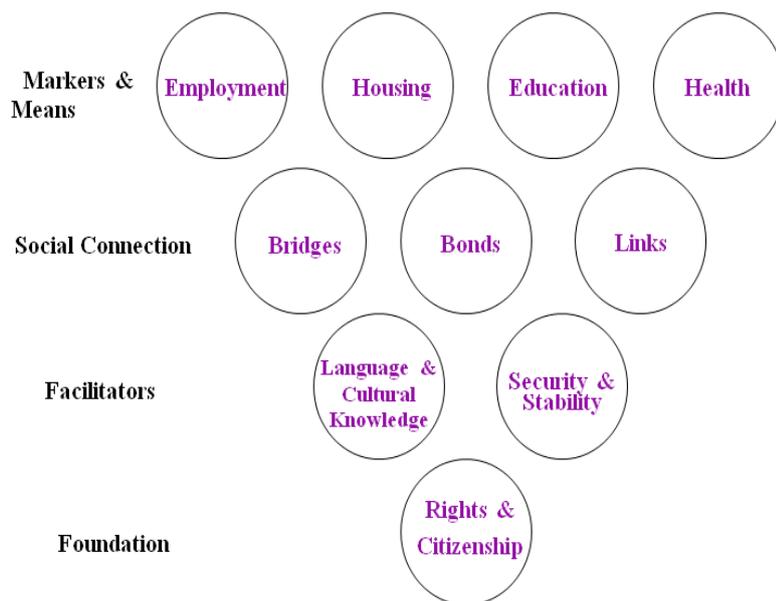
Institution: Queen Margaret University
Unit of Assessment: UoA 24 Anthropology and Development Studies
Title of case study: Refugee Integration Programme
1. Summary of the impact

Integration of refugees, asylum seekers and their host communities is a complex challenge but an important marker both of future health and psychosocial wellbeing and of social cohesion. The UK Home Office commissioned IIHD to undertake the Indicators of Integration (IOI) research programme (from 2001) to clarify the IOI concept and recommend IOI for refugee policy and practice. The *Ager and Strang IOI Framework* (*Ager and Strang, 2004a; 2004b; 2008*) has become a foundational framework for refugee integration policy, for the measurement of integration and for critiquing policy and practice. *Strang* was appointed to chair the Scottish Government Refugee Integration Strategy consultation process in 2012 and has contributed by invitation to a number of EU- commissioned policy consultations.

2. Underpinning research

IIHD has had a long standing research engagement with wellbeing in those affected by armed conflict, which informed an interest in refugee and asylum-seeking populations (for example, *Strang and Ager, 2003*).

Figure 1 *Indicators of Integration Framework*
(*Ager & Strang, 2008*)



The first phase of the IOI research programme commissioned by the UK Home Office was undertaken between 2001 and 2004 by *Ager* (Director, IIHD 1992-2004) and *Strang*. A comprehensive investigation of types of 'integration', in the context of refugees settling in high- income countries, was conducted to develop a conceptual framework representing core aspects of refugee integration. Indicators for each domain of the framework were proposed (Figure 1).

The research concluded that refugee integration is understood as a combination of all these factors and that each 'domain' impacts on every other (for example, the

nature of housing provision impacts on sense of security, the development of social connections and access to employment or educational opportunities). Thus, status in any one of the domains can be seen as a 'marker' (or indicator) of integration, but it is also in itself a means of progressing integration across the domains. It was proposed that refugee integration policy should address all of these domains and recognise the interaction between them.

The 'Indicators of Integration' framework contributed to addressing a theoretical, policy and practice void by providing a systematic elaboration of the elemental components of refugee integration. It highlighted the core role of social connection and systematised the role of language and cultural knowledge, along with sense of safety and security. A particular innovation was to apply theoretical constructs distinguishing different types of connection ('Bridges', 'Bonds' and 'Links') from social capital literature (Putnam 1993, Woolcock 1998) to this field.

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The UK study was followed in 2007-2008 by 'IntegraRef', an EU funded collaborative study extending the IOI approach to the study of refugee integration in Germany, Italy, and Malta for which *Strang* and *O'Brien* (Lecturer, IIHD) acted as scientific advisors. This study established the validity of the IOI framework in the wider EU context.

From 2009 to 2012 the Scottish Refugee Council used the framework as the basis for a longitudinal study on refugee integration for which *Strang* was on the Advisory Board (Mulvey, 2013). In 2010, a special issue of the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 'Critical Reflections on Refugee Integration: Lessons from International Perspectives' (<http://bit.ly/17RfJSk>), was published, bringing together a range of international research using the IOI framework to critique aspects of refugee integration.

The IIHD team has built on this research by elaborating understanding of social connection in refugee contexts. An assessment tool is being developed for use by local project staff and community groups to map the pattern of social connections in terms of the IOI framework. A series of collaborative studies have been undertaken to refine the approach and identify patterns of social connection in contrasting refugee contexts, including Darfur and Glasgow. *Strang* is currently conducting a new study, funded by the UK NHS, to use the tool to explore the relationship between social connection and mental health amongst asylum seekers.

References (if not in Section 3)

- Mulvey, G. (2013) 'In search of normality: Refugee integration in Scotland.' Scottish Refugee Council.
 Putnam, R. (1993) 'The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life', *American Prospect*, 13: 35–42.
 Woolcock, M. (1998) 'Social Capital and Economic Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework'. *Theory and Society*, 27(2): 151–208.

3. References to the research

- *Strang A. and Ager A.* (2003) Psychosocial interventions; some key issues facing practitioners. In *Intervention*, 1(3): 2-12. <http://bit.ly/19WPpgy>
- *Ager, A. and Strang, A.* (2004a) The experience of integration: A qualitative study of refugee integration in the local communities of Pollokshaws and Islington. Report to IRSS Home Office, Croydon. <http://bit.ly/H5B6dq>
- *Ager, A. and Strang, A.* (2004b) Indicators of Integration. A Home Office Development and Practice Report. Communication Development Unit, Home Office, <http://bit.ly/1bFiKqW>
- *Ager, A and Strang, A.* (2008) Understanding integration: a conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2): 1-26. <http://bit.ly/1atV9JA>
- *Losi, N. and Strang, A.* (2008) Local communities and refugees. Fostering social integration. Final report of the IntegraRef project. <http://bit.ly/19RbFCy>
- *Strang, A. and Ager, A.* (2010) Refugee integration: Emerging trends and remaining agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4): 589-607. <http://bit.ly/18sRmPt>

Evidence of the quality of the research

In 2008, the IOI work was published in the Oxford published *Journal of Refugee Studies*. The impact factor hit a high of 1.91 in the aftermath of the publication in 2010 (<http://bit.ly/GWvvpj>), and is currently (and has been for the past 3 years) the most read and the most cited article in the journal (<http://bit.ly/19epWMI>). This is the main journal for this field and a key resource for academics and policy makers. Take up of the work by Smyth, Steward and da Lomba, a research team we have not worked closely with, as the basis of a follow up special issue marks its contribution in its field. The special issue brought together an international collection of papers using the IOI framework to critique refugee integration policy and practice in Norway and Sweden, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Slovenia, and Canada.

4. Details of the impact

The research has had impact on government policies in the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand and can particularly demonstrate impact on service delivery to refugee and asylum-seeking populations in Scotland. Benefits to these populations include improved health and

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psychosocial wellbeing while the benefits associated with social cohesion accrue to refugee, asylum-seeking and host populations.

The original IOI programme was conducted in close communication with Home Office policy makers and completed through a series of stakeholder consultations that enabled government policy makers, service providers and participating communities to contribute to the final product. The framework, and associated indicators, were first presented to an interdepartmental UK government meeting in July 2004 involving staff from several branches of the Home Office, the Department of Health, Department of Social Security and Department of Education. The 'Indicators of Integration' framework was then published as a series of 'Development and Practice' reports by the UK Home Office (*Ager and Strang, 2004a; 2004b*).

Prior to the publication of this work, policy, in the UK and across Europe, was structured around domains of service provision ('Markers and Means'), reflecting a very 'top-down' approach based on governmental priorities and perspectives with little or no explicit reference to social relationships. The European Council for Refugees and Exiles, an advocacy group, had argued that refugee integration should be seen as a 'two-way process' (ECRE, 2005). The IOI provided empirical evidence to support this claim and threw light on the ways in which communities themselves (both refugees and non-refugees) experience belonging together.

Policy on refugee integration across the world now regularly demonstrates a much broader set of parameters, reflecting the domains of the IOI framework. Our research has been cited widely in policy processes around the world that have led up to this change, including in Scotland, England, Australia, New Zealand and across the European Union as itemised in the documents listed below to corroborate impact. Following the dissemination of the *IntegraRef* report, *Strang* has been invited to a number of EU consultation events to contribute to the shaping of EU integration policy. Social connections in particular are given prominence where once they were ignored, as exemplified by the most recent report by UNHCR on behalf of the European Union (see below).

Impact on practice is most readily seen in Scotland, where we have been working closely with both the Scottish Refugee Council and Scottish Government to support them in the application of the research. Following the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan, the Scottish Government required that applicants for government funding should specify how their project would contribute to the different domains of the IOI framework. In that way the framework directly impacted on the allocation of funds to ensure that support projects addressed the appropriate range of refugees' integration needs. In 2012, Scottish Government, in collaboration with the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), convened a consultative cross-sector review of integration strategy using the framework as a design principle to ensure systematic coverage of the key issues. On the invitation of Scottish Government, *Strang* is leading this process as independent Chair. The final strategy report will be launched in December 2013, however it is already clear that the series of consultation events (organised according to the themes of the IOI framework from Oct 2012 to June 2013) has improved partnership working between the public and voluntary sector and across sectors.

The Scottish Refugee Council has used the framework consistently since 2004 to inform and evaluate their integration support and community development programme and for staff and community training. This has led to an increased emphasis on promoting social connections between refugees and established members of local communities as well as between refugees. There are now two strong community groups run by refugees (the 'Scottish Refugee Policy Forum' and the 'Refugee Women's Strategy Group') both of which demonstrate a clear commitment to building social connections at the level of 'bonds', 'bridges' and 'links' as elaborated by the IOI framework. The Scottish Refugee Council has also invested in dialogue with other service provider partners to emphasise the interdependence of different services in supporting integration. The Council has undertaken a longitudinal study of integration from 2009 to 2012, based on the IOI work, designed to inform their own practice and contribute to advocacy and the evidence base on refugee integration in the UK (<http://bit.ly/17y8Kif>). (*Strang* is on the Advisory Group.)

Impact case study (REF3b)

During 2012/13 a former student of IIHD (Esa Aldegheri) used our research as the basis of her work with the Refugee Survival Trust to promote two-way integration between refugees and established Scottish communities. She initiated and led a poetry project, 'Making it Home', which brought together the refugee women of the Maryhill Integration Network (set up by the Scottish Refugee Council) and the women of Pilton (an economically and socially deprived established Scottish community in Edinburgh). The project was show-cased by the Scottish Refugee Council in their launch of Refugee Week in the Scottish Parliament in June 2013 (<http://bit.ly/GWlxnN>).

Feedback from policy makers and practitioners has consistently emphasised the importance of the domains of 'social connection'. Partner projects are continuing to use the practical tool developed by the research team that has been piloted in Darfur and Glasgow to gather data independently. This equips project staff and communities with the tools to map social connections in their own contexts in a way that empowers decision making and also provides robust data for funders and policy makers.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Citation in refugee integration policy consultation processes

UNHCR A new beginning: refugee integration in Europe, p131. <http://bit.ly/1flzqVo>

Inter-agency partnership response to Commission on Integration and Cohesion consultation, p9. <http://bit.ly/1qRAS79>

Citation in reports of research carried out by and for Government departments and humanitarian agencies

For the UK Home Office p23. <http://bit.ly/1eFVb5e>

For Scottish Refugee Council: multiple citations. <http://bit.ly/H8bvjj>

For Welsh Assembly Government: multiple citations. <http://bit.ly/19eHJTU>

By and For the New Zealand Government Department of Labour: multiple citations <http://bit.ly/16gD2e7>

For Australian government Department of Immigration and Citizenship: p6 <http://bit.ly/1d3fprA>; p39 <http://bit.ly/15ZPKf9>

By and for the Refugee Council of Australia: pp2-3. <http://bit.ly/1auhere>

Documented participation in policy review processes

Ager was a member of the original Scottish Refugee Integration forum (constituted January 2002) <http://bit.ly/H5TWB8>

Strang chairs 'Refugees in Scotland's Communities', a Scottish government led review of refugee integration policy and practice <http://bit.ly/16V4i09> <http://bit.ly/1qvdiIN> (after 9/12/13).

Individual users/beneficiaries who could be contacted by the REF team to corroborate claims

Head of Refugee Integration, Scottish Refugee Council; Head of Equalities Unit, Scottish Government; Head of UK Policy Advisor organisation, Michael Bell Associates; Associate Director, Community Partnerships and Health Equity Research, University of Melbourne; Deputy Director, Child Protection Working Group.

Testimonials held by the University

Scottish Refugee Council in IIHD DVD "Working for a fairer and healthier world".