

Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds

Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia

A research report—October 2009

by Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson



A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN
THE LA TROBE REFUGEE RESEARCH
CENTRE, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
AND THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION
FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE
(FOUNDATION HOUSE)



la trobe
refugee
research
centre



Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds

Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia

A research report—October 2009

by Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN
THE LA TROBE REFUGEE RESEARCH
CENTRE, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
AND THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION
FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE
(FOUNDATION HOUSE)





© La Trobe Refugee Research Centre

Good Starts for Recently Arrived Youth
with Refugee Backgrounds: Paperback
ISBN 978-0-9807254-0-7

Good Starts for Recently Arrived Youth
with Refugee Backgrounds: PDF
ISBN 978-0-9807254-1-4

Published by the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre,
La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia.

Recommended citation: Gifford SM, Correa-Velez
I and Sampson R. (2009) Good Starts for recently
arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting
wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in
Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee
Research Centre.

Design and layout by Designland
Case study illustrations by Kat Chadwick Illustration
Print by Bamba Press

The views expressed in this document are those
of the authors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

9	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
12	FIGURES & TABLES
14	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
17	PART I: BACKGROUND AND STUDY DESIGN
18	CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMONG RECENTLY SETTLED YOUTH WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS
27	PART II: GOOD STARTS YOUTH
28	CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY AND BECOMING: WHO WE ARE, WHO WE WANT TO BE
50	<i>CASE STUDY: ZORAN: WELL PLACED AND DOING WELL</i>
54	CHAPTER 3: SUBJECTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING
61	<i>CASE STUDY: LEYLA: MISSING HER PARENTS AND WANTING WORK</i>
65	PART III: SUPPORTING RESETTLEMENT: THE BROADER SOCIAL CONTEXT
66	CHAPTER 4: OUR FAMILIES
72	CHAPTER 5: OUR SCHOOLS
84	<i>CASE STUDY: JAMES: DEALING WITH CONSTANT CHANGES AND DISCRIMINATION</i>
88	CHAPTER 6: OUR COMMUNITY
94	<i>CASE STUDY: WAN: CARRYING A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY WELL</i>
97	PART IV: REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS
98	CHAPTER 7: PROMOTING GOOD STARTS FOR RECENTLY SETTLED YOUTH WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS
	▪ RESEARCHER VOICES
	▪ GOOD STARTS VOICES
	▪ KEY INSIGHTS
111	<i>CASE STUDY: ARIF: WORKING HARD AND DOING WELL</i>
114	REFERENCES
116	<i>CASE STUDY: AMIR: CHANGING PLANS WHEN A BABY ARRIVES</i>
119	APPENDICES
120	APPENDIX I THEMES FOR EACH DATA COLLECTION SESSION
120	APPENDIX II STANDARDISED SCALES AND METHODS USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
121	APPENDIX III WEBSITES TO ACCESS THE INSTRUMENTS FOR THE STUDY
121	APPENDIX IV CODING FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITATIVE DATA
122	APPENDIX V SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE MEASURES USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
124	APPENDIX VI DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES
124	APPENDIX VII PUBLICATIONS
124	APPENDIX VIII CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND PRESENTATIONS
126	APPENDIX IX POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS, STUDENT PLACEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

127	APPENDIX X	RELATED STUDIES
127	APPENDIX XI	LIST OF ALL STAFF WORKING ON THE STUDY
128	APPENDIX XII	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
128	APPENDIX XIII	FUNDING BODIES

LA TROBE REFUGEE RESEARCH CENTRE LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

The La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC) is located in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, Melbourne. Established in 2003, the LaRRC promotes the health and wellbeing of refugee communities through applied and foundation research, teaching, continuing education and professional development.

The aims of the LaRRC are to:

- Undertake multi-disciplinary **research** into the social determinants of health and wellbeing of people from refugee backgrounds.
- Provide post-graduate **education** in refugee health and resettlement.
- Provide **expertise** upon which other organisations can draw to assist them in health promotion, service delivery, and research and policy development.
- Contribute to community debate and **awareness-raising**.

LaRRC AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

La Trobe University, Bundoora VIC 3086, Australia

PHONE +61 3 9479 5874 **EMAIL** larrc@latrobe.edu.au

WEBSITE www.latrobe.edu.au/larrc

THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE INC. (FOUNDATION HOUSE)

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST), or 'Foundation House' as it is also known, provides a range of services to people from refugee backgrounds whom have survived torture or war related trauma.

Foundation House provides direct services to clients in the form of counselling, advocacy, family support, group work, psycho-education, information sessions and complementary therapies. Direct services to clients are coupled with referral, training and education roles aimed at developing and strengthening the resources of various communities and service providers.

Foundation House provides services across Melbourne with offices in Brunswick and Dandenong. Services are also provided in a number of rural and regional centres across Victoria.

Foundation House is non-denominational, politically neutral and non-aligned.

FOUNDATION HOUSE

6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick VIC 3056, Australia

PHONE +61 3 8791 2450 **EMAIL** info@foundationhouse.org.au

WEBSITE www.foundationhouse.org.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who have contributed to the Good Starts research project.

First and foremost a big thank you to the young people who participated in this study, who gave so generously their time and shared their ups and downs of early settlement with the research team. Secondly are the research officers for whom Good Starts was more than just a job. They are to be commended for their creativity, sensitivity, and their passion for the study. They ensured that the research did not impact negatively on the wellbeing of the participating young people, they had the capacity to solve problems and to ensure enduring team work throughout the highs and lows of this project. Christine Bakopanos was part of the conception of this study and her unwavering loyalty, commitment, attention to detail, organisational talents, and clear thinking was critical to seeing this project through to its conclusion. Robyn Sampson is outstanding for her flair of creativity coupled with sound methodological rigour, for her capacity to think through the tricky ethical issues that arise over time in a study such as this and for providing leadership along with Christine, to the team of research assistants.

Good Starts depended on a large team of part time and casual research assistants and while they are all stars, special mention must be made to the core of this group. Belinda Devine shone for her quiet ability to establish strong, trusting and egalitarian relationships with the Good Starts participants. The integrity of her work with the youth has been a major factor in our ability to keep so many of the participants interested in the study over the four years. Credit must go to Belinda for ensuring that the needs of the Good Starts youth were always put before the needs of the research study. Debbie Taylor worked on a casual basis with a smaller group of Good Starts youth throughout the study. In addition to the strong relationships she built with her group of participants, as a professional journalist, Debbie brought a certain excitement to the project. She introduced opportunities for some of the youth to feature in a teen magazine and wrote articles about youth for the popular press. Caitlin Leahy joined the team later in the study and her good cheer, meticulous data collection and being the engine behind the production of newsletters, broadsheets and the final report—always pushing to meet the deadlines—has underpinned our ability to produce “outcomes” while the study was in progress. Thank you to Aude Plontz and Tulsi Bisht who assisted with data entry and to Sam Abbato who undertook the daunting task of early data analysis, enabling the production of the policy broadsheets during the course of the

study. Anthony Rodriguez was terrific in assisting with a final round of data collection and especially in conducting in-depth interviews with some of the young men in year three.

The co-investigators of this study—Ignacio Correa-Velez and Ida Kaplan—have each contributed immeasurably in their leadership and their wisdom and methodological rigour. Ignacio has the rare qualities of high level quantitative methodological expertise, a keen mind and logical thinking, while at the same time having the grounded understandings of how context and everyday life impinges on data collection and on the interpretation of results. His level-headed, fair and compassionate leadership through this project has been critical both for its conduct and for the ongoing outcomes in publications and policy. Ida was responsible for the initial idea of this study—being a constant inquirer about whether or not “practice” makes a difference. It is in her role as manager of direct services at Foundation House, and her particular passion for improving settlement outcomes of youth, that she has advocated for the need of a project such as this and has ensured that it continued when challenges arose. She has also had a critical role in debriefing research staff, giving advice on referrals for participants and liaising with the wider staff of Foundation House.

We are most grateful for the project’s major funding provider VicHealth. This study required significant commitment from VicHealth’s research funding and we wish to acknowledge their recognition of the pioneering nature of this research. Good Starts was run on a tight budget and could not have come into being without additional financial and in-kind support from Foundation House, as well as The Sidney Myer Fund and The William Buckland Foundation (through a grant they made to Foundation House), La Trobe University, and Mrs and Mr Spitzer. We especially thank Katherine Chadwick of ‘Designland’ for *pro bono* design, illustration and layout work contributed over the past five years. ‘Designland’ are solely responsible for producing high quality research materials including journals, newsletters, postcards and this final report. It is rare that a research study is able to produce high quality research materials that reflect the respect that the project has for the youth who have so freely given up their time to participate.

We thank Foundation House, where the study was based, for respecting the expertise of the researchers and for allowing us to get on with the task with minimal interference and optimal support. It is this kind of research partnership that leads to an innovative and responsive research environment and to successful outcomes. Thank you to Estelle Purchas, administration officer of the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre for the considerable administrative support she has provided for the study. Her ability to meet the unusual requirements of this study (movie tickets, travel claims, casual time sheets, ever changing staffing and multitudes of correspondence) with a smile is gratefully acknowledged. And of course we must not forget the English Language Schools who welcomed the study, the Victorian Department of Education for their support and the many other organisations that have been involved and saw this study as a worthwhile undertaking.

This report was written by Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson with input from Christine Bakopanos and Ida Kaplan. Many thanks to Kaye Brown for her thorough review of the final document and to Edmee Kenny for her editorial assistance. Thank you to Celia McMichael for review and editing of the report, Caitlin Leahy for final production and Kathleen Weekley for copy editing. There are many

others who have provided their research expertise to this study, it is to the entire team that the success of this study is attributed.

Good Starts has been a group effort, from beginning to end. It has produced important insights about the experiences of settlement for young people with refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. It has also provided an opportunity to conduct a research study that, while challenging and difficult, could only have been successfully carried out through the commitment and efforts of so many.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has made this project possible.

Sandy Gifford

Chief Investigator

Professor and Director

La Trobe Refugee Research Centre

La Trobe University

FIGURES & TABLES

FIGURES

- 31 *fig. 1* Akok drawings of the past
- 31 *fig. 2* Abraham's drawings of the past
- 31 *fig. 3* Basima's drawings of the past
- 33 *fig. 4* Changes in mean self-esteem scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 33 *fig. 5* Changes in mean optimism scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 33 *fig. 6* Changes in mean sense of control scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 34 *fig. 7* Changes in mean happiness scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 36 *fig. 8* Self portraits: Positive ethnic identity
- 37 *fig. 9* Self portraits: Positive family
- fig. 10* Self portraits: Positive youth culture
- 38 *fig. 11* Self portraits: Positive portrayal of self in relation to their new life in Australia
- 38, 39 *fig. 12* Self portraits: Positive sense of their own individuality
- 40, 41 *fig. 13* Self portraits: Negative images
- 41 *fig. 14* Self portraits: Words rather than drawings
- 42 *fig. 15* Changes in mean ethnic identity scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 43, 44 *fig. 16* Angok's future portraits
- 45, 46 *fig. 17* Rayak's future portraits
- 47 *fig. 18* Changes in mean educational aspirations scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 48 *fig. 19* Akier, 14 year old Sudanese male
- 49 *fig. 20* Starting families
- 55 *fig. 21* Changes in mean subjective health status scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 55 *fig. 22* Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the physical domain over time for all participants and by gender
- 55 *fig. 23* Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the psychological domain over time for all participants and by gender
- 57 *fig. 24* Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the social relationships domain over time for all participants and by gender
- 57 *fig. 25* Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the environment domain over time for all participants and by gender
- 57 *fig. 26* Changes over time in risk behaviours among male participants
- 58 *fig. 27* Changes over time in risk behaviours among male participants' closest friends
- 58 *fig. 28* Changes over time in risk behaviours among female participants
- 58 *fig. 29* Changes over time in risk behaviours among female participants' closest friends
- 60 *fig. 30* Garang, 12 year old Sudanese male
- 67 *fig. 31* Changes in mean family discipline scores over time for all participants and by gender
- 67 *fig. 32* Changes in mean family attachment score over time for all participants and by gender
- 67 *fig. 33* Changes in mean family conflict score over time for all participants and by gender
- 70, 71 *fig. 34* Kadani, 15 year old Ethiopian female
- 76 *fig. 35* Changes in mean school performance scores over the three year period for all participants and by gender
- 76 *fig. 36* Changes in mean school belonging and safety scores over the three year period for all participants and by gender
- 76 *fig. 37* Changes by year of data collection in mean scores of social status at school for all participants and by gender
- 77 *fig. 38* Changes in mean school support scores over the three year period for all participants and by gender
- 77 *fig. 39* Changes in "getting bullied or teased at school" scores over the three years for all participants and by gender
- 77 *fig. 40* Changes over time in experiences of discrimination at school for all participants and by gender

79	<i>fig. 41</i> Changes over time in experiences of enjoying coming to school, for all participants and by gender
79	<i>fig. 42</i> Changes over time in experiences of liking teachers, for all participants and by gender
79	<i>fig. 43</i> Changes over time in experiences of being involved in sports and other school activities, for all participants and by gender
81	<i>fig. 44</i> Images of school environment
83	<i>fig. 45</i> Achai, 14 year old Sudanese female
89	<i>fig. 46</i> Changes in sense of belonging to ethnic community for all participants and by gender
89	<i>fig. 47</i> Changes over time in experiences of discrimination, for all participants and by gender
91	<i>fig. 48</i> Changes over time in mean scores of social status of young people's families within their ethnic communities for all participants and by gender
91	<i>fig. 49</i> Changes over time in mean scores of social status of young people's families within the broader Australian community for all participants and by gender
92	<i>fig. 50</i> Amira, 15 year old female from Kuwait Amira, Kuwait, Year Three Journal
93	<i>fig. 51</i> Amira, 15 year old female from Kuwait Amira, Kuwait, Year Three Journal

TABLES

29	<i>table 1</i> Participants' country of birth by gender at baseline interview
29	<i>table 2</i> Main languages spoken at home at baseline interview
75	<i>table 3</i> Education—work transitions in the first three years in Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the key findings of a longitudinal study (2004–2008) investigating the experiences of settlement among a group of 120 recently arrived young people with refugee backgrounds settling in Melbourne, Australia. Each year, less than one per cent of the world’s refugees are offered resettlement in one of 18 countries participating in The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resettlement programme. Australia offers places to around 13,500 people per year, of whom about 26 per cent are between the ages of 10 and 19. What are the experiences of these young people in their early settlement years? How do they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood given the traumas of their past and the challenges of their present and future in Australia? What are the key social determinants of wellbeing and good settlement and what can we learn from these young people about what social policies and services will most effectively support them to make successful lives in their new home? This study explores these questions, the overall aim being to identify the key social determinants of wellbeing and settlement and to describe the lived experiences of these young people as they shape their lives in Australia. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the psychosocial factors that promote successful transitions during the settlement process
- Describe in depth the contexts, settings and social processes that promote health and wellbeing among young refugees over time.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The study began in 2004 and young people were recruited through three Melbourne English language Schools (ELS) that had high numbers of students with refugee backgrounds. Classes of students exclusively aged 12–18 years, with refugee backgrounds, were selected by the school to participate in the study. These young people had been in Australia for an average of 5.6 months when they first enrolled in the study, 46 per cent were female, 54 per cent were male, 72 per cent were born in Africa (52 per cent in Sudan), and 24 different languages were spoken at home. The median age was 15 years and the young people had an average of 5.7 years of schooling prior to arrival. The majority arrived in Australia with at least one family member, and two arrived without any family.

Data collection involved a series of activities carried out in school, home and community settings, on a yearly basis over four years. Participants were given a 'settlement journal' in which they recorded their experiences through drawings, photos and answering questions. This was facilitated by research assistants and interpreters/bicultural workers in the classroom, at participants' homes, or public libraries. In the fourth year follow-up, a minimum set of data was collected either over the phone or in a brief meeting with participants.

The aim of this report is to discuss the key findings—to tell the overall story of the settlement experiences of these young people during their first three to four years in Australia. In this report, the *quantitative* outcomes have been reported over *three years* and these findings have been enriched with insights from the *qualitative* data gathered over *four years*.

KEY FINDINGS

The picture that emerges is of a group of young people who, despite their traumatic past, bring many personal strengths to the challenges of settlement in Melbourne, Australia. They are a group of young people with high levels of optimism, self-esteem and happiness and these attributes do not diminish over the course of the study. In short, these young people arrive in Australia with high hopes for making a good life and this is important for helping them face the challenges of settlement.

Getting a good education is the single most important goal in the early settlement years for these young people. Their first year in an ELS, with the exception of teasing and bullying, is a positive experience. However, transition to a mainstream high school is less positive. Many feel they have not yet acquired a sufficient level of English to enable them to engage successfully with the educational requirements, they feel less supported by their teachers and their levels of perceived achievement at school decrease. Significantly, their feelings of belonging and safety decrease compared to the ELS and there is a significant increase in experiences of discrimination at mainstream schools. By the end of the fourth year, one quarter of the young people still in the study had left school without completing secondary education to seek further technical training or employment.

The support of their family is key for Good Starts youth. Yet, few of the young people arrived in Australia as part of an intact family. This, coupled with changes in household composition, means that family instability was a core feature of family life in the early settlement period for many. Additionally, youth are living in families who have many burdens and as such, the supportive context of the family weakens over time.

In terms of their connections to the wider community these young people value their relationships with their ethnic community, the presence of which is an important resource for wellbeing in the early settlement years. They also feel valued by the wider Australian society and most rank the social status of their family as medium to high, both within their own ethnic community and within the wider Australian community. However, within the wider community, experiences of discrimination are of major concern among these youth—by the third year, over one third had experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour. In addition, many young people report experiences of discrimination prior to arrival in Australia and these

powerful forms of social exclusion not only continue in Australia, but increase over time. Finally, ongoing experiences of conflict and violence are key concerns for these youth and the qualitative data in particular highlights how violence—verbal and physical fighting—are one of the key challenges that they face as they make their life in Australia.

One of the most important insights of this longitudinal study is that it paints a picture of the young person's settlement journey as one of continual change. It is a journey to which the young people bring considerable personal strengths and yields both ups and downs. A young person doing well in one year may struggle the next and then do well again the following. Importantly, the study reveals a group of young people who arrive in Australia with considerable potential to do well, to make a good life and to contribute to their new country.

However, they face a range of challenges in their host communities. For most, the transition to mainstream schools is difficult and although they continue to report overall positive experiences, their sense of engagement with and achievement in the mainstream school system decreases significantly compared to their first year in an ELS. Although these young people look to their families for the key source of their social support, families are struggling with many settlement challenges as well as dealing with the worries of relatives left behind. Strengthening families so that they can better support their young people should be a key priority for the host community. Like all adolescents, sexual and reproductive health is an issue of concern and at least 16 per cent of the female participants became pregnant over the four years of this study. Although sexual and reproductive health promotion is a difficult area to tackle, this study suggests that mainstream and youth services that provide this kind of information and care are not meeting the needs of this group of young people. Finally, discrimination has emerged as a major source of social exclusion. This is a form of structural violence—that it increases over the three years of this study and that it has a negative impact on the wellbeing of these young people is a chief concern.

If there is one overall message to emerge from this study it is that despite their often traumatic childhoods and lives prior to arrival, these young people bring with them personal strengths that are important for them to do well in making their lives in Australia. However, they encounter many challenges in the social environment of the host community and these, coupled with the burdens shouldered by their families, impact on their ability to reach their full potential in the early years of settlement in Australia.

PART I: BACKGROUND AND STUDY DESIGN



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMONG RECENTLY SETTLED YOUTH WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

1. We have used culturally appropriate pseudonyms for all our participants.

Settlement in a third country is a dream for 11.4 million of the world's refugees for whom return to their home country is not possible and making a home in the country to which they have fled is not an option (UNHCR 2008). Between 2003 and 2007, 16,290 young people aged 10–19 with refugee backgrounds settled in Australia (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2007) with hopes and dreams of building good futures in this country. Fifteen-year-old Idris¹ arrived in August 2004 with her older sister and brother-in-law after fleeing Ethiopia and living in another African country for almost three years. Dlovan arrived from Iraq when he was 15 with both parents and all his brothers and sisters after living in Turkey for a year. After fleeing Sudan, 16-year-old John spent 18 months living 'illegally' in Egypt before he arrived with his brother, sister and grandfather to join his uncle's family in Australia. Comfort arrived when she was 16 years old, with her father, step-mother and younger brothers and sisters after living in a refugee camp for 10 years. These are four of the young people who participated in Good Starts—a study that followed a group of recently-settled youth with refugee backgrounds over the first four years of their life in Australia. Although diverse in their individual and cultural backgrounds, these young people all share the experiences of having lived most of their lives in contexts of violence, have suffered the violent death and disappearance of family and friends, had few opportunities for continuous schooling, and many have experienced personally the trauma of violence, fear and loss prior to arrival in Australia. For them, making a new home in Australia is the chance to flourish and to make secure futures for themselves and their families.

What are the experiences of these youth in their early settlement years? How do they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood given the traumas of their past and the challenges of their present and future in Australia? What are the key social determinants of wellbeing and good settlement and what can we learn from these young people about what social policies and services will most effectively support them to make successful lives in their new home?

This report describes the findings of a study of 120 young people with refugee backgrounds during their first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia. The aim was to identify the key social determinants of wellbeing and settlement and to describe the lived experiences of these young people as they shape their lives in Australia.

AIMS OF THE GOOD STARTS STUDY

- To identify the *psychosocial factors* that promote successful transitions during the settlement process.
- To describe in depth the *contexts, settings and social processes* that promote health and wellbeing among young refugees over time.

The aim of this report is to discuss the key findings—to tell the overall story of the settlement experiences of these young people during their first three to four years in Australia. This report is organised into four sections. We begin with a brief review of the research into the social determinants of wellbeing and resettlement among recently-settled young people with refugee backgrounds; we then describe how the study was conducted, including the socio-demographic backgrounds of the participants, our data collection methods, and the context for understanding the results. The second section focuses on the young individuals, their senses of self, and their health and wellbeing in their first three years in Australia. The third section examines the broader social contexts that shape their lives; family, school and community. The fourth section reflects on what the youth have told us during their first three to four years in Australia—what was difficult for them, what was easy or good, and what lessons they and we have learned about how best to promote good starts for resettled youth with refugee backgrounds. We also include reflections from the participants and the researchers of their experiences being part of this study.

The report provides different kinds of information, including summaries of quantitative data drawn from standardised questions used in this study—ones that are commonly used in other studies of youth wellbeing—and qualitative information provided by the young people themselves through interviews, field notes, photographs and drawings. Quantitative and qualitative data provide different insights into the experiences of the young people. In some cases the quantitative and qualitative findings are complementary and in some cases they are contrasting. Each chapter gives a broad overview of the findings on a particular theme and readers are encouraged to refer to the publications listed in Appendix VII which report on more detailed and specific findings of this study.

WELLBEING AND SETTLEMENT AMONG YOUTH WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS: A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE

Each year, less than one per cent of the world's refugees are offered resettlement in one of 18 countries participating in The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) resettlement programme (UNHCR 2002; 2008). Australia offers places to around 13,500 people per year, of whom about 26 per cent are between the ages of 10 and 19 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). What do we know about the social determinants of wellbeing among recently settled youth with refugee backgrounds? What do we know about their lived experiences of settlement and wellbeing in the first years of arrival? Much of the research investigating health and wellbeing of resettled youth from refugee backgrounds has tended to focus on the trauma of their pre-migration experiences and how this has impacted—often negatively—on settlement outcomes. However, in recent years there has been a shift in focus to recognise the considerable strengths and personal resources refugees bring with them, while also recognising that post-migration factors may play as great or a greater role in their wellbeing in a resettlement

context (Porter and Haslam 2005; Watters 2007). While it can not be ignored that past traumas impact on the health and wellbeing of refugee youth, it is equally important to have a greater understanding of the factors that are most important for assisting them in building their lives in a new host country. While there is a large body of knowledge about the negative impacts of past trauma on resettled youth, there is relatively little known about what promotes wellbeing among this population (Ahearn 2000; Chapman and Calder 2002).

Resettled youth with refugee backgrounds share many of the challenges of other migrant youth, with two important exceptions. First, they must come to grips with the fact that their migration is forced, not chosen. Second, they arrive in their new host country with past experiences of loss, violence and for some, the trauma of torture. Many have spent long periods of time in refugee camps or have lived much of their lives in violent and unsettled circumstances. All of these past experiences are known to place these youth at high risk of psychological ill health (National Child Traumatic Stress Network Refugee Trauma Taskforce 2003; Carlsson, Olsen, Mortensen et al. 2006). Despite these past traumas, many young people also bring with them memories of happy times amongst the angst of a refugee life. Thus, in thinking about promoting health and wellbeing, it is important to recognise both the traumas of the past and the strengths and personal resources youth bring to the resettlement experience.

One way of summarising the research into what promotes the wellbeing of resettled youth with refugee backgrounds is to focus on the social factors of the host society and on the individual factors of resettled individuals.

The social context of the host society plays a key role in determining health and wellbeing outcomes. Important social factors include: the climate of the host community—that it is welcoming (Ager and Strang 2008); resources for achieving cultural and linguistic competency of the host country (Ager and Strang 2008); a supportive school environment (Bond, Giddens, Cosentino et al. 2007); being settled with other family members (Valtonen 1994); choice and security of housing (Ager and Strang 2008; Porter and Haslam 2005); living in close proximity to other members of one's ethnic community (Ager and Strang 2008; Beiser 2005); and, peace and security of the local area (Ager and Strang 2008). Especially relevant to the Good Starts study is the research that identifies the impact that a positive, supportive and inclusive immediate social environment has on the health and wellbeing of refugee children and youth (Angel, Hern and Ingleby 2001) and conversely, the negative impact that experiences of discrimination in the resettlement context have on health and wellbeing (Beiser and Hou 2006; Beiser, Noh, Hou et al. 2001; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2007).

Individual factors are also acknowledged to play an important role in health and wellbeing. Individual factors can be understood as those psychosocial characteristics of the youth themselves. These include; how rapidly youth can become competent in the language of the host country (Chapman and Calder 2002; Olliff and Couch 2005); experiencing educational success in school (Beiser, Shik, Curyk et al. 1999; O'Sullivan and Olliff 2006); living with supportive family members (Chapman and Calder 2002; CMYI 2006); feelings of belonging to one's ethnic community (Beiser and Hou 2006; Brough, Gorman, Ramirez et al. 2003); being able to develop positive relationships with the broader host community (Beirens, Hughes, Hek et al. 2007); and, having a positive sense of self-esteem and one's own identity (Beiser, Shik, Curyk et al. 1999).

There have been only a few studies that have explored how resettled youth with refugee backgrounds fare over time. Important work in Canada has highlighted that despite their traumatic past and the many settlement challenges in a host country, many of these youth respond well to making a life in their new country (Beiser 2005). Even when they struggle, newcomer youth continue to remain optimistic about eventually doing well and making a good life for themselves (Kilbride and Anisef 2001). Importantly, recent studies have highlighted the agency of these young people, how they do not always remain victims of their past but rather, actively remake their lives by drawing on their strengths and developing strategies for moving forward and actively shaping their identities and their futures (CMYI 2006; Kumsa 2006; Maegusuku-Hewett et al. 2007).

ABOUT THE STUDY

The seeds of Good Starts were planted in 1999 when the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) wanted to identify the key factors that promote wellbeing among recently-settled youth and contribute to their making successful transitions to life in Australia. Foundation House was interested in knowing what happens to these young people over time, especially during their first five years of settlement. Recognising the methodological, logistical and ethical challenges of conducting a longitudinal study with this culturally diverse and potentially traumatised group from the moment of their arrival in Australia, a pilot study was carried out with 50 young people in 1999–2000 in collaboration with two English Language Schools (ELS) in western Melbourne. From this study the specific methods of sampling, data collection and terms of engagement with youth were developed.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can we best promote wellbeing for newly-arrived young people from refugee backgrounds in their first year of resettlement?
- What are the key psycho-social determinants of wellbeing among young people from refugee backgrounds?
- How do these psycho-social determinants change over time?

The Good Starts study is unique in a number of ways. First, it is one of the few longitudinal studies that have been carried out into wellbeing and settlement among young people with refugee backgrounds. Longitudinal studies are important because they provide information about changes over time and documenting these changes is particularly relevant to understanding the settlement experience and its outcomes (Beiser 2006). Second, Good Starts is one of the few studies that have used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods thus providing information on both measurement and meaning (Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan et al. 2007). The mixed-method approach is especially important for reflecting on the complexities of the experiences of recently-arrived youth over time (Ahearn 2000). Third, the study is interdisciplinary, informed by the theories and methods of social epidemiology, medical anthropology and refugee studies. Fourth, the study was conducted in such a way as to add value to the settlement experiences of the participants themselves. Being aware that research rarely directly benefits those who participate in it (or at least not in the short term), processes of data collection were designed so that exercises were integrated into the English Language School (ELS) curriculum in the first year

and participants were able to keep their ‘settlement journals’ as a record of their first four years in Australia. Finally, Good Starts was conducted as a partnership between a university research centre (La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, La Trobe University) and a peak community-based organisation (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture—Foundation House) responsible for the delivery of settlement services and programmes for newly-arrived humanitarian refugees in Victoria. This partnership facilitated referrals for participants ‘at risk’, debriefing for research staff and, most importantly, the transfer of research findings into policy and practice throughout the duration of the study (see Appendix VII for a list of policy broadsheets).

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

The state of Victoria resettles approximately one-third of Australia’s humanitarian entrants each year and of these, approximately 1,000 are aged 10—19 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). A major challenge of this study was identifying these youth shortly after their arrival and recruiting them into the study. Most newly-arrived youth spend between six and twelve months in an ELS during their first year in Australia. Recruitment into the study through key ELSs was identified as the most viable sampling strategy for this study. A scoping exercise was conducted to gather enrolment data from all eight ELSs in Melbourne about the numbers and demographic characteristics of students from refugee backgrounds. Immigration settlement data (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2004) was also examined in order to sample from schools in the regions that represent major hubs of refugee settlement.

Young people were recruited through three ELSs that had high numbers of students with refugee backgrounds, one in the south-east, one in the west and one in the north of Melbourne. Classes of students exclusively aged 12—18 years, with refugee backgrounds, were selected by the school to participate in the study. The recruitment strategy focused on building partnerships with these ELSs. This proved advantageous for a number of reasons, including the ease of being able to establish a relationship with the youth, being able to conduct the study in a school setting, and being able to gain informed consent from both the young people, and their parents, to participate in the study as part of the school curriculum. The strategy also enhanced follow-up data collection once participants had left the ELS. Ethical clearance was given by the Human Ethics Committee of La Trobe University, the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST), and the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection for the study involved a series of activities carried out in school, home and community settings, on a yearly basis over four years. Participants were given a ‘settlement journal’ in which they recorded their experiences through drawings, photos and answering questions (see Appendix I). Quantitative data was elicited through the use of standardised questions and scales commonly used in studies of wellbeing and adolescent health (see Appendix II and III). Qualitative data was collected through informal discussions, more formal in-depth interviews, field notes, and non-narrative methods including drawings and photographs (Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan et al. 2007). Data collection was facilitated by research assistants and interpreters/bicultural workers. In the first year, data were collected in weekly 90-minute sessions in the classroom, over eight to ten weeks of the school term.

In the second and third years, data collection took place at participants' homes, schools, or public libraries during two to three 90-minute sessions. In the fourth year follow-up, a minimum set of data was collected either over the phone or in a brief meeting with participants. The fourth year also included a wrap-up with participants to ensure that they were aware that this was the end of the study. Three years of data are reported in this document; however, some more qualitative reflections of youth in their fourth year are also included. The settlement journals, including all the instruments and methods, can be accessed from the Good Starts website http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/refugee_youth.html.

ANALYSIS

The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (SPSS Inc. 2007) and the qualitative data was transcribed, coded and managed with the assistance of N-Vivo (QSR International 2006). Different kinds of analyses were carried out, depending on the kinds of questions we asked of the data. All qualitative data—interviews, open-ended questions and field notes—were analysed for major themes and sub-themes (Patton 2001; Bernard 2000). The researchers jointly developed a coding frame after reading transcripts and field notes (see Appendix IV), and N-Vivo (QSR International 2006) was used to manage the coding and the data. Content analysis was used to interpret drawings and photographs.

Two methods for representing quantitative longitudinal data on key outcomes are used throughout the report. First, for those outcomes assessed using scales (e.g. wellbeing, self-esteem, ethnic identity) data are represented by smooth estimates² of the mean scores (for all participants and by gender) using date of arrival in Australia as the common baseline. This is an accurate way of identifying changes over time, as participants were interviewed at different times following their arrival in Australia. For instance, for the baseline interview (Year One of the study), although all participants were attending an ELS, 20 per cent had been in Australia for one month or less, while about 10 per cent had been in the country for 12 months or more. One participant had been in Australia for 19 months. The second method of representing longitudinal data is applied for those outcomes that used categorical variables (e.g. risk behaviours where participants were asked whether or not they had smoked, drunk alcohol, tried other drugs, or gambled). Using date of arrival in Australia is impractical for representing changes on these types of variables over time. Instead, year of data collection (One, Two and Three) is used. In addition, year of data collection is used to represent those variables focusing on school issues (e.g. school performance, school support, bullying and discrimination at school etc).

The Generalised Estimating Equations (GEEs) model³ (Diggle, Liang and Zeger 1996) was used to assess the association of outcomes variables with time and gender. Finally, for the quantitative data provided in this report, we have noted whether or not any changes that occurred from Year One to Year Two to Year Three are statistically significant. In many cases, graphs show some change over time, however many of these changes are not statistically significant. This means that we cannot rule out the possibility that the change may have happened simply by chance. In addition, the small size of the study sample and the time interval of the assessments should also be taken into account. However, we have provided information on these 'trends' because although not statistically significant, they raise questions about what these changes might look like in years to come. (Appendix V summarises the key findings for the

2. Smooth estimates are used for data visualisation purposes to represent the average scores of a set of irregular data points as a smooth line or surface (Hastie, Tibshirani and Friedman 2001).
3. The Generalised Estimating Equations (GEEs) model is a popular and well-accepted method that has been developed for analysing repeated measurements on the same subject (longitudinal data). In these situations responses are correlated, rather than independent random variables, as measurements of the same person at different times may be more similar than measurements of different subjects. The GEE method uses techniques comparable to those for generalised linear models (Dobson and Barnett 2008).

quantitative measures used in the Good Starts study.)

ETHICAL AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES

Special consideration must be given to both ethical and logistical issues when conducting research with youth from refugee backgrounds. Good Starts encountered a range of problems that had to be addressed and reassessed continually (Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan et al. 2007). Crucial ones were that participants had arrived recently, spoke little English and often were not literate in their first language. Hence, we grappled with how to collect information, given both these problems and the range of languages spoken, in a context of limited financial resources. We opted for data collection being embedded in the ELS curriculum through young people recording information about themselves in a ‘settlement journal’, printed in English but with participants working in small groups of two or three with a bilingual research assistant and/or teacher’s aid. We also used a range of qualitative methods, many of which did not depend on written or spoken narrative, instead including drawings and photographs; this was especially important in the first year of data collection. Interestingly, over time many participants opted to use written English when asked to draw their present and future self-portraits, using words instead of drawings to paint pictures of who they are and wish to become. Despite using different strategies to triangulate data collection, Year One field notes recorded by researchers highlight the difficulties that many participants had understanding questions and the caution that is required in interpreting responses.

A second key problem relates to the larger enterprise of research and ethics. Not only were the young participants unfamiliar with the concept of research, they also had no concept of research ethics or informed consent. We thus spent the first few research sessions explaining research and the principles of informed consent. One of the challenges was to explain the voluntary nature of the study and to assure them that they could opt out of the study at any time. Towards the later years of the study, we did indeed have some participants who told us they no longer wished to be involved with Good Starts and we take this as a positive indicator of them exercising their own agency to find their way through life in Australia.

A third difficulty constant throughout the study was the blurred boundary between research and social care. Although the study was not one of participatory action research, it did require that researchers build relationships with Good Starts participants over time. Friendships were forged, young people asked researchers for advice and assistance (e.g. on how to get a job, pathways to further study, advice about relationships, how to write a resumé, to be referees) and researchers gained in-depth knowledge of the lives of these youth beyond the formal research frame. Researchers began to appear in the *social circles* of participants as important people in their lives. The importance of these relationships over time was surprising, especially since contact was brief but intense each year and followed up throughout the year with phone calls and newsletters. In the fourth and final year, one young man broke down in tears when the researcher said that this would be the last time they would meet to fill out the journals. He pleaded for someone from Good Starts to ring him just once a year to ask about how he was going. While Good Starts began with concerns that the study would be overly burdensome for the participants, this was quite the reverse for many,

who felt they belonged to the project. It provided continuity during their first years in Australia and offered relationships outside of school, community and family. It gave young newcomers a sense that they mattered and that someone was interested in their lives in a non-judgmental way, and this relationship was maintained over the often difficult first years of settlement in Australia.

Finally, because researchers became familiar with the personal lives of these youth, they were also alerted to issues that were negatively affecting the welfare of some. The study was conducted in partnership with a community-based organisation (Foundation House) that provides counselling and broad social care and support for new arrivals and, with the permission of individual participants, it was possible to organise referrals to Foundation House and to liaise with school welfare officers. Finally, the researchers themselves were exposed to the often traumatic ups and downs of participants' lives and Foundation House offered regular debriefing for them.

LIMITATIONS

A range of factors have affected the study and are important to keep in mind while interpreting the findings. First, the sample size is relatively small and while this allows for the wealth of in-depth information about the participants, generalisations to all recently-arrived youth must be made with caution. Each of the Good Starts participants is as unique as other young people of their generation, while sharing many of the challenges and aspirations that come with growing up and becoming an adult. Secondly, there is considerable ethnic and cultural diversity among the participants and this diversity can be important even within ethnic groups. Third, the building of relationships with participants was critical for longer term follow-up and many of the youth have found their relationship with the study to be of benefit over time. Thus, participation in the study and the relationships that these youth have had with the researchers have affected their settlement experiences. Fourthly, it is important to ask questions about those who dropped out of the study. Are they different from those who remained with Good Starts throughout the three years? Defining 'drop out' is not straight forward, as data collection over the entire study involved structured interviews, phone interviews, in-depth interviews and more informal conversations in homes, schools and train stations. Overall, age at baseline was the key difference between those who dropped out of the study and those who stayed in, with those 15 years or older at baseline more likely to drop out than younger people. Thus, if we define drop-outs as those who had one interview only (eight participants) then there are no statistically significant differences between drop-outs and those who did two interviews or more. If we define drop-outs as those who did fewer than three interviews, excluding those who completed journals one and three, but not journal two, then we had 20 drop-outs:

- Boys were more likely than girls to drop out (18.5% and 14.5%; not significant)
- African-born were more likely than Others to drop out (20% and 9%; not significant)
- Older participants (over 15 years old at baseline) were more likely than younger ones (aged 15 years or less) to drop out (24% and 10%; significant $p=0.041$)
- Time since arriving in Australia (18% 4 months or less in Australia VS 16% longer than 4 months; not significant).

Finally, this study did not include a sample of young people without refugee backgrounds. Therefore, we can not directly compare the findings of this study to other migrant youth nor to Australian born youth. It is not possible to say whether the Good Starts youth would fare better or worse compared to other youth if it were possible to “control” their prior refugee experiences.

PART II: GOOD STARTS YOUTH

- ① I want to be a medical doctor.
- ② I will have family
- ③ I will have two or three children



This my girl friend.

In 25 years time I would have finish my school, I would like to become musician, I would like to have girl friend, I would like to have sport car and have buy a house.

I like going to Library After school



Complete grad 12

Complete

University



1. doctor

2. Soccer

3. Basketball



music
dancing
English
Ashanti

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY AND BECOMING: WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE WANT TO BE

Within the context of the aims of the Good Starts study, the background, research design and the limitations, readers can engage with the content of this report in different ways. A reading from cover to cover will provide a broad but sound summary of the major findings of the research. The overall picture of the key issues youth face, how they engage with challenges, and the impact on their health and wellbeing, is important for broadly informing resettlement and youth support services.

From a methodological perspective, the report offers examples of the different ways in which we have sought to answer the key research questions and illustrates the importance of using a range of research strategies and methods in conducting research into resettlement and wellbeing amongst youth with refugee backgrounds. Finally, the study has attempted as much as possible, to give a voice to the youth themselves and thus, through their drawings, their quotes and their case studies, this report offers an insight into their lives over the early years of their resettlement in Melbourne, Australia.

WHO ARE THE GOOD STARTS YOUTH?

The participants in Good Starts are both average and unique: average in that they share the highs and lows of all young people as they grow into adulthood, but also unique because they have lived their childhoods and early adolescence surrounded by violence, loss and an uncertain future. The 120 young people who participated in the Good Starts study are broadly representative of the approximately 1,000 youth from refugee backgrounds who settle in Victoria each year. In the second year of the study, 109 youth participated and in the third year, 100 remained (see Table 1). These young people had been in Australia an average of 5.6 months when they first enrolled in the study, 46 per cent were female, 54 per cent were male, 72 per cent were born in Africa (52% in Sudan), and 24 different languages were spoken at home (see Table 2). The median age was 15 years and the youth had an average of 5.7 years of schooling prior to arrival. The majority arrived in Australia with at least one family member, however two arrived without any family.

One of the key questions that Good Starts set out to answer was how do young people see themselves when they first arrive and how does this change over time? When we first began the study, we hypothesised that the young participants would begin their first year in Australia with positive self-images, high self-esteem and many aspirations

TABLE 1: Participants' country of birth by gender at baseline interview (n=120)

Country of birth	Females	Males	Total N	%
SUDAN	28	34	62	51.7
IRAQ	9	9	18	15.0
ETHIOPIA	6	9	15	12.5
AFGHANISTAN	3	5	8	6.6
LIBERIA	3	3	6	5.0
BURMA	1	1	2	1.7
CROATIA	0	2	2	1.7
IRAN	1	1	2	1.7
UGANDA	2	0	2	1.7
BOSNIA	0	1	1	0.8
BURUNDI	1	0	1	0.8
KUWAIT	1	0	1	0.8
TOTAL	55	65	120	100.0

TABLE 2: Main languages spoken at home at baseline interview (n=120)

Language	N	%
ARABIC	26	21.7
DINKA	25	20.8
ASSYRIAN	12	10.0
DARI	7	5.8
AMHARIC	6	5.0
ENGLISH	5	4.2
NUER	5	4.2
TIGRINYA	5	4.2
OROMO	4	3.3
KISWAHILI	3	2.4
CHALDEAN	2	1.7
KAREN	2	1.7
PASHTO	2	1.7
SERBIAN	2	1.7
TURKISH	2	1.7
OTHERS ¹	9	7.5
MISSING	3	2.4
TOTAL	120	100.0

1. Acholi, Bosnian, Chollo, Farsi, Jursol, Kpelle, Latuka, Mandingo, Nuba

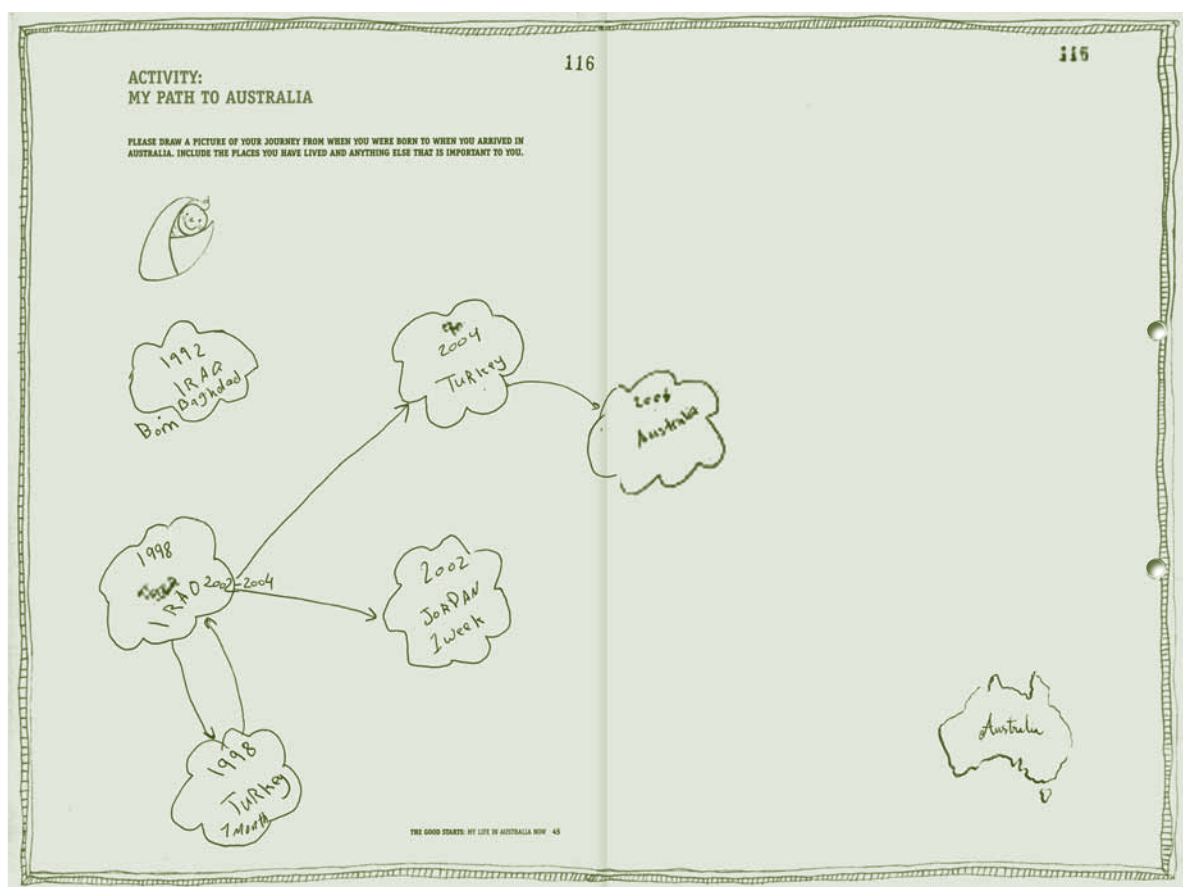
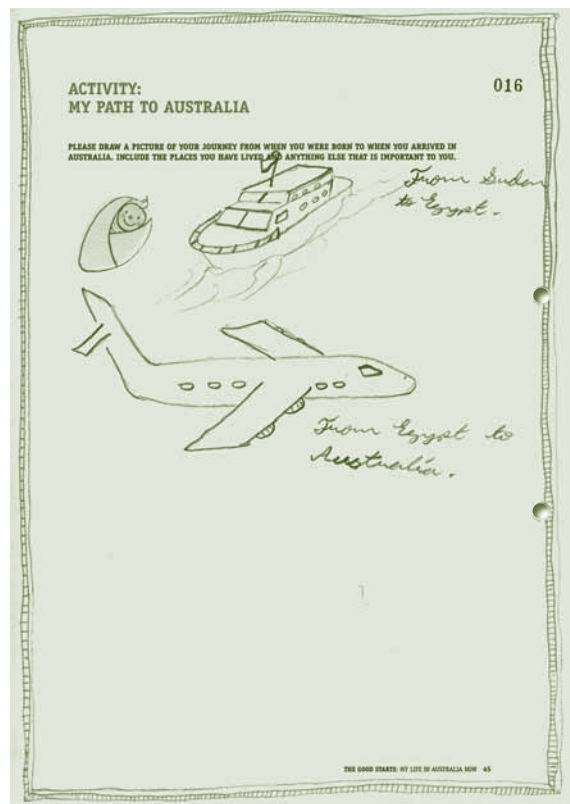
for the future. We also thought that some of the challenges they would meet in their second and third years of settlement would negatively affect their sense of self. So what pictures do these youth paint of themselves over their first three years of settlement? We can explore this question through their drawings of themselves in the present and in the future, through their educational aspirations, and measures of identity and self-esteem. Overall, these youth arrived in Australia with positive self-images and sense of identity and despite the challenges they encountered, their self-esteem and life aspirations remained high during their first three years in Australia.

ABOUT THE PAST: BEFORE AUSTRALIA

Good Starts youth were born in 12 different countries and 83 per cent had lived in a different country of transit prior to arrival in Australia. Thirteen per cent had lived most of their lives in refugee camps. Although we did not specifically elicit detailed information about past traumas, all participants had experienced various forms and degrees of loss prior to arriving in Australia. The journey maps drawn in the first and third years of settlement give some insight into these experiences, as do the detailed field notes kept for each participant over the life of the study. Senay began to tell us about his past when we met him for the third year follow-up and told of his grief for his sister and mother who had died before Senay arrived in Australia. Also in his third year, Jada told us about his life in Egypt, where he would sleep only four hours a day because he was working a double shift. Over the course of the study, participants began to talk about their lives before arriving in Australia but importantly, within the context of their present lives.

Of particular importance for this study are the ways in which events and experiences of their pasts affect the challenges of settlement and how the young new arrivals navigate these challenges. Some of the most powerful effects of life before resettlement on life in Australia are the continued disruptions to family life. These include: the deaths of family members and memories that are still too painful to talk about; family members who are lost, their whereabouts unknown; family still in refugee camps or living in dangerous environments; and, family members living as asylum seekers or resettled in countries other than Australia. In their first year, 90 per cent of the participants had at least one close family member still living overseas. By their third year, this figure decreased to 80 per cent. These realities are played out in young people's everyday lives in a variety of ways. Family and household composition in Australia is often changeable as members begin to reunite, family members return to their home country for periods of time to support other family and community left behind, and families juggle financial responsibilities by sending remittances to relatives overseas.

Tragically, receiving news of the death of a family member still overseas is not an uncommon experience for these youth. The turmoil of this unsettled past translates into an unsettled present. For example, having to move house is not uncommon as family size grows or household composition changes—50 per cent of the youth moved house in their second year and 55 per cent in their third year. Changes in household composition can cause stress and strain as well as joy, and field notes highlight the many changes that took place in household composition—relatives arriving, staying for some time, leaving or moving on—over the three years. Young people face increased household responsibilities because they often care for younger children and translate for



FIGURES 1-3: DRAWINGS OF THE PAST

Abraham, Ethiopia, Year One journal | Akok, Sudan, Year One journal
Basima, Iraq, Year One journal

newly-arrived family members; financial pressures, they are pushed to work part-time in order to support family overseas; and, parents or guardians who are still worrying about and providing support to family overseas may not be able to provide enough support for youth in their schooling (Atwell, Gifford and McDonald-Wilmsen 2009).

The Good Starts study has provided insight into how the participants face these challenges over time. For example, Archangelo finished two years of schooling in Australia before he dropped out to get a job. He had been struggling at school and his main priority was to get together enough money to sponsor his mother to join him and his sisters in Australia. His mother has now arrived and they are both hoping that he will be able to continue his studies, because for the moment Archangelo continues to work while they find a house big enough for the reunited family. However, while their unsettled past continues to frame their present and future, as the following chapters reveal, these young people are not passive victims of their past. Rather, over time we see that they employ various strategies to build their lives taking these continuing difficulties into account. Indeed, Good Starts youth arrive in Australia with a range of personal and social resources that they draw on as they strive to reach their full potential in Australia.

HOW WE SEE OURSELVES

Good Starts youth have remarkably positive images of themselves when they arrive in Australia, high hopes for their futures, moderate sense of control over their life and high levels of optimism and happiness. These can be understood as important resources for negotiating successful settlement and longer term integration. A range of settlement challenges impact on the positive outlook of these youth and this is reflected in their second year in Australia. We can describe these changes over time by looking at both quantitative measures (self-esteem, optimism, sense of control and happiness) and qualitative descriptions (self-portraits and interviews) of the youth in each of their first three years. We asked whether there are any differences between boys and girls in these measures.

KEY FINDINGS

Good Starts youth have high potential for good settlement, arriving with:

- High levels of self-esteem, which remain high over 3 years
- High levels of optimism, which remain high over 3 years
- Moderate levels of a sense of control, which increase over 3 years
- High levels of happiness, which do not change significantly over 3 years

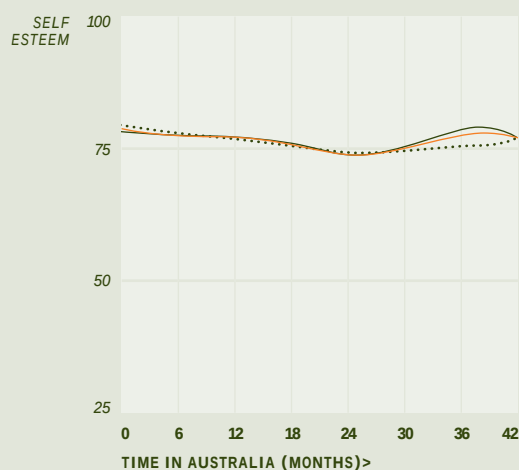
SELF-ESTEEM (FIGURE 4) The youth arrive in Australia with high levels of self-esteem and there is no difference between boys and girls. However, in their second year, there is a slight fall in self-esteem for all. By the third year, self-esteem begins to rise again, though we see a greater increase for boys than for girls. Changes in mean (average) self-esteem scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

OPTIMISM (FIGURE 5) The levels of optimism among Good Starts youth are high in their first year of settlement, though a little higher for males than females. There is a dip in optimism in the second year for all, but it increases as they enter their third year. Interestingly, although females are less optimistic than males when they arrive, by the third year of settlement the trend begins to reverse. However, changes in mean

FIGURE 4:

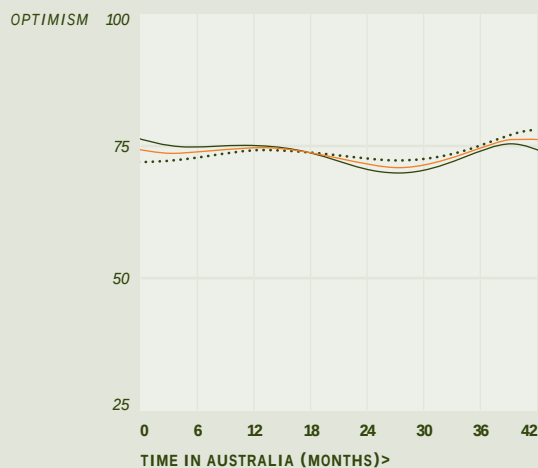
Changes in mean self-esteem scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest self-esteem score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

**FIGURE 5:**

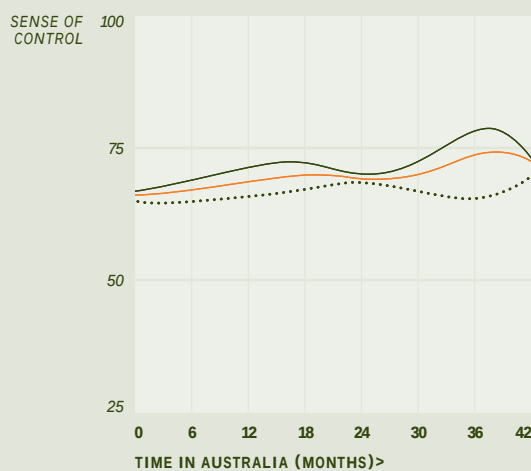
Changes in mean optimism scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest optimism score = 25; highest score = 100)

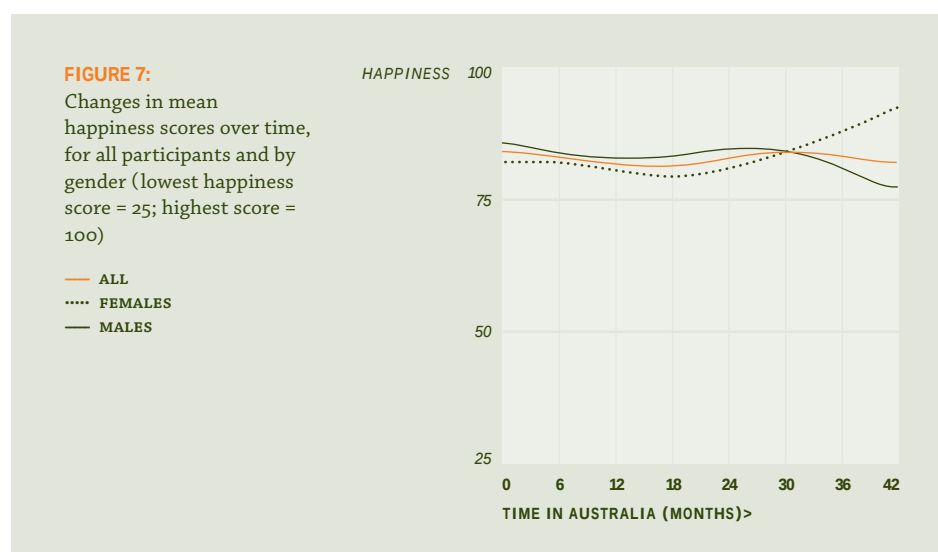
— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

**FIGURE 6:**

Changes in mean sense of control scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest sense of control score = 25; highest score 100)

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES





optimism scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

SENSE OF CONTROL (FIGURE 6) Young peoples' sense of control is moderate on arrival and increases overall over the first three years of settlement (statistically significant; $p=0.018$). Males report a higher sense of control over time than females (borderline significance; $p=0.050$).

HAPPINESS (FIGURE 7) It is not surprising that youth arrive with high levels of happiness and this maintains throughout the second year. However, the third year shows girls' happiness increasing while boys' happiness decreases. Changes in mean happiness scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

These trends indicate that on the whole, young people arrive in Australia with a strong sense of self and optimism about life in Australia. Despite the challenges they encounter over time, their statistics paint a picture of a resourceful group. The portraits they drew each year and the stories from interviews and field notes further fill out this picture.

PRESENT: WHO I AM

Another method for gaining a picture of young peoples' sense of self is through self portraits, which they were asked to draw each year. Overall, the pictures reveal a range of key themes related to a positive sense of self in the first year in Australia:

- Positive sense of identity with their ethnic group, their family and with broader youth culture (see Figures 8, 9 and 10)
- Positive portrayal of self in relation to their new life in Australia (see Figure 11)
- Positive sense of their own individuality (Figure 12)
- Of the 112 self portraits drawn in Year One, only five were negative images (see Figure 13).

In Years Two and Three, self portraits continue to reflect a group of young people with positive self-images. By this time, many chose to portray themselves through words rather than a drawing (see Figure 14), yet their reflections continue to paint a picture of a group of youth with a strong and positive sense of self.

ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

Good Starts youth display a range of identities which can be understood as fluid and contextual. Importantly, they identify strongly with their ethnic communities (see Figure 15). Overall, ethnic identity scores for all youth decrease slightly during the second year of settlement, especially for boys. By the third year, ethnic identity begins to increase, again more markedly among boys than girls. Changes in mean ethnic identity scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

However, qualitative data indicates that ethnic identity is not straight forward. Although participants indicated strong identification with their ethnic community, many were resistant to naming a single ethnic group that defined their identity. In other words, many were reluctant to describe themselves in terms of a single ethnic identity. Others found it difficult to talk about their ethnicity, in part because of their painful memories of life before Australia and in part because they do not clearly identify as belonging to only one group. For example, Sarah always hesitated to discuss ethnicity with the Good Starts researchers: although her tribe is from Sudan, she was born in Uganda and spent most of her life in a refugee camp in that country. She experienced discrimination in Uganda because of her tribal background and this led to fighting in the school she attended there, and in 2003 fighting broke out between different tribes living in the refugee camp. Sarah said that when she arrived in Australia, she had difficulties at her ELS because most of the students, while Sudanese, were from a different tribe than her. When we met up with Sarah in her fourth year in Australia she was much more open to discussing her ethnic identity. In response to the question asked each year in the settlement journal (What is your ethnic background?), she finally responded: 'Ugandan, Sudanese and Australian'. A second issue emerging from the qualitative data relates to the ambivalence some youth feel about their ethnic backgrounds—they feel both pride and angst. For example, Senay was born in Sudan but says he is Eritrean. He strongly identifies as Eritrean, however he tells us that he is not always proud of being Eritrean because *"its history isn't great"*. He also says that although he has an Australian passport, he will never be *"fair dinkum"*. Finally, qualitative data suggests ambivalence about identifying as a *refugee*, with youth seeing this as an identity of their past and not their present.

FUTURES: WHO I WANT TO BE

Good Starts participants have high hopes for making good lives for themselves and their families in Australia. Through their drawings and interviews, they express dreams and aspirations similar to those of Australian-born young people. When we first met Angok in her first year in Australia, she explained that she wanted to be a doctor or a singer and dancer. In her second year, she wanted to be a pilot and a fashion designer. *"Can I do both?"* she asked the researcher. *"You'll be very busy if you do both!"* was the reply. When we met her in the third year of settlement, she was doing Year 11 at school and told us that she is now thinking of becoming a nurse because the minister at the church she is involved with thinks she would be a good healer and because she says that she is no longer smart enough here in Australia. She explains that she used to be really smart, always the smartest in class overseas and even at her ELS, but that she is not smart anymore. We met Angok again in her fourth year in Australia and she is now doing a diploma of accounting through distance learning and a degree in nursing. She

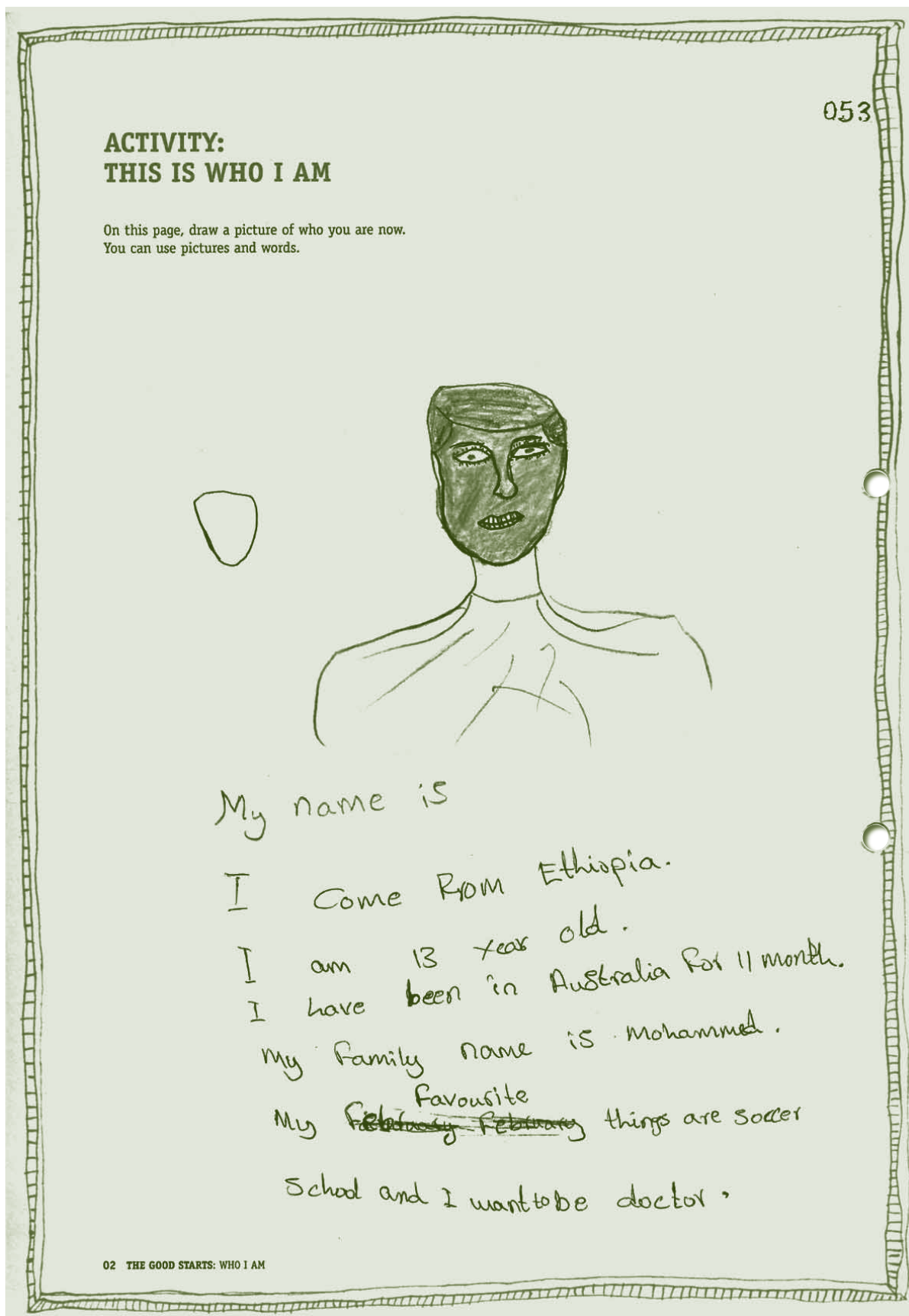


FIGURE 8: SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE ETHNIC IDENTITY
Sammy, Ethiopia, Year One journal

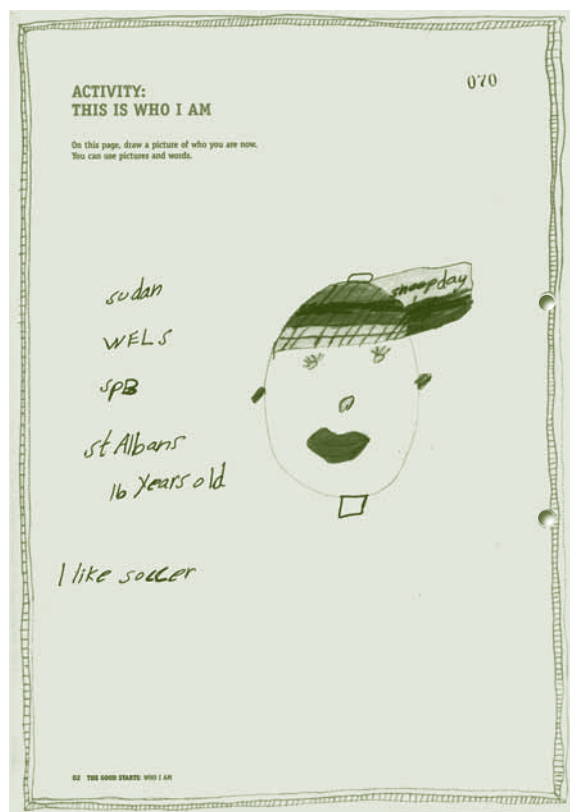
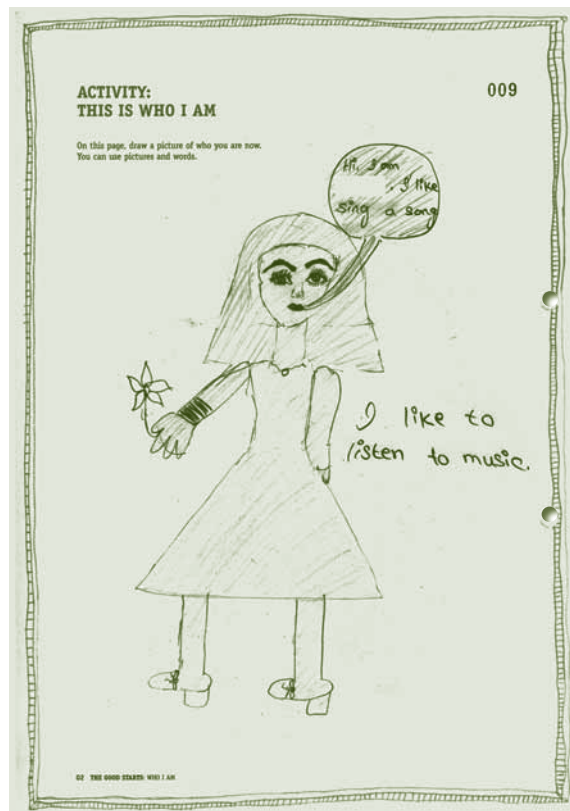
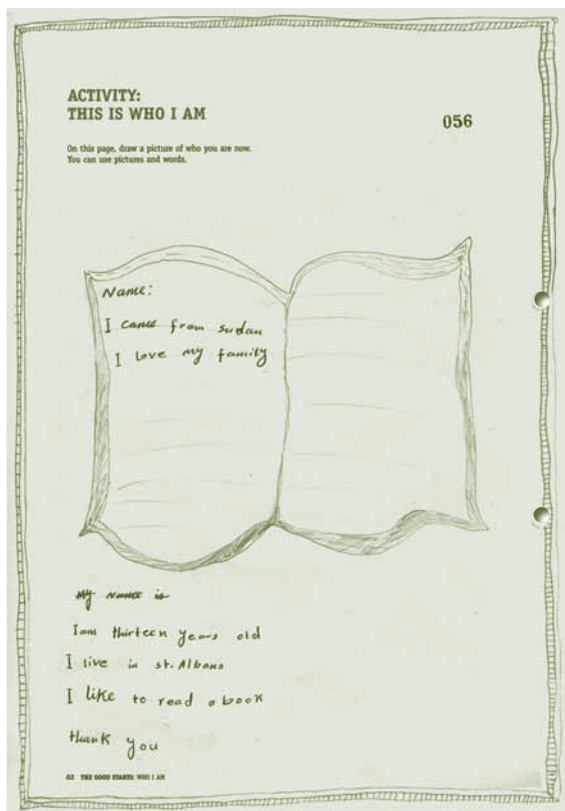


FIGURE 9: SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE FAMILY
Garang, Sudan, Year One journal

FIGURE 10: SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE YOUTH CULTURE
Malia, Afghanistan, Year One journal
Nyagony, Sudan, Year One journal | Rosan, Sudan, Year One journal

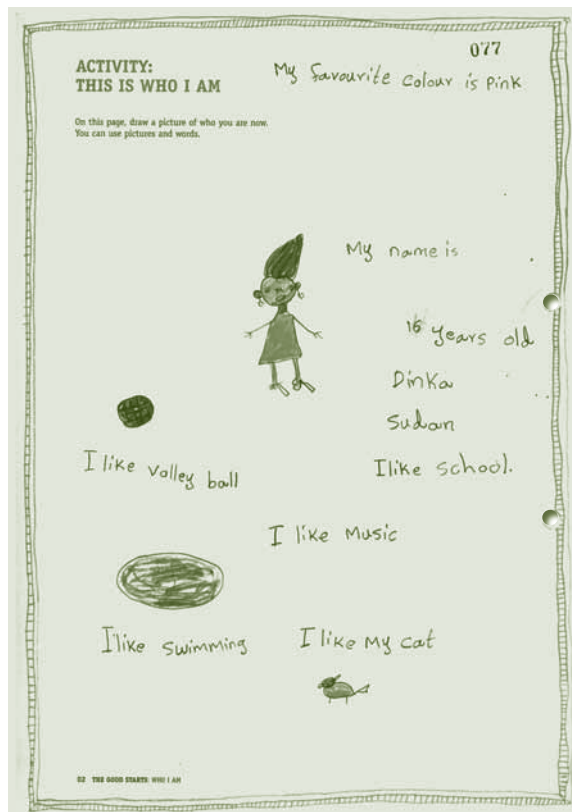
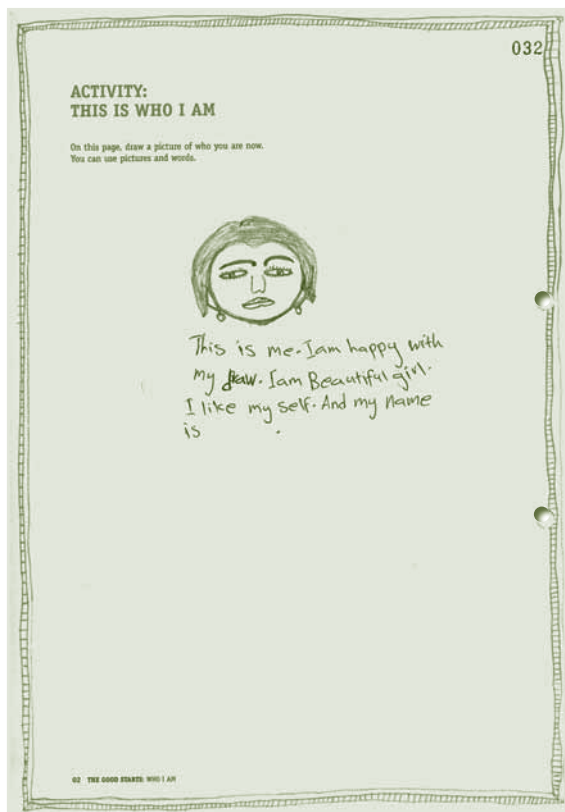
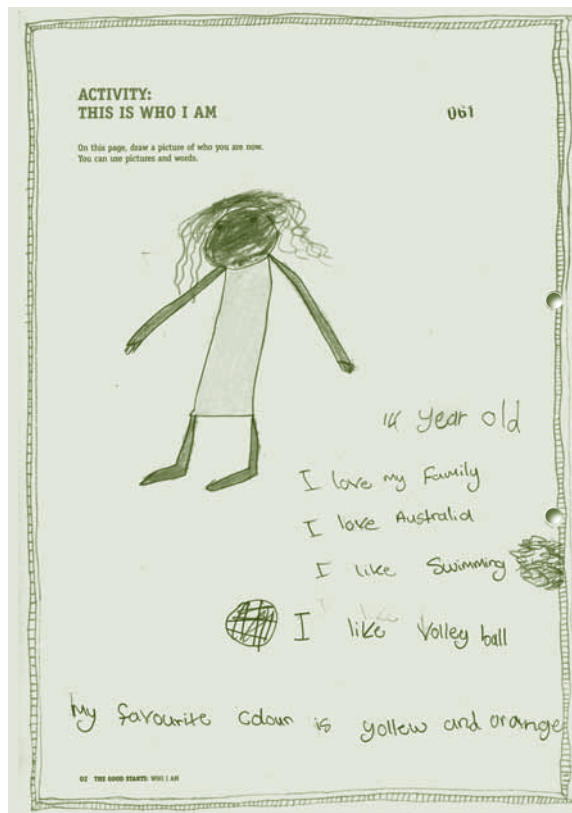
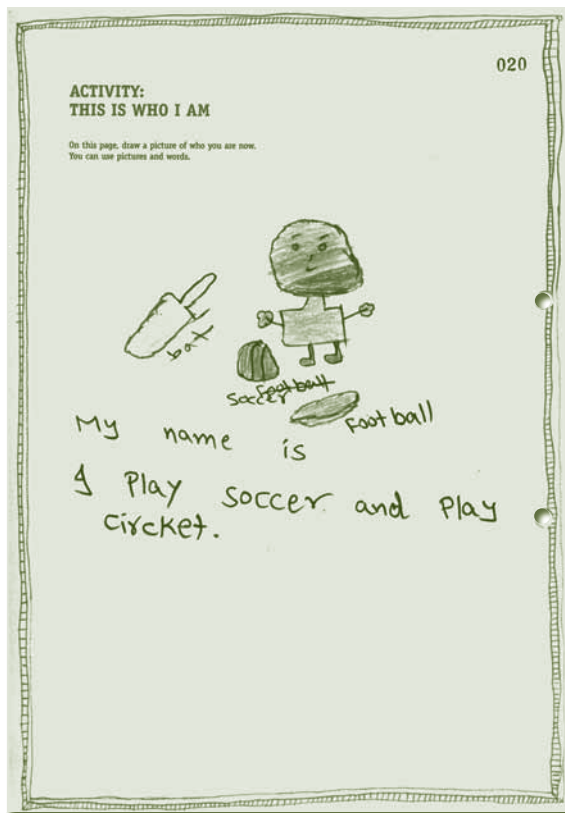


FIGURE 11: SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE PORTRAYAL OF SELF IN RELATION TO NEW LIFE IN AUSTRALIA
Fahim, Pakistan, Year One journal | Achan, Sudan, Year One journal

FIGURE 12: SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE SENSE OF OWN INDIVIDUALITY
Haga, Sudan, Year One journal | Nyandeng, Sudan, Year One journal

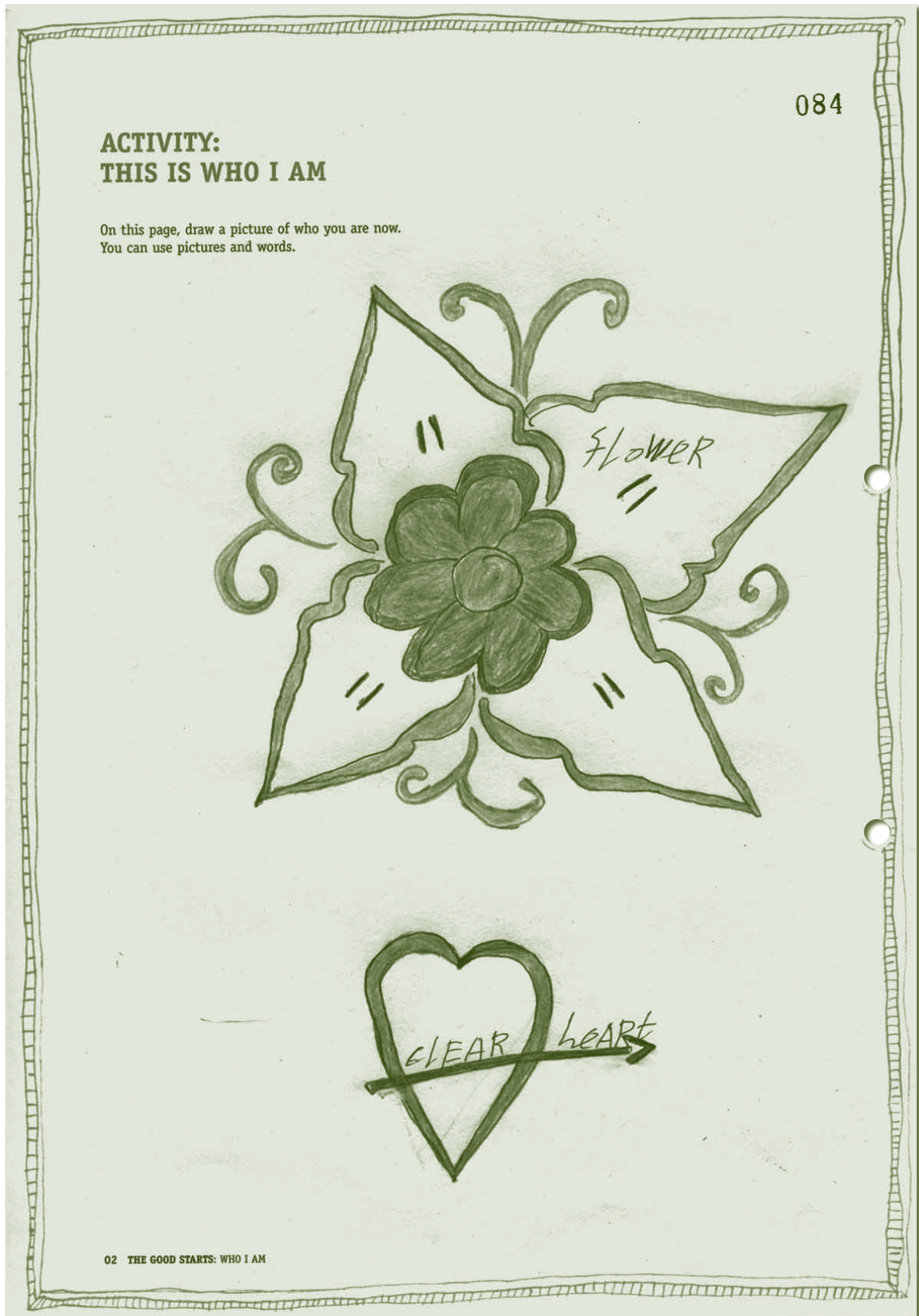


FIGURE 12 (CONT.): SELF PORTRAITS: POSITIVE SENSE OF OWN INDIVIDUALITY
Aisha, Sudan, Year One journal

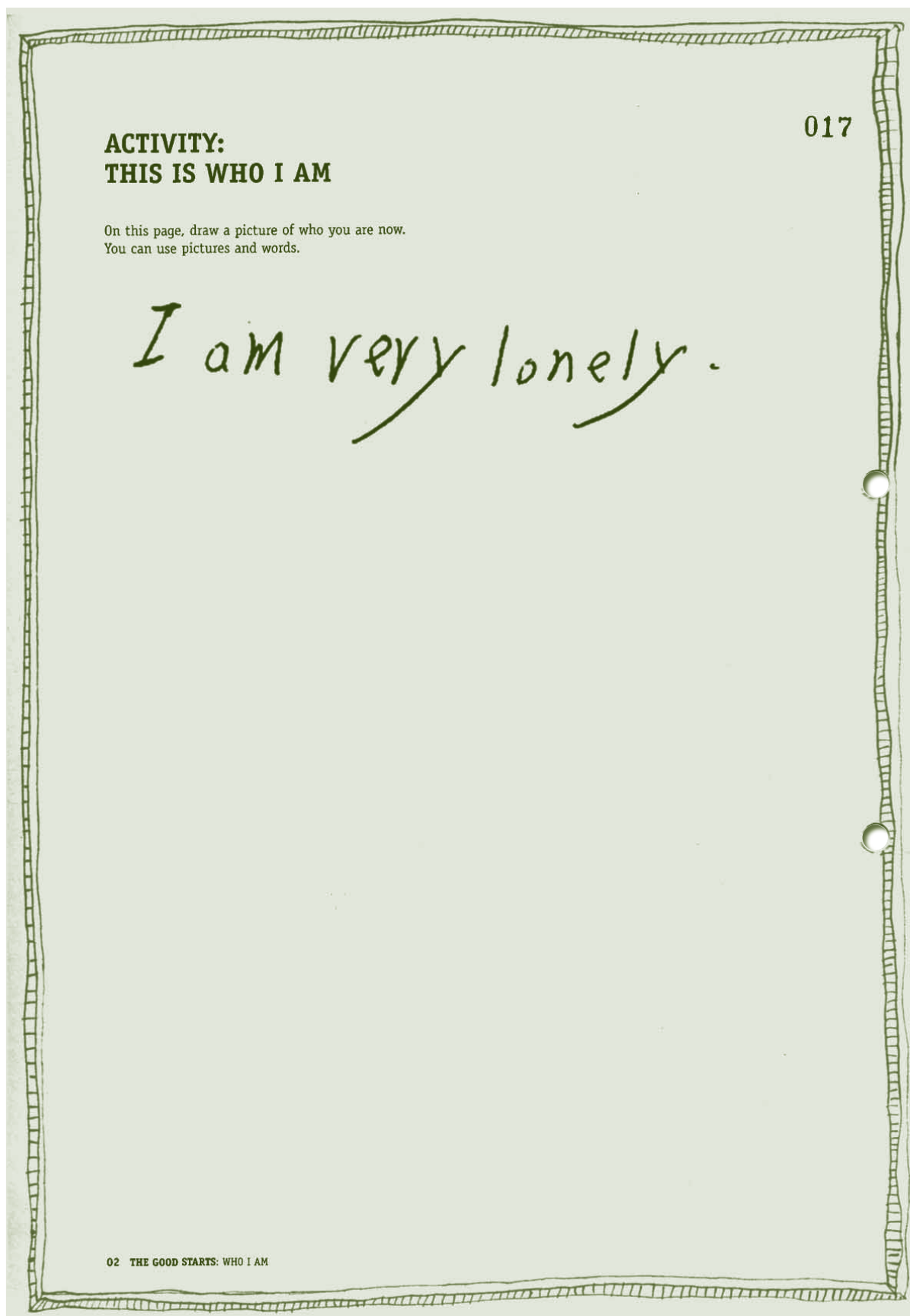


FIGURE 13: SELF PORTRAITS: NEGATIVE IMAGES

Abdullah, Iran, Year One journal Negative feelings about life

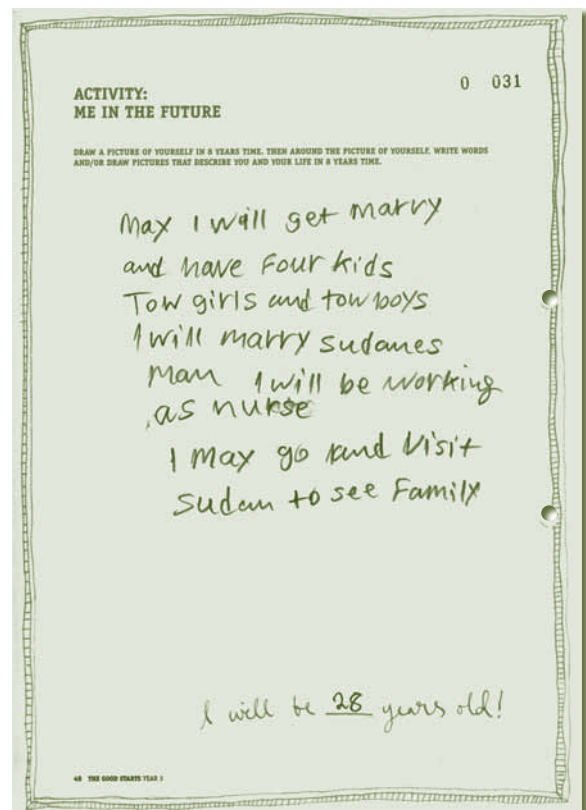
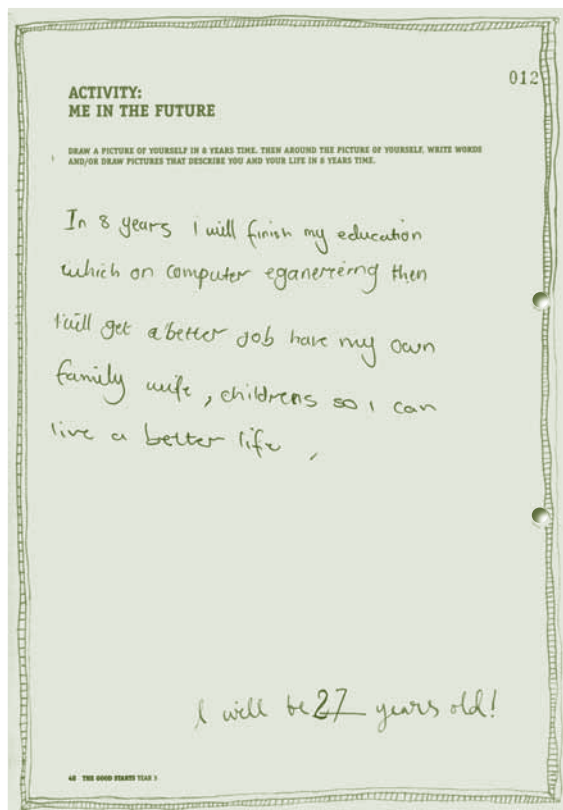
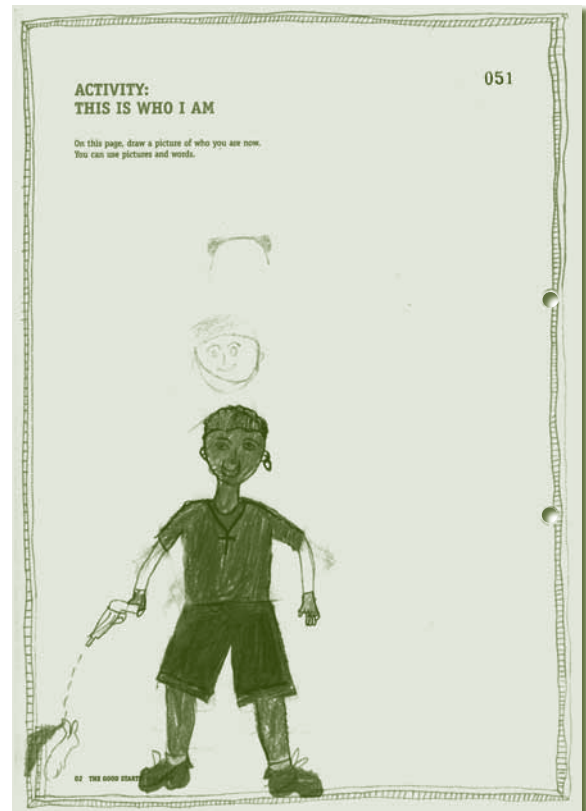
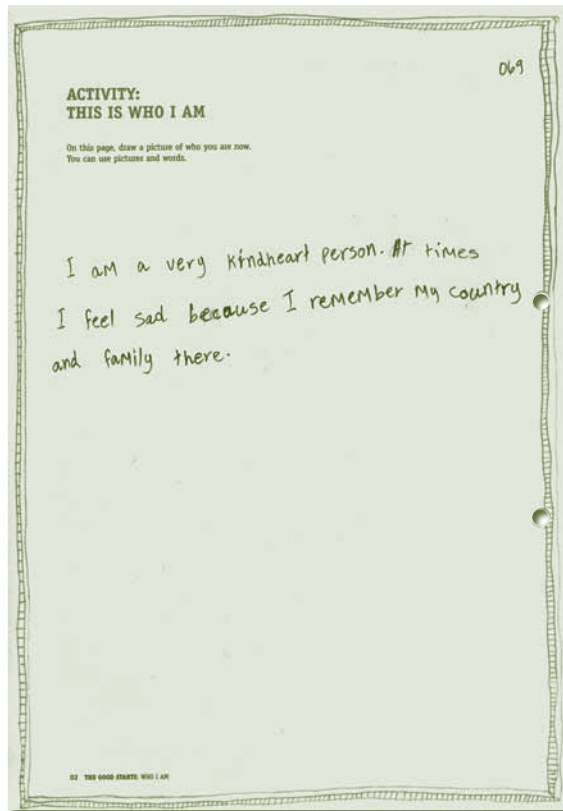


FIGURE 13 (CONT.): SELF PORTRAITS: NEGATIVE IMAGES

Agol, Sudan, Year One journal Missing people | Musa, Sudan, Year One journal Violence

FIGURE 14: SELF PORTRAITS: WORDS RATHER THAN DRAWINGS

Jada, Sudan, Year Three journal | Yar, Sudan, Year Three journal

FIGURE 15:
Changes in mean ethnic
identity scores over time,
for all participants and
by gender (lowest ethnic
identity score = 25; highest
score = 100)

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES



is indeed a busy young woman and she tells us that looking back on her life so far, while she was sad to leave her friends and come to Australia, she is also happy because she is able to go to school and study. She says that although she still looks after her family, she is doing *“her thing”* and as for her dreams, she says she can *“go and get them”* (see Figure 16).

For some youth, experiences prior to arrival in Australia continue to shape the ways in which they think about their futures. While sitting next to one of the youth, Rayak, as he was getting ready to fill out his second year journal, the researcher chatted about his recent citizenship ceremony. He mentioned that he really wanted to be an actor when he grew up. When the researcher asked why he had not included this dream in his drawing of himself in ten years’ time, Rayak replied that he was *“too old”*. The researcher pointed out that she was older than he was and that she could still be an actor if she wanted. Rayak then explained, *“you were born in a place of safety. I was born in a place of war, bullets going [he makes an action of bullets rushing past his head]. You go crazy...I’m going crazy all the time. I can’t remember properly...from what happened to me I get sad. I get pissed off.”* For some young people, the uncertainty experienced in the past makes it difficult to imagine and move towards a positive future (Figure 17).

Interestingly, when contacted one year later, Rayak said he had joined an African youth centre where he does comedy acting *“...they act about their own lives and families but make it funny.”* In his third year, Rayak enrolled at a TAFE and when the Good Starts researcher arrived at the TAFE to interview him, he arrived smiling, wearing baggy pants and hip hop clothing, making jokes with his class mates and shaking hands with some of the staff.

Young participants drew pictures of themselves in the future as being employed in a range of careers (see Figures 1, 2, 19, 39, 34, 42, and 47). First year drawings tend to depict images of ideal futures, full of family, jobs and material wealth. Over time, drawings of the future contain less detail. Of those who provided future drawings, a picture emerges of young people adjusting their career aspirations over time. For example, in the first

year, the most common career goal drawn was to be a doctor, followed by engineer or pilot. In Year Two, the most common career was still doctor, followed by nurse, teacher or mechanic. In the third year, the most common was nurse, followed by pilot or police officer. Interviews and field notes indicate that when the participants arrived in Australia, they had knowledge of a narrower range of possible careers and in part these reflect the aspirations that their families had or have for their futures. However, over time youth become aware of different occupational pathways and many—particularly those whose education was severely disrupted prior to arriving in Australia—face the reality that it will be difficult to obtain the qualifications required for many career dreams.

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Participants saw educational success as crucial to achieving their goals for the future. Figure 18 shows the change in educational aspirations scores over time. The levels of educational aspirations among Good Starts youth are high on arrival, slightly higher for males. There is a decline in aspirations over time, though it is not statistically significant. Neither is there a statistically significant difference in mean educational aspirations scores between males and females. However, as described in Chapter 5, a range of factors pose obstacles to these youth achieving their educational dreams.

HOMELANDS OLD AND NEW

Overall, most drawings depict positive images of future lives in Australia, but these lives are also connected with homes of the past. Pictures, interviews and field notes show young people's desires to settle down, marry and have families—to make their homes in Australia—but also to maintain contact with their country of origin. Continuing contact with country of origin is important for these young people and already in their

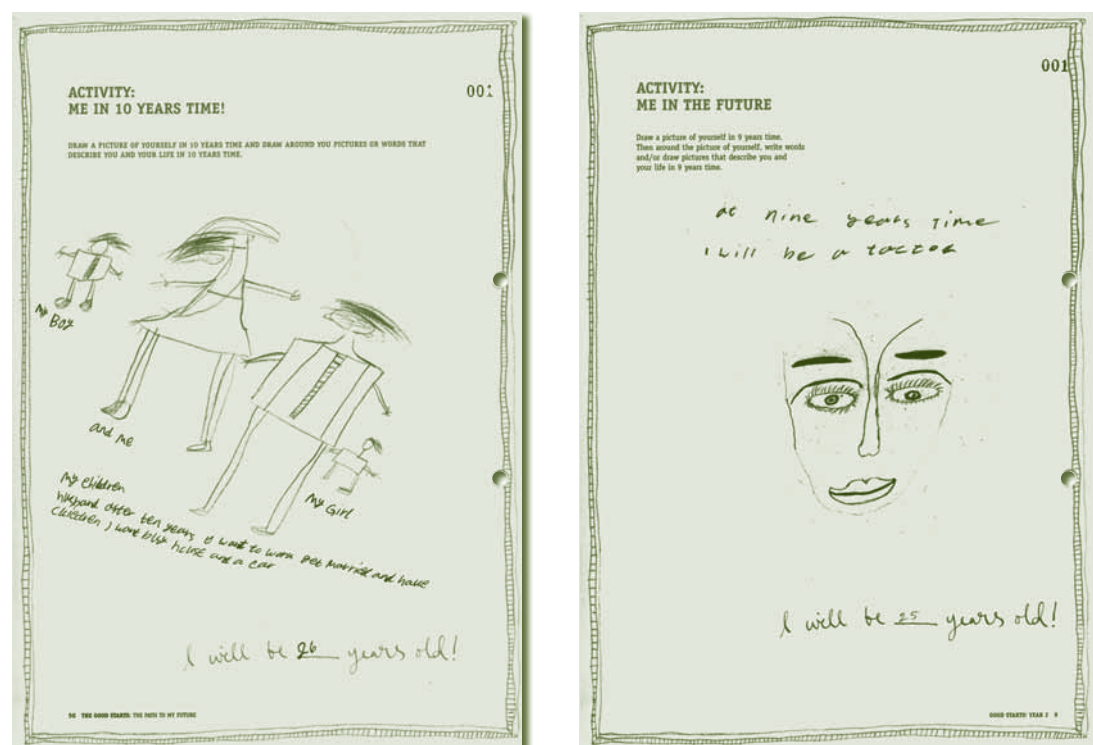


FIGURE 16: ANGOK'S FUTURE PORTRAITS

Angok, Sudan, Year One journal

Angok, Sudan, Year Two journal

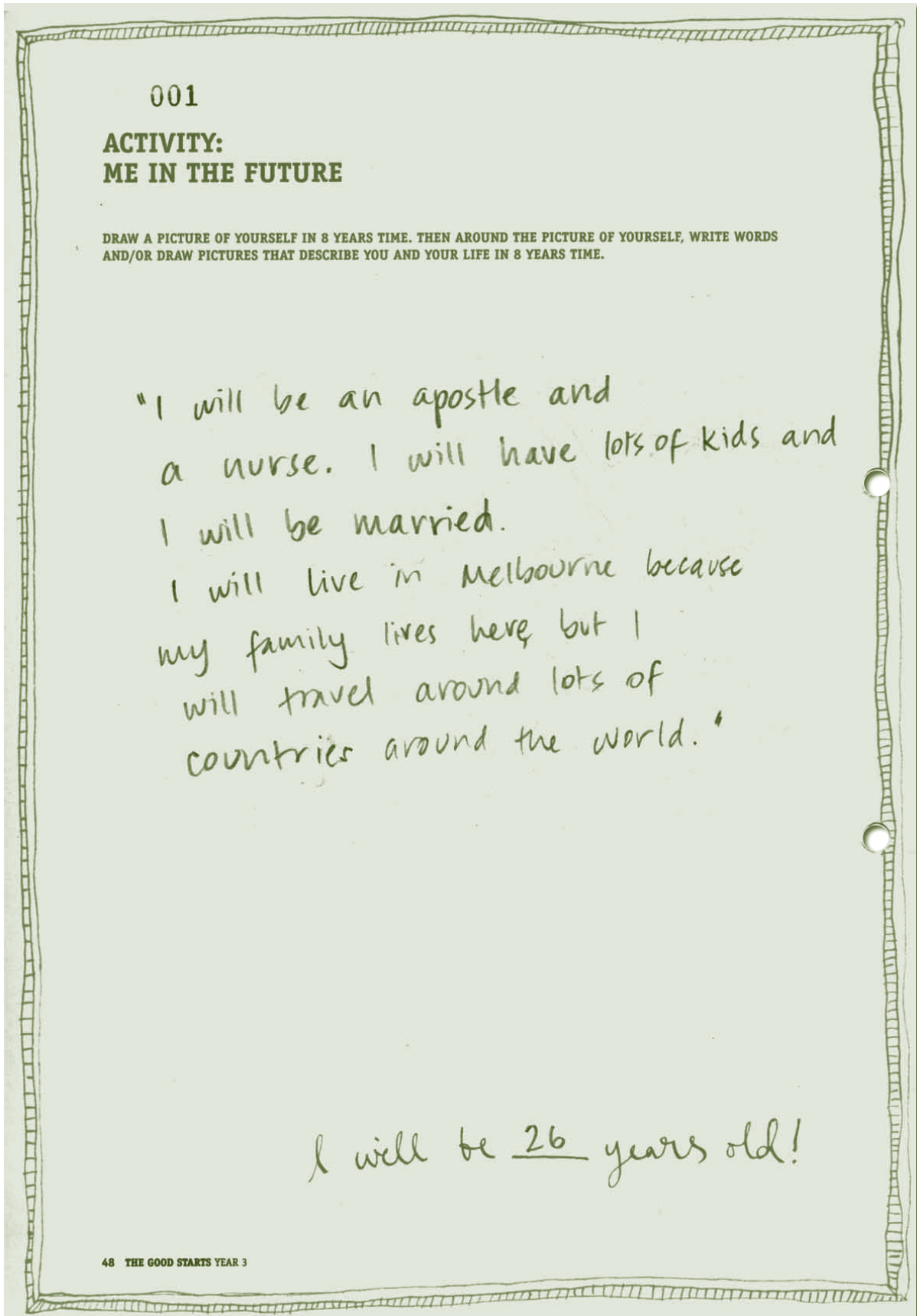


FIGURE 16 (CONT.): ANGOK'S FUTURE PORTRAITS
Angok, Sudan, Year Three journal

third year in Australia a number spoke of having made a trip 'home' to visit friends, relatives or places. Many of the youth portray themselves as being able to travel to their home country in their future, having a job that will help their community in the country of origin, or going back to their home country to gain further qualifications if they are unable to do so in Australia. Angok, for example, says that she wants to be a doctor and if she cannot gain entry to medical school in Australia then she will go back to Africa to study. Thus, although all youth portray themselves as becoming at home, making their home, in Australia, this is squarely in the context of maintaining links with their country of origin. This is important because settlement for these youth must be understood as occurring in a transnational context. The futures these youth paint for themselves are not rooted in one place and while Australia is pictured as *home* it is home linked across borders to homelands of the past and communities spread across the globe.

Finally, having a family, buying a house and having a car is very much the dream of these youth. Indeed, as discussed at the end of this chapter, some of the participants have become pregnant, are already beginning to start their own families and becoming young parents, in their third and fourth years in Australia (see Figure 20).

To summarise, in spite or because of their extraordinary pasts, who these youth are and what they wish for their futures is both as ordinary and as unique as other young people in Australia.

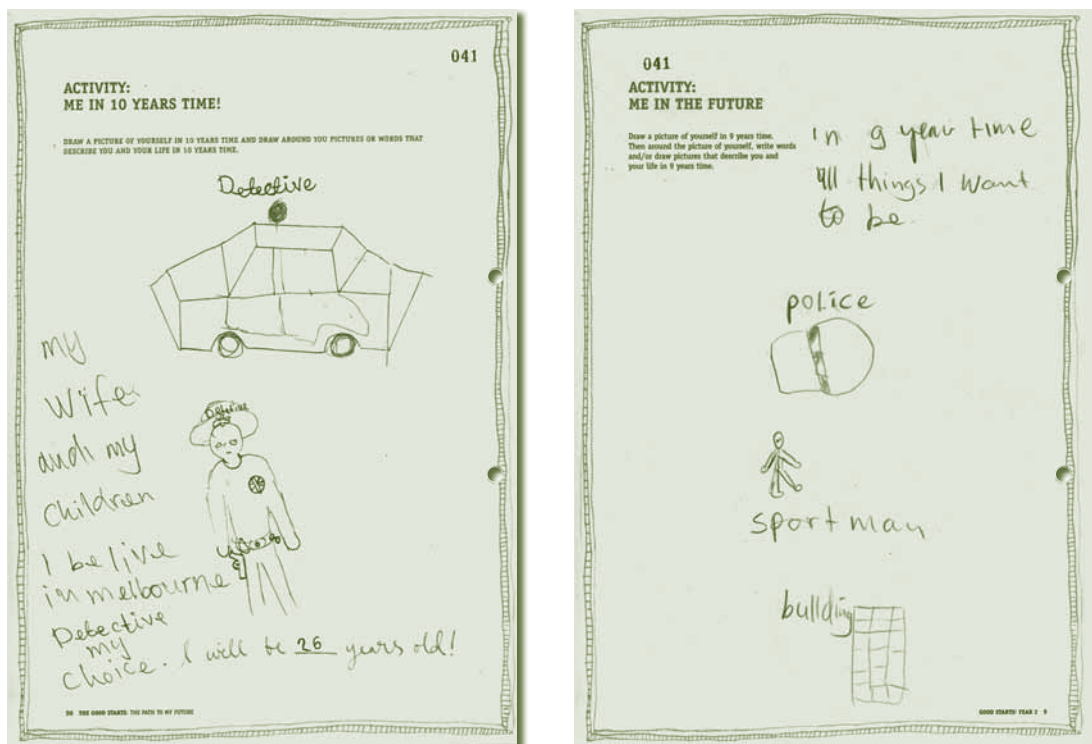


FIGURE 17: RAYAK'S FUTURE PORTRAITS

Rayak, Sudan, Year One journal | Rayak, Sudan, Year Two journal

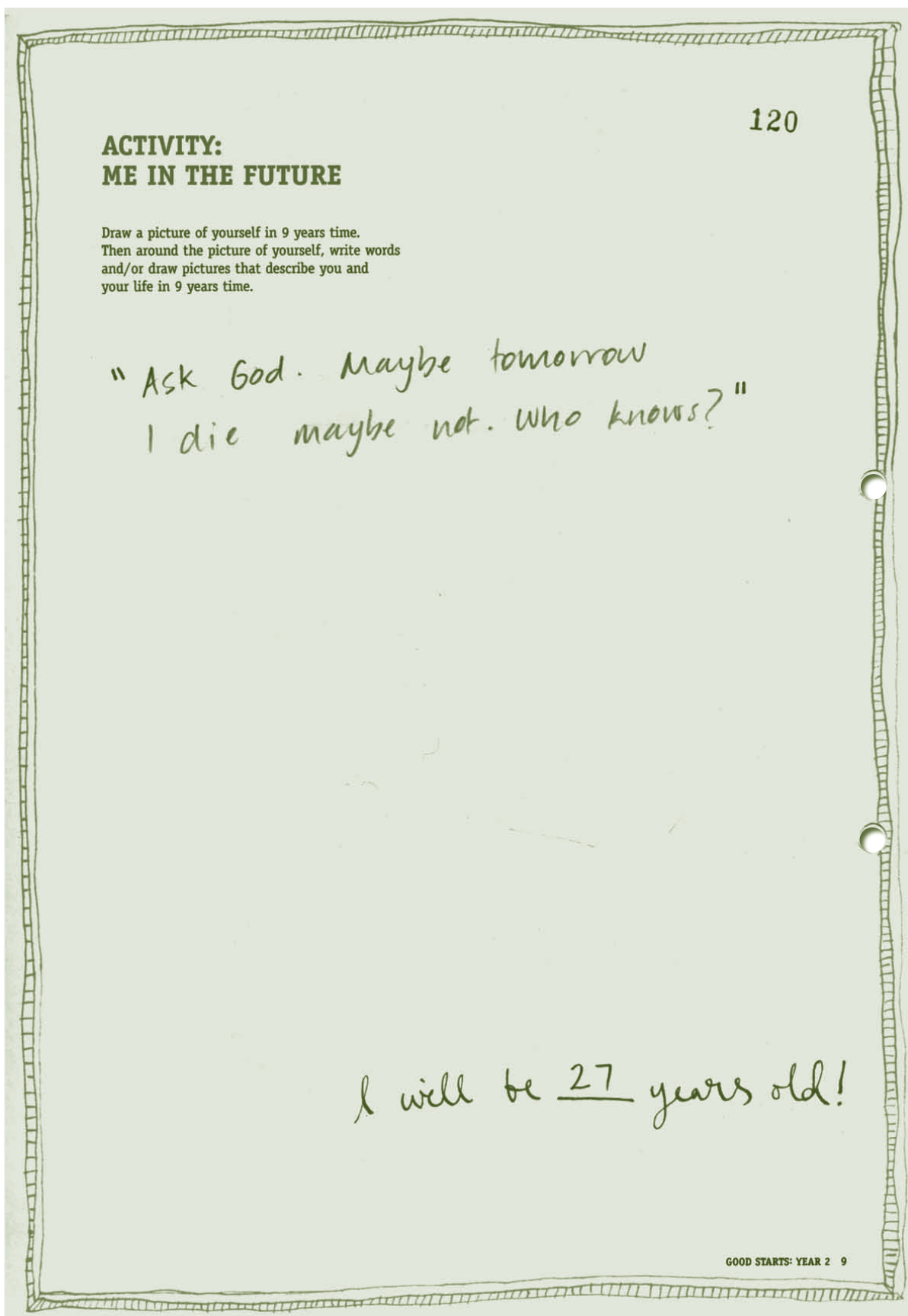
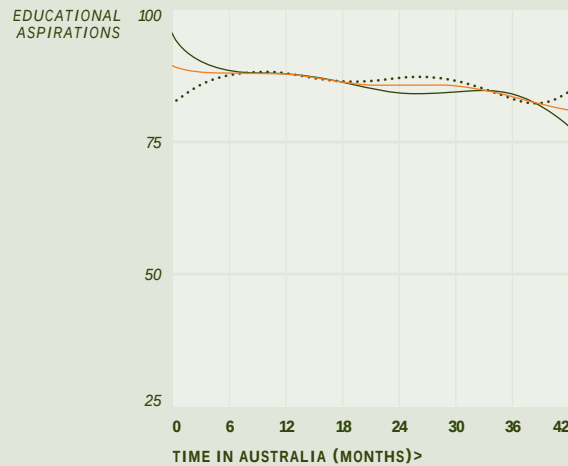


FIGURE 17 (CONT.): RAYAK'S FUTURE PORTRAITS
Rayak, Sudan, Year Three journal

FIGURE 18:

Changes in mean educational aspirations scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest educational aspirations score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
 FEMALES
 — MALES



KEY FINDINGS:

- Young people arrive in Australia with a strong and positive sense of self, and high hopes and motivations for making a good life here
- Their sense of optimism, self-esteem and happiness remains high from year one to year three
- These qualities can be seen as important resources that help youth to settle and do well in Australia
- In the third year, some particular challenges arise for both males and females, especially in regard to educational aspirations and continuing family instability
- Young people portray themselves not as victims of their past, but rather as individuals with agency working towards the future

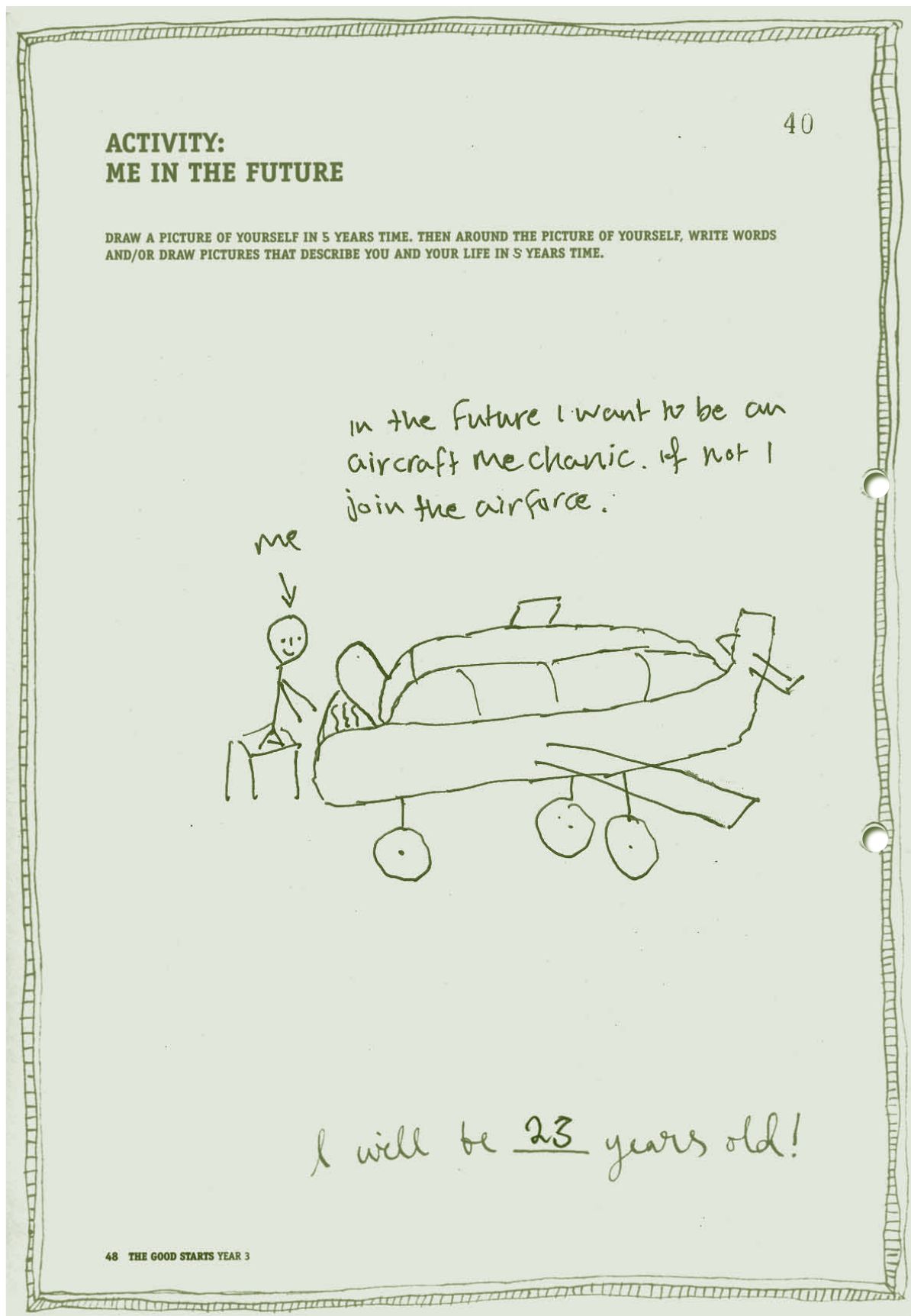


FIGURE 19: AKIER, 14 YEAR OLD SUDANESE MALE
Akier, Sudan, Year Four Journal

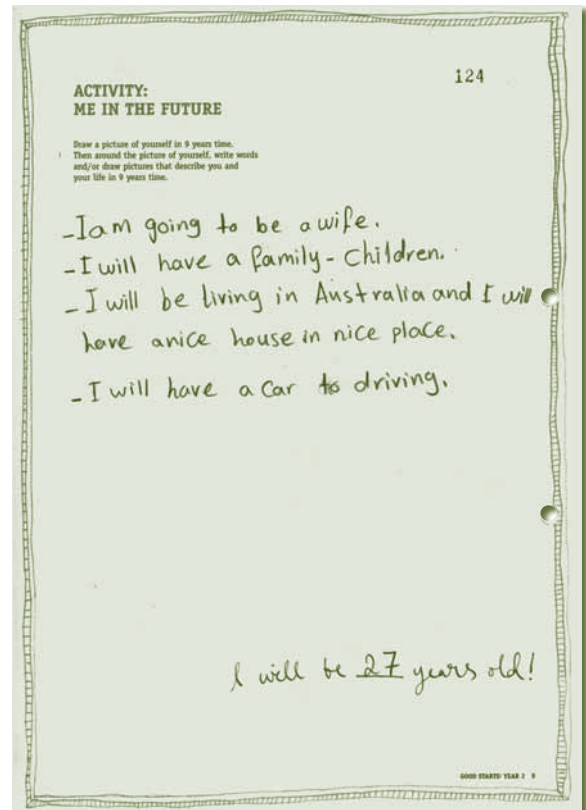
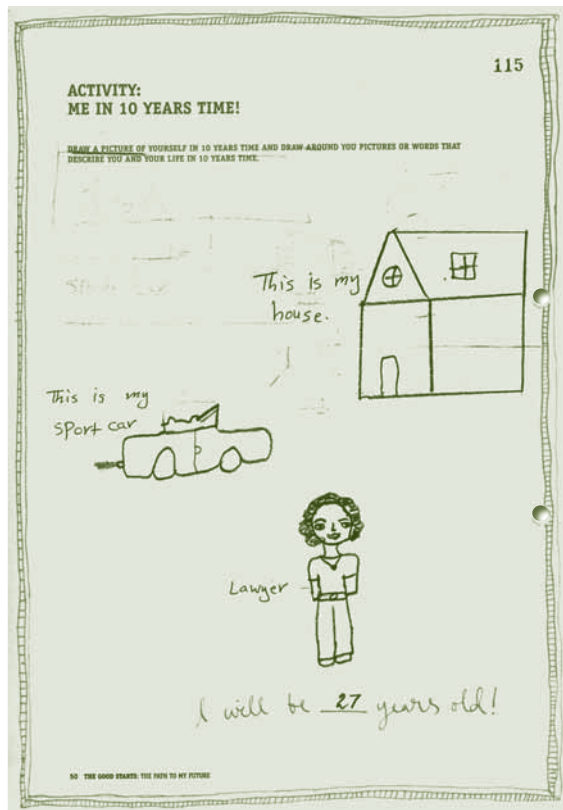
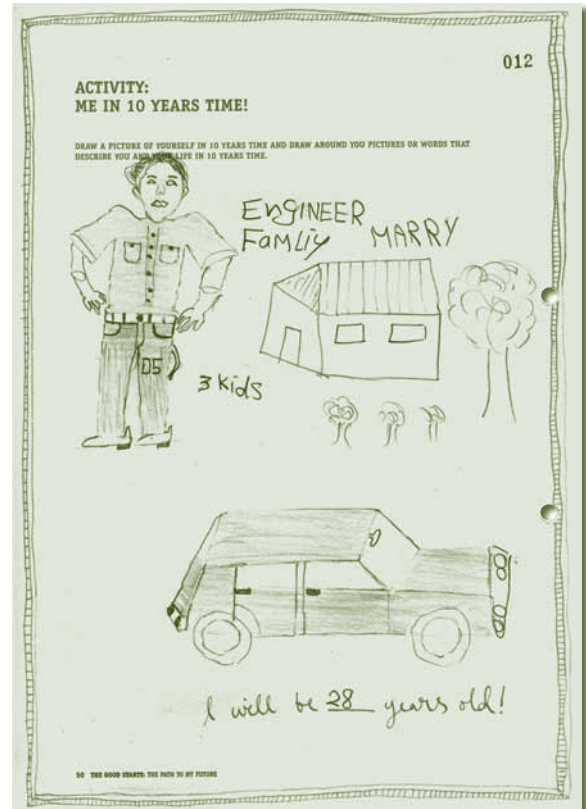
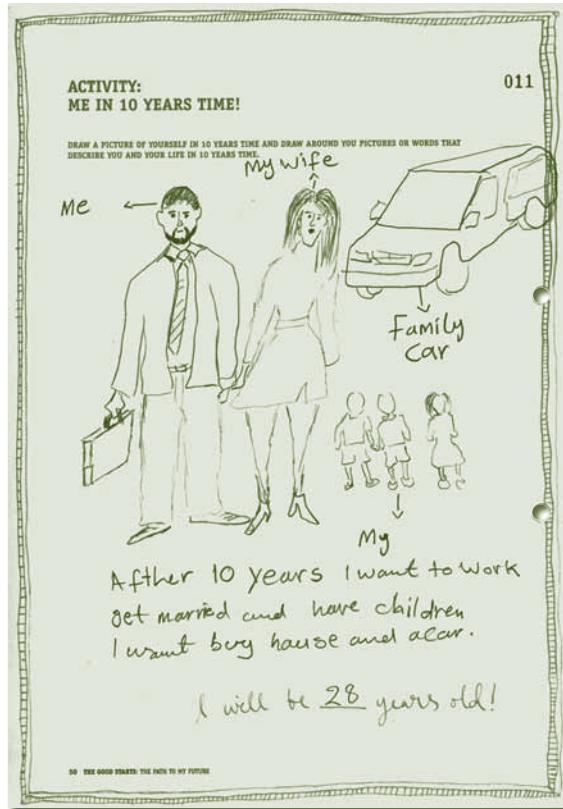
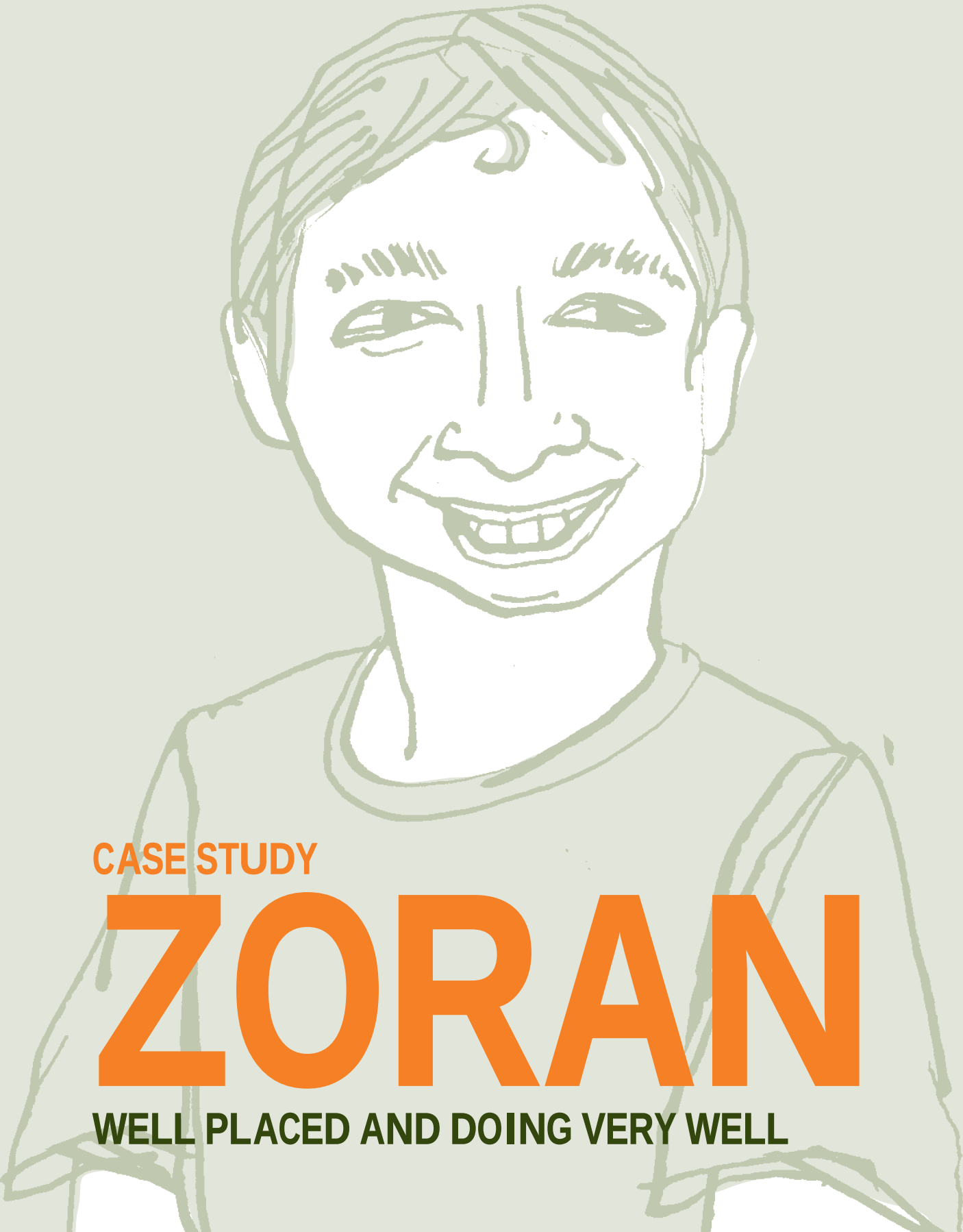


FIGURE 20: STARTING FAMILIES

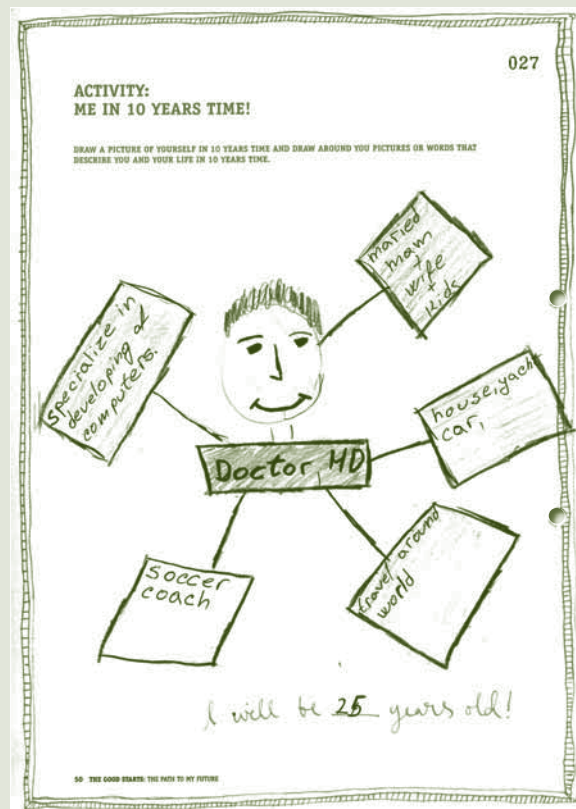
Benjamin, Sudan, Year One journal | Jada, Sudan, Year One journal
Basmina, Iraq, Year One journal | Naima, Iraq, Year Two journal



CASE STUDY

ZORAN

WELL PLACED AND DOING VERY WELL



Zoran is a relaxed, friendly young man with an infectious laugh who loves soccer and computers. He arrived in Australia when he was 14 with his father, mother and two siblings. The family had fled Croatia when he was five and lived in exile for nine years. His oldest sister lives in safety in a city overseas. Zoran had eight years of schooling and knew some English on arrival. He thought that learning English and making new friends were the important things for helping him make a new life in Australia.

Zoran did not enjoy going to English Language School - the classes were too long and he became bored. He had a few friends in a different class but neither liked nor trusted the students in his own class, although he was not bullied. He trusted and liked his teachers. At home, Zoran felt happy and safe; his family had clear rules and although they argued sometimes, these arguments were not serious. He felt close to his parents and that he could turn to them for help. His older sister helped with his homework and he helped his younger brother. He read lots of English books and newspapers at home in order to learn the language better.

Overall, Zoran was happy and enjoyed life. He found it easy to concentrate, slept well, had plenty of energy for everyday life and never experienced blue moods or depression. He was quite optimistic and felt he had some control over his life, although he worried about doing well at school. He hoped in the future to specialise in developing computers, have a family, buy a house, yacht and car, travel around the world and become a soccer coach.

After leaving ELS, Zoran began Year 10 at the local high school with his own age group. There, he made lots of friends and enjoyed choosing which subjects to take. He felt

A PLACE I FEEL I BELONG

Where is this place? My room

Write one sentence to describe why you feel you belong at this place:

It's my room. ~~When~~ When I am sad that is the
only place I feel belong

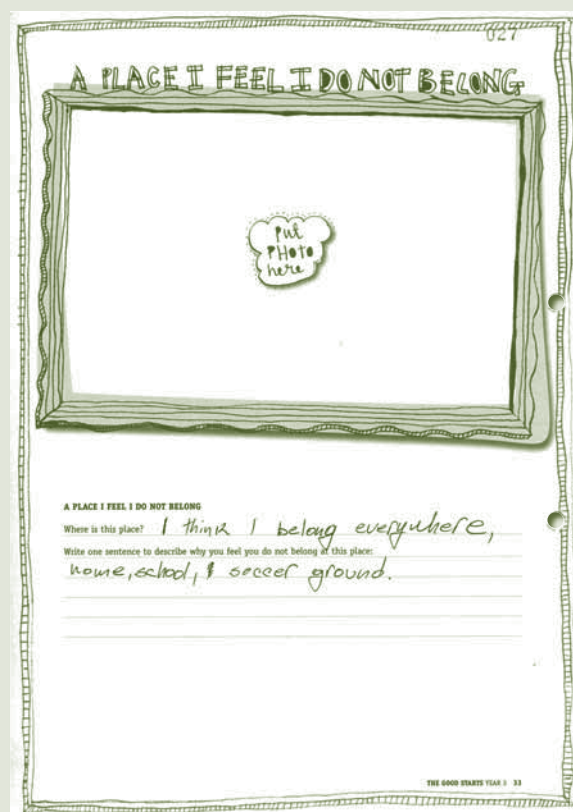


he learned more at high school than at the ELS and enjoyed going: "If I would stay home everyday doing nothing, I would definitely get bored, but at school—every day always something new". He trusted and liked his teachers but felt they did not have as much time to help as those at ELS. He trusted and liked the other students and did not experience bullying or discrimination. Because he knew he wanted to do electrical engineering, he chose subjects that would prepare him for university. He had studied science before coming to Australia, so he did not find these subjects too difficult.

During this time, Zoran had a range of people to whom he could turn for help as well as people who needed his help on a regular basis. He felt he had good friends. He reported no arguments or family conflict at home. Although they moved house a couple of times, they stayed in the same suburb, which he liked and felt safe in. Zoran could not identify any barriers to participating in activities in the community and became part of a soccer competition. He never experienced discrimination, nor was he ever stopped and questioned by police. He felt very happy and thought life was getting much better. Although he occasionally experienced negative feelings, he was more often optimistic and developed a greater sense of control over his own life.

During Year 12, Zoran worried about getting good enough marks for university and was less satisfied with his achievements at school. He also reported a drop in his view of his family's status in Australia. However, he still had plenty of energy, concentrated well and was very satisfied with his sleep. He did not have to work and could study after school. He found it difficult that "getting older [I] must be more responsible", but lots of things made him happy: "Everything: school, computer, soccer, friends, music..."

Now 19, Zoran has completed his VCE and is in first year at university doing electrical engineering. He has a part-time job for 10 hours a week and does not need to use any of the money to support his family. Zoran is happy and feels life is getting much better. He has become an Australian citizen. His hope for the future is to finish university "if everything goes as planned", look for a job, get a house, go for a holiday back to his country, enjoy life and do the things that make him happy.



ZORAN'S JOURNALS
Year Three journal

CHAPTER 3: SUBJECTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Subjective health and wellbeing can be understood both as important resources for undertaking the tasks of settlement and also as indicators of settlement outcomes. Measures of subjective health and wellbeing have also been shown to be closely correlated with objective health outcomes: ‘in longitudinal studies, subjective self-ratings of health are consistently found to predict subsequent mortality as well as, or better than, physical measures’ (McDowell 2006). In relation to good settlement for youth, we might expect that positive health on arrival would enhance young people’s success at settlement transitions and that the results of these transitions will affect their health and wellbeing outcomes. In this chapter we describe the subjective health and wellbeing of Good Starts youth over three years, including some of the factors and events in their lives that constitute health risks.

SUBJECTIVE HEALTH STATUS

Each year, Good Starts participants were asked to rate their health on a scale of one to five, from poor to excellent. This is a standard question asked in many studies of health and wellbeing. Ratings of subjective health were high among these youth in all three years of settlement (See Figure 21). Young women rated their health lower over time than young men, though this is not statistically significant. Changes over time in youth’s subjective health status are not statistically significant either.

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

The WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire (World Health Organization 1996) was used to assess four wellbeing domains among the Good Starts youth. This questionnaire has been used to assess subjective wellbeing in many different cultural contexts and despite its limitations has provided an important indicator of wellbeing over time for Good Starts participants. A picture emerges of a group of youth with relatively high wellbeing scores across all four domains, and these scores remain high over all three years of the study.

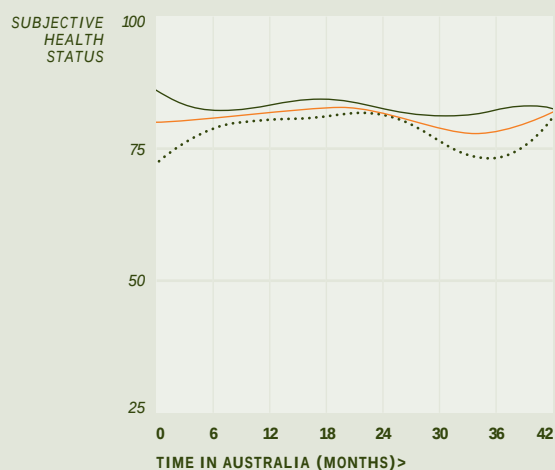
PHYSICAL DOMAIN (FIGURE 22) Levels of wellbeing in the physical domain are high over the first three years of settlement, a little higher for males than for females. Changes in mean physical domain scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DOMAIN (FIGURE 23) Wellbeing in the psychological domain is also high among the Good Starts youth over time. During the first two years of settlement

FIGURE 21:

Changes in mean subjective health status scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest health status score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
 FEMALES
 — MALES

**FIGURE 22:**

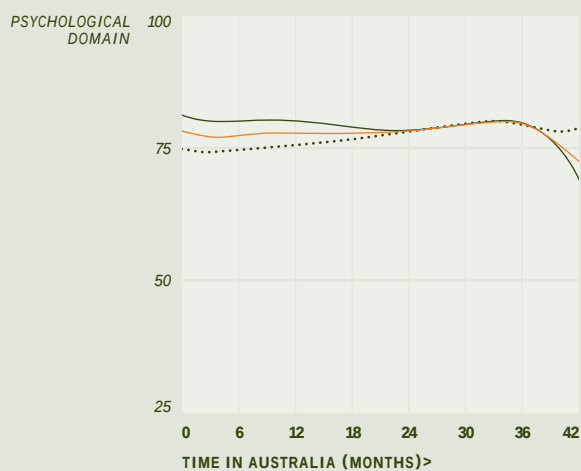
Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the physical domain over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest wellbeing score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
 FEMALES
 — MALES

**FIGURE 23:**

Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the psychological domain over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest wellbeing score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
 FEMALES
 — MALES



levels of psychological wellbeing were higher among boys than girls. However, psychological wellbeing among girls increases over time, until similar levels are shown for both groups by the third year of settlement. Overall changes in mean psychological domain scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS DOMAIN (FIGURE 24) The Good Starts youth arrived in Australia with high levels of wellbeing in the social relationships domain and these levels increased over time, especially among females. Changes in mean social relationships domain scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN (FIGURE 25) (refers to financial resources, freedom, physical safety and security, quality and accessibility of health and social care, home environment, opportunities for participating in recreation and leisure activities, transport.) Young people's levels of wellbeing in the environment domain are high on arrival and increase over time (statistically significant; $p=0.007$). Males report slightly higher levels of wellbeing in this domain than females, though this is not statistically significant

BEHAVIOURAL RISK FACTORS

A number of risk behaviours were investigated. Good Starts youth were asked whether they or their closest friends smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol without their parents'/guardians' permission, tried any other drugs, or tried gambling. Overall, the prevalence of risk behaviours increased over time, especially among males (Figures 26 and 27) compared with females (Figures 28 and 29). Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol show the highest increase over the three-year period (statistically significant; smoking: $p=0.011$; alcohol: $p<0.001$). Males were more likely than females to have smoked cigarettes (though the difference is not statistically significant), drunk alcohol without parents/guardians permission (statistically significant; $p<0.001$), and tried gambling (statistically significant; $p=0.017$).

OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS

The quantitative measures of subjective health and wellbeing paint an overall positive picture. However, these standardized measures do not capture the more contextual aspects of wellbeing nor the lived experiences of health on everyday life. The qualitative information provided by Good Starts participants about their health and wellbeing raises a number of issues. Many young people talked of suffering from a range of chronic conditions, including insomnia, headaches, concerns about body image (both boys and girls) and fatigue. Detailed field notes recorded over four years portray a group of young people living lives that are prone to disruption—for most of them, the early years of settlement are neither smooth nor stable but are instead physically and psychologically demanding. Moving house, family conflict, worry about school success, financial concerns and obligations, racism and discrimination, lack of recreational opportunities and facilities are all described as affecting their everyday health.

During the first three years in Australia, complaints of chronic health concerns are a common theme among Good Starts youth and are woven into narratives about the worries that they deal with in their everyday lives. For example, Akier thinks he is too skinny and wants to put on weight: *"It's the way my body is, I'm never growing fatter, I wish I was fat and now I lose weight"*. He wants to be bigger so that he can compete

FIGURE 24:
Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the social relationships domain over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest wellbeing score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

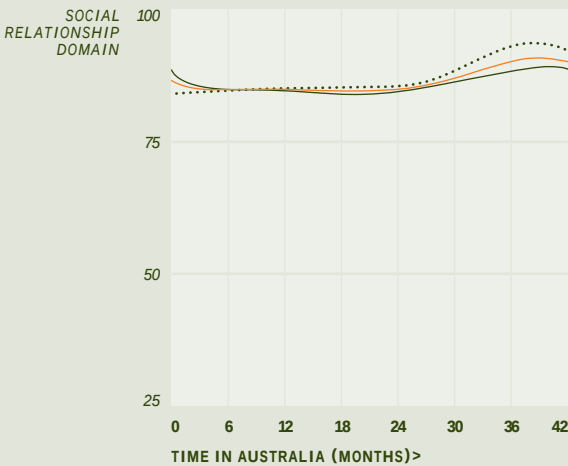


FIGURE 25:
Changes in mean wellbeing scores in the environmental domain over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest wellbeing score = 25; highest score = 100)

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

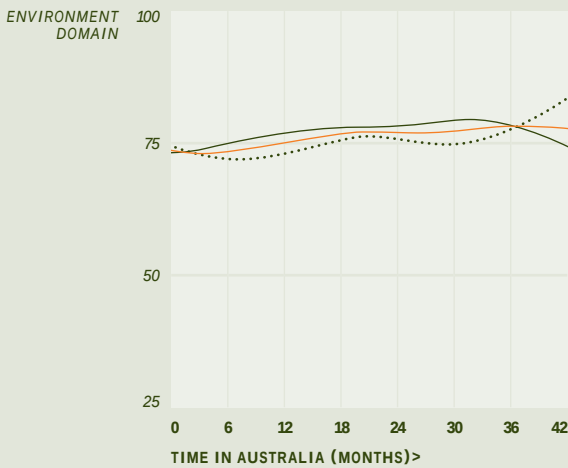


FIGURE 26:
Changes over time in risk behaviours among male participants

HAVE YOU EVER...
..... SMOKED CIGARETTES
..... DRUNK ALCOHOL WITHOUT PARENTS' PERMISSION
— TRIED OTHER DRUGS
— TRIED GAMBLING



FIGURE 27:
Changes over time in
risk behaviours among
male participants’
closest friends

IN THE PAST MONTH HAVE
ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS...

- SMOKED CIGARETTES
- DRUNK ALCOHOL WITHOUT
PARENTS’ PERMISSION
- TRIED OTHER DRUGS
- TRIED GAMBLING



FIGURE 28:
Changes over time
in risk behaviours
among female participants

HAVE YOU EVER...

- SMOKED CIGARETTES
- DRUNK ALCOHOL WITHOUT
PARENTS’ PERMISSION
- TRIED OTHER DRUGS
- TRIED GAMBLING

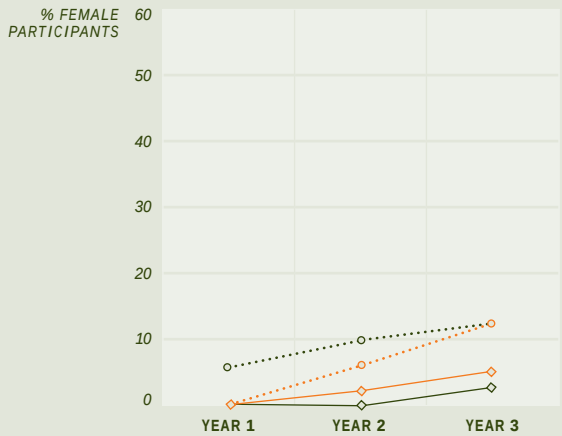
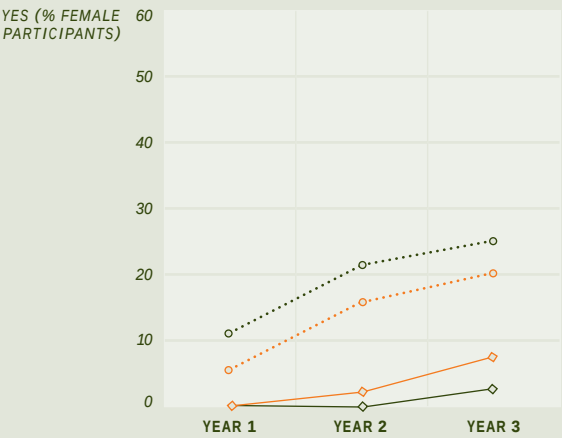


FIGURE 29:
Changes over time in
risk behaviours among
female participants’ closest
friends

IN THE PAST HAVE ANY OF
YOUR CLOSEST FRIENDS...

- SMOKED CIGARETTES
- DRUNK ALCOHOL WITHOUT
PARENTS’ PERMISSION
- TRIED OTHER DRUGS
- TRIED GAMBLING



with other players in the local soccer competition. Sarah gets bad headaches which hurt her eyes. She says she is usually alright in the morning, but they come when she finishes TAFE or has been doing homework for an hour or so. They go away after she takes pain-killers. Angok has been unhappy with her body and has talked about her weight over the years. When she came to Australia she was very thin and was given medication to help her to put on weight. Now she feels she needs to lose weight because she thinks she has put on too much. She thinks that if she looked better then she would feel more confident.

Finally, although the study did not directly elicit information about sexual and reproductive health, these issues became apparent throughout the course of the study. Between 2004 and 2008, we became aware that 11 (9%) participants became pregnant or had babies. Of these, nine were female and two were male. Of the nine young women, eight had babies and one had a termination. This translates into at least 16 per cent (9 out of 55) of the female participants having had a pregnancy within the four year period of the study. This raises concerns about the health risks of unprotected sex as well as the social impact that young parenthood has on educational aspirations and social and economic wellbeing (McMichael and Gifford 2009a, 2009b).

Overall, Good Starts youth display a remarkable picture of strength over the early years of resettlement. They arrive with a strong sense of their identity and high levels of optimism for making a good life in Australia. They are a group of young people who, while living with the traumas of their past and dealing with the continued disruptions to their resettlement, draw on personal resources that enable them to look forward to making a good future for themselves and their families. However, they experience a range of challenges to their health and wellbeing, including concerns about chronic ill health and risks to their sexual and reproductive health. In the next chapter we describe the issues they grapple with in their social environments and how these challenges are met in the resettlement context.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Subjective health is high in the first year of settlement and remains so in the third year
- Subjective wellbeing is high in the first year of settlement and remains high in the third year
- Risk behaviours, including the use of alcohol and cigarettes, is low in Year One and increases in Years Two and Three, especially among boys
- Unplanned pregnancies are of concern amongst this group of young people and raise broader concerns about sexual and reproductive health risks
- Many youth experience a range of chronic health concerns, including sleeplessness, tiredness, headaches and concerns about body image

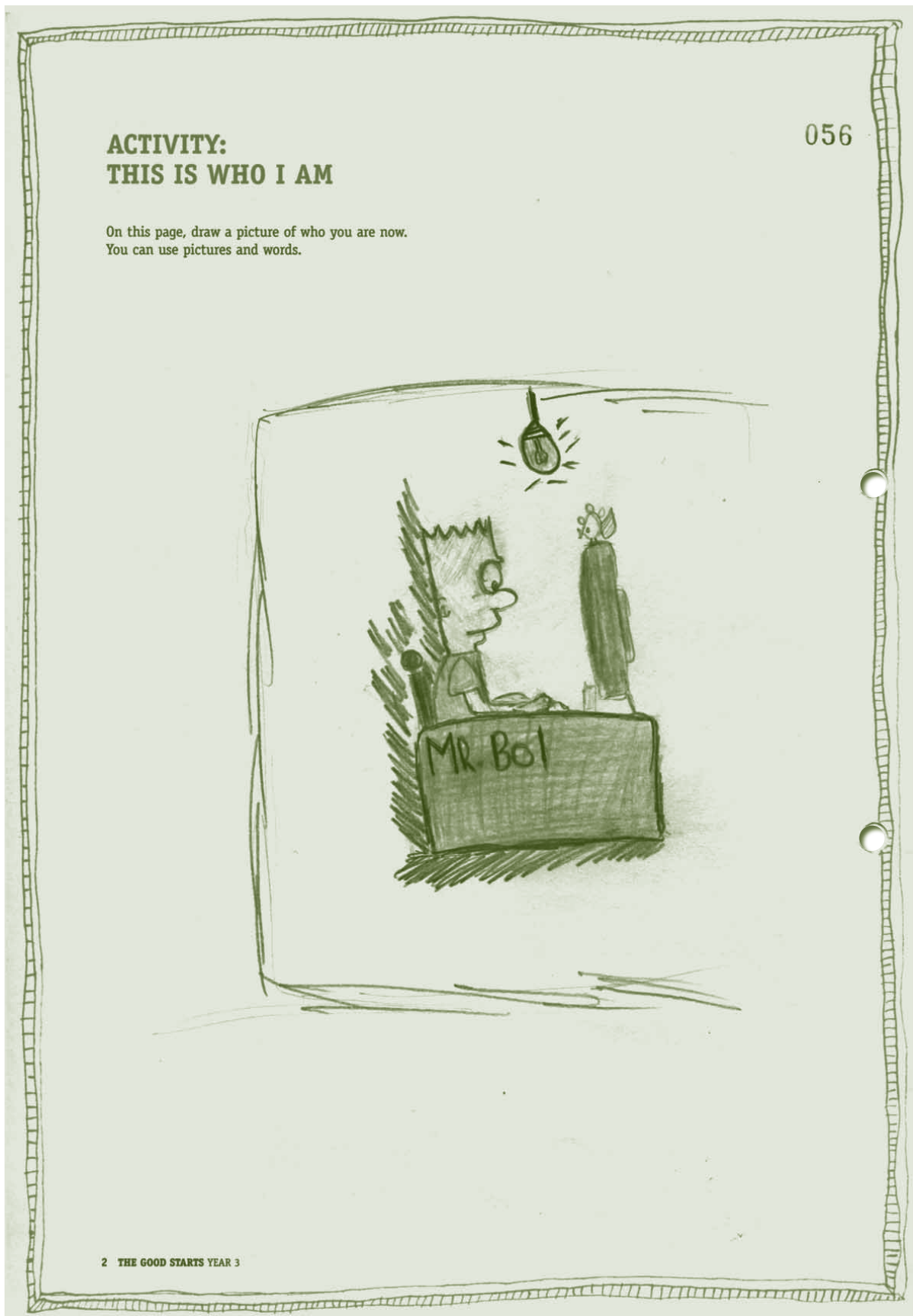
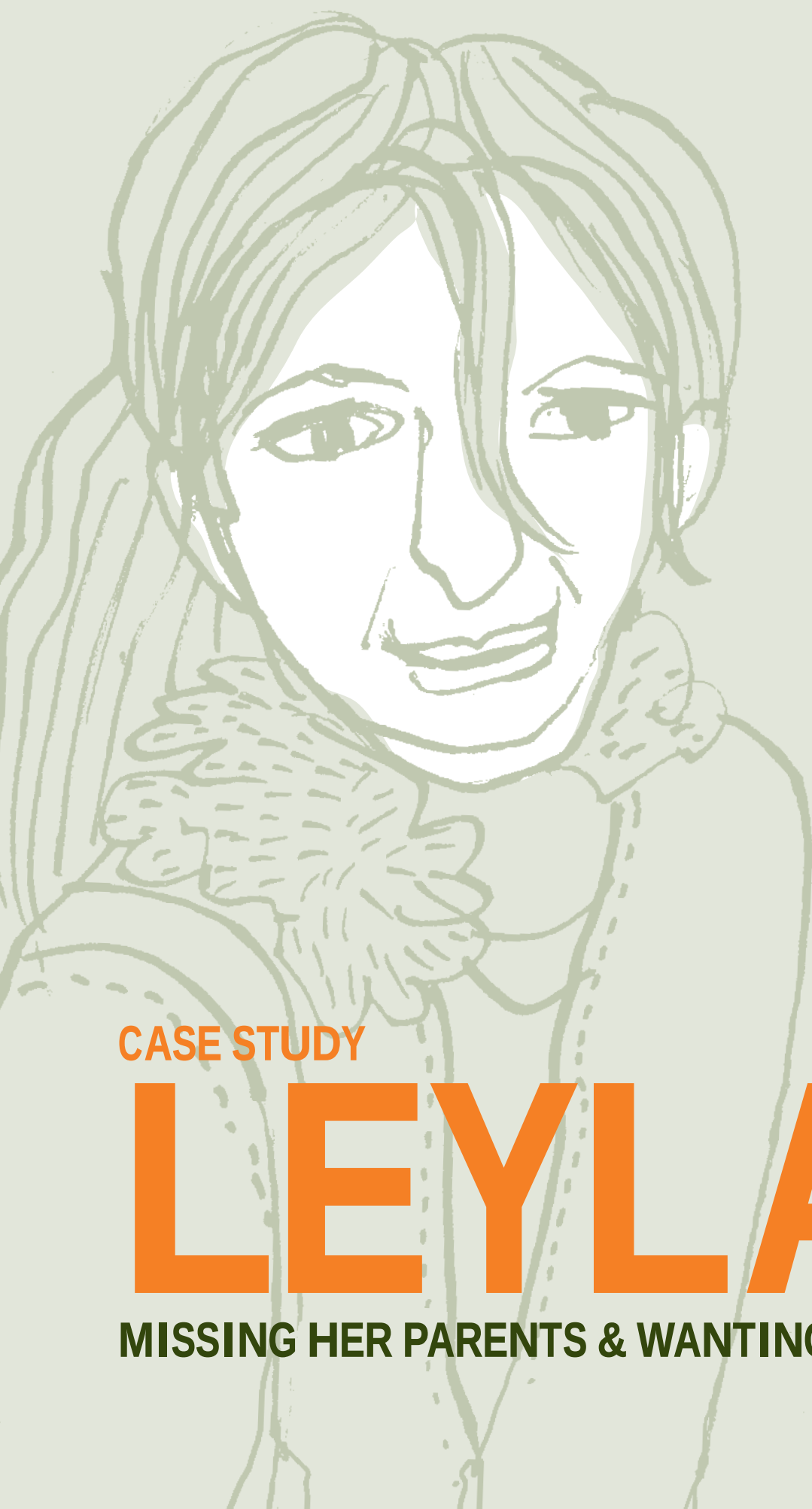


FIGURE 30: GARANG, 12 YEAR OLD SUDANESE MALE
Garang, Sudan, Year Three Journal

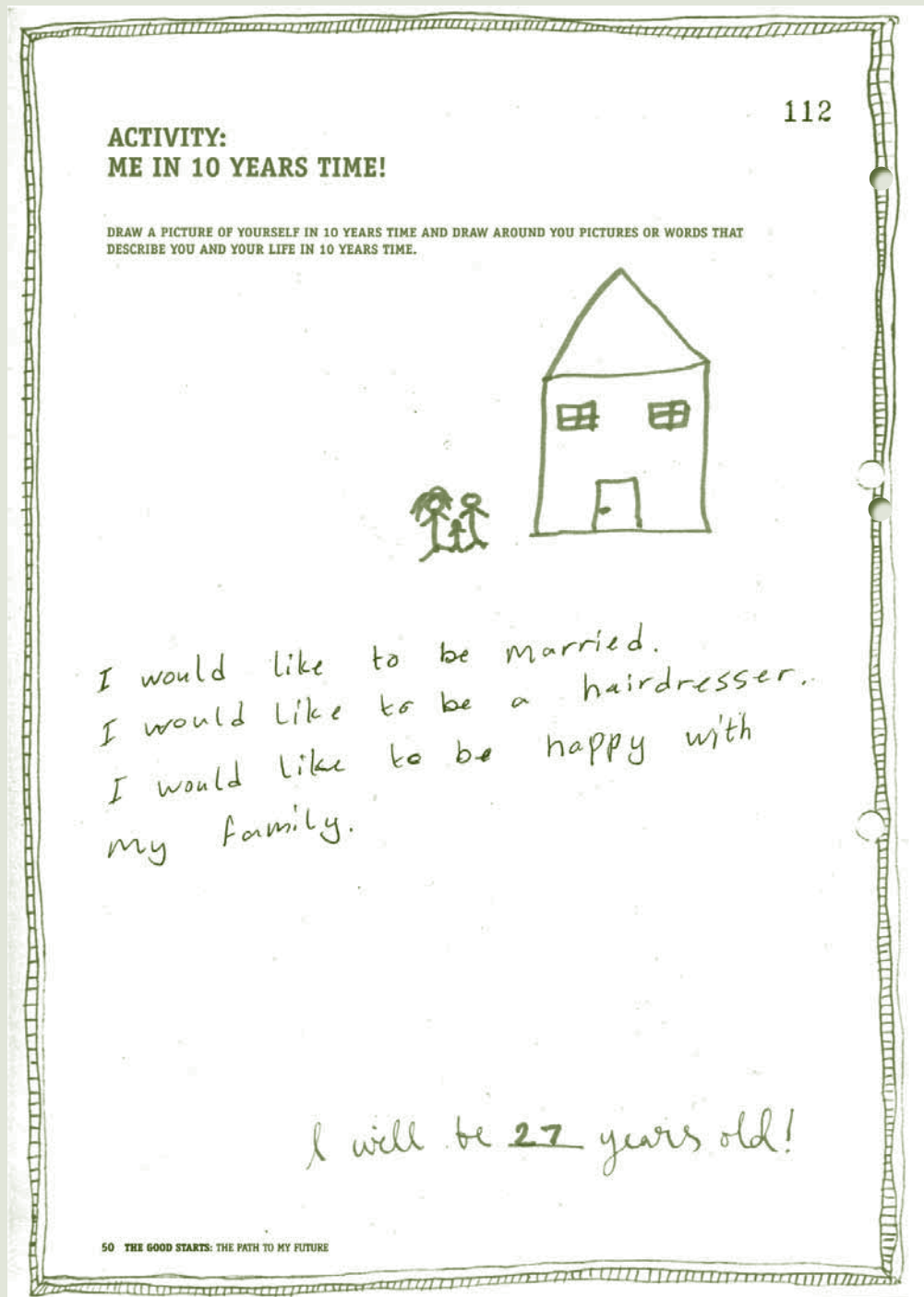


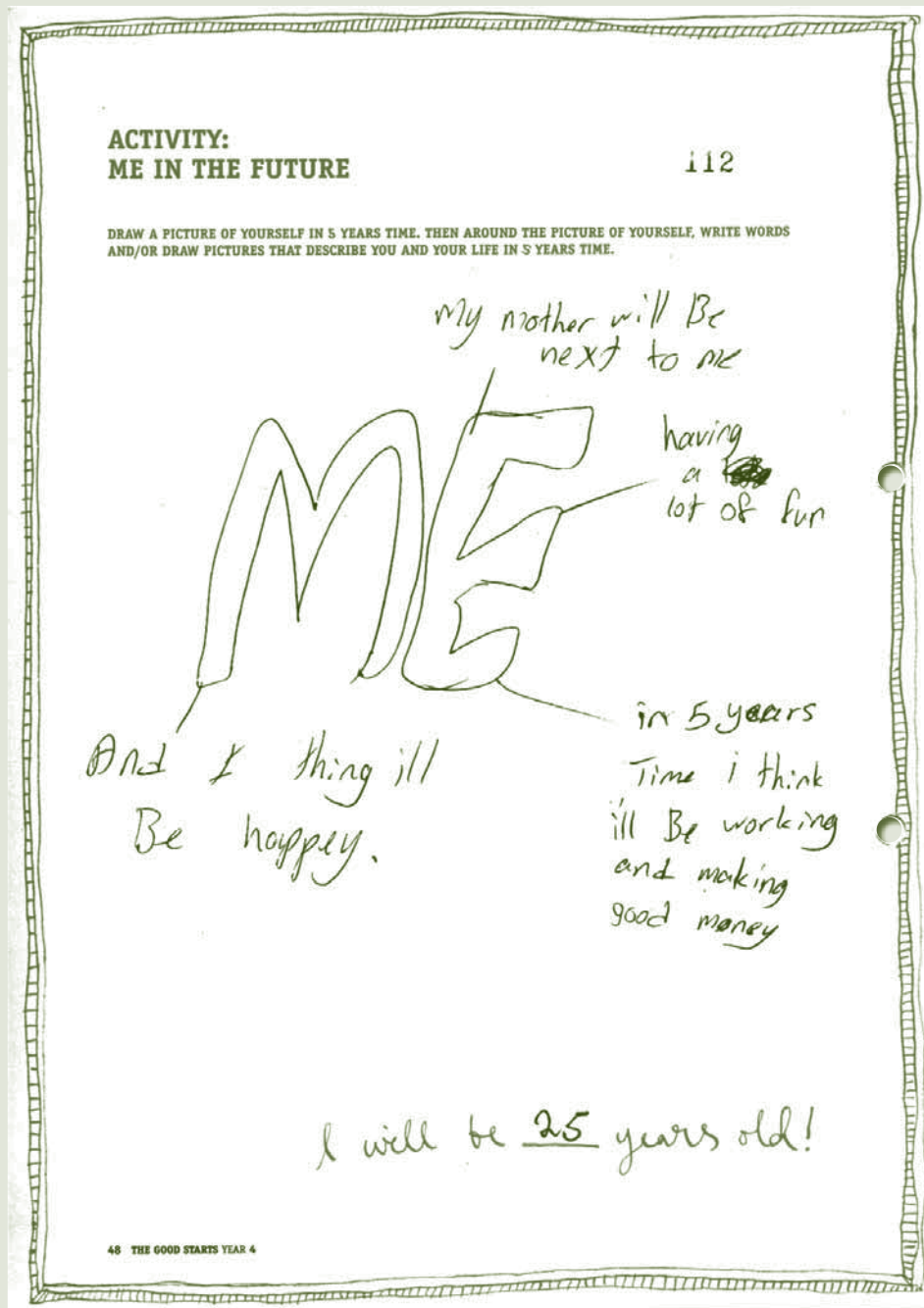
CASE STUDY

LEYLA

MISSING HER PARENTS & WANTING WORK

Leyla is a sweet-natured young woman with a big smile, always ready with a warm welcome. She arrived in Australia when she was 17, one of the eldest in a group of brothers and sisters. Their parents are not with them. These siblings had been forced to flee Iraq when Leyla was eight and they lived in exile for nine years before coming to Australia. Leyla had three years of schooling before she fled Iraq and had been working in a shop for much of her life. English is her fourth language. Her greatest hope is to be reunited with her mother and to bring her to safety in Australia.





When she arrived, Leyla went to an ELS for a year. She loved being at school and meeting friends but did not like studying all the time. She found it hard to concentrate and did not have much energy. At home there were lots of arguments among her brothers and sisters. Although her family is very important to her, Leyla wanted to move out. She really missed her parents and worried a lot about being able to bring them to Australia: "We came without our parents. I would always like to be with my loved ones". Leyla found being new in Australia difficult. She was not at all happy, always felt 'blue' and that she had little control over her own life. However, she felt that people in Australia

helped her and cared about her, and that life was getting better. She hoped one day to become a hairdresser and get married.

After a year at ELS, Leyla moved to a local TAFE to continue studying English and develop her skills for employment. She liked the teachers and students but no longer enjoyed going to school and did not feel successful in her subjects. She started missing classes. She was looking forward to doing an apprenticeship but worried about her ongoing studies.

Leyla and her siblings continued to have lots of serious arguments, especially about money. Leyla would get upset that her brothers and sisters spent money on things she thought they did not need. She worried about the bills and wanted to save money to sponsor their mother to come to Australia. She felt she gave her brothers and sisters a lot of support but she did not rely on them for help. However, she could go to her friends for help with problems. She did not sleep well, always felt in a 'blue' mood and sometimes got head aches and neck aches that were only partially alleviated by medication. She worried about her appearance and did not eat regularly. Her boyfriend made her happy because he supported her all the time and was funny and cute, but her friends believed that he was too controlling. Overall, Leyla felt satisfied with herself and remained optimistic about the future.

Leyla was excited to get a casual job at a factory through a friend. The job made it easier for her to be in charge of her own money, and she started to send money to her mother overseas. She was also feeling better about her TAFE course and satisfied with some of her achievements at school.

These days, Leyla is still at TAFE but the work at the factory has slowed down a lot. She would like to work more. She loves work because the people she works with are friendly and they joke and have fun together. Her older brother has moved out of home but they still have arguments in the house. She is very upset because she and her best friend have had a big fight and are no longer talking. She feels it was her fault and wants to make up, but does not know how. She feels somewhat happy and that life is getting better. She hopes one day to have a good job and be happy. She is still trying to sponsor her mother to come to Australia.

PART III: SUPPORTING RESETTLEMENT: THE BROADER SOCIAL CONTEXT

The first half of this report described the personal resources of the Good Starts youth and overall it paints a picture of a group of young people from refugee backgrounds whose range of qualities make them well equipped to make good lives in Australia. The second half of this report looks beyond the individuals to their social contexts and the challenges they face in achieving their potential. A key question that unifies the next three chapters is what are the key *social* contexts or *social* worlds that shape settlement journeys? Chapter 4 begins with a discussion of the social world of family; Chapter 5 examines the social context of school and educational experiences; and Chapter 6 reflects on experiences within the context of the broader community.



CHAPTER 4: OUR FAMILIES

‘FAMILY IS EVERYTHING!’

For Good Starts youth, family is both their key source of support and their key source of worry and distress. Few of the participants in this study arrived in Australia as part of a fully intact family. Just over one-third arrived with both their mother and father and slightly more than four-fifths came with one or more siblings. Around one in three arrived with their mother but not their father, while only three (2.5%) arrived with their father but not their mother. A small number of participants arrived with aunties and or uncles (5%), cousins (5%) or grandparents (2%). Two participants arrived without any family at all. For most, household composition changed considerably during each of the three years. In the first year of settlement, fewer than one in five reported that both their mother and father were responsible for them. This increased to nearly one in three in the second year, then fell to 28 per cent in the third year. About one-quarter of the youth had only their mother responsible for them on arrival and another one-quarter had only their father. Two participants were living by themselves during their first year in Australia and, by the third year, 13 per cent of the youth said that no one other than themselves was responsible for them. While the composition of the households changed, more than two-thirds also moved house at least once, with the mean number of moves being 1.4 (median = 1.0). One young girl moved house seven times.

Problems related to family separation are a key settlement challenge (Atwell, Gifford and McDonald-Wilmsen 2009). In addition to concerns about family still overseas, financial obligations to support these family members is a common burden on household income. In the second year, more than one in two Good Starts households had at least one member employed. By the third year this figure had increased to 60 per cent. News of the illness or death of family members overseas was not uncommon. Field notes reveal a number of parents of Good Starts participants visiting their home countries in order to look after family left behind and organising family reunion in Australia through the sponsorship of individuals. For some Good Starts youth, while family reunion brought joy at having a loved one near, for others it brought changes to household dynamics and became a source of family conflict as new roles and responsibilities were negotiated.

Having to deal with family conflict is not uncommon for Good Starts youth and this adds to the settlement challenges they face. Conflict revolves around a range of issues

FIGURE 31:
Changes in mean family discipline scores over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [poor family discipline]; highest score = 100 [good family discipline])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

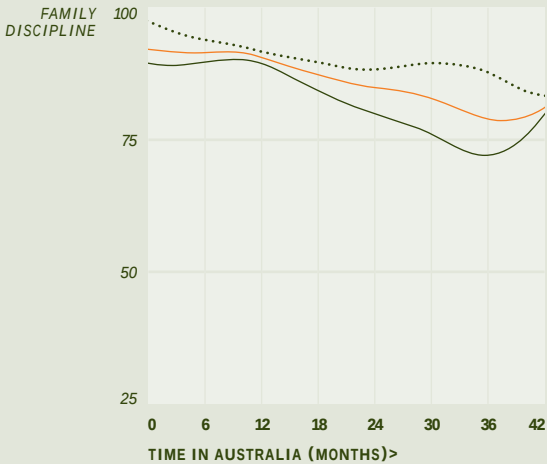


FIGURE 32:
Changes in mean family attachment score over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [poor family attachment]; highest score = 100 [good family attachment])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

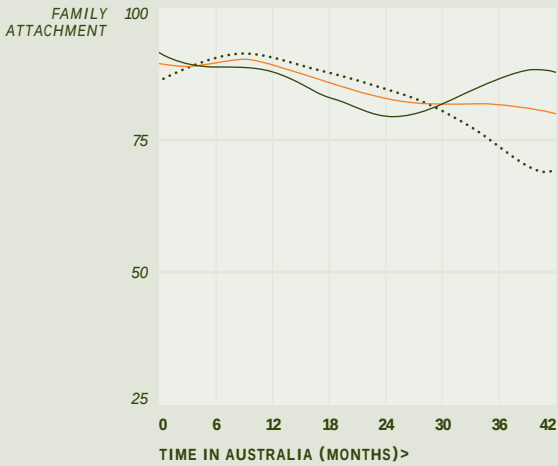
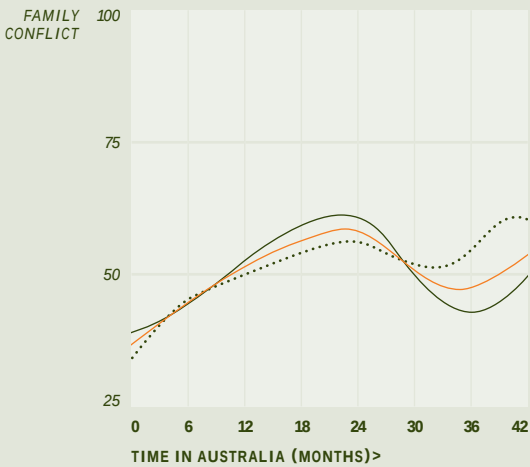


FIGURE 33:
Changes in mean family conflict score over time, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [low family conflict]; highest score = 100 [high family conflict])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES



including discipline, role expectations and domestic violence, and is also related to conflicts existing prior to arrival in Australia. Importantly, the picture that emerges for Good Starts youth is one in which the supportive context of family weakens over time—discipline decreases, conflict increases and family attachment decreases.

FAMILY DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT (FIGURE 31) Good Start youth arrive in Australia reporting good levels of family discipline and management but these show a statistically significant decline over the first three years in Australia ($p < 0.001$). Females report more positive levels of family discipline and management over time than males (statistically significant; $p < 0.001$)

FAMILY ATTACHMENT (FIGURE 32) Youth arrive in Australia with high levels of family attachment but these also decrease over time (statistically significant; $p < 0.001$). Females report slightly higher levels of family attachment than males over the first 2½ years, though this is not statistically significant. However, the third year shows a tendency for girls' family attachment to decrease while boys' family attachment increases.

FAMILY CONFLICT (FIGURE 33) Good Starts participants report low levels of family conflict on arrival in Australia but these levels show a statistically significant increase over time ($p = 0.017$), mainly in the first two years. Boys report higher levels of family conflict than girls during the second year in Australia, but this trend reverses during the third year. Overall, there are no statistically significant gender differences in reports of family conflict.

TRUST

Trust is an important marker of social capital and is strongly associated with wellbeing, while the degree of trust youth have in their families remained high over the three years, the inverse is not the case. Young people report high levels of trust in their parents and family on arrival in Australia and these levels remain high over time. There are no significant differences between males and females. However, when asked whether or not their parents and family trust them, participants reported high levels on arrival which decreased significantly during the first three years in Australia ('My parents trust me' $p = 0.006$; 'my family trust me' $p < 0.001$). In this, too, there are no significant differences between boys and girls.

Finally, Good Starts youth take on a range of family responsibilities including looking after younger siblings, assisting parents and guardians with settlement problems, and working part-time to contribute financially to the family. This is the broader context within which young people make their lives and their futures in Australia, and their struggles and successes cannot be separated from those of their families.

The qualitative data provide important contextual insights into the experiences of Good Starts youth in relation to settlement and their relationships with family.

Young people look to their families for their key sense of belonging and as a major source of support, yet families themselves are often dealing with a range of issues that impact on the extent to which young people experience this support. Ongoing family separation is a key theme and many of the young people told how they missed their mothers and fathers, aunties and uncles, and brothers and sisters who were still overseas.

A young woman from Sudan explained how she was *“very sad and worried”* because her brother and sister were still in Sudan and although her family sent them a form to apply

to come to Australia, their application was rejected “...*because Australia didn’t want them because they had too many people*”. This young woman explained how her father was still in Kenya, her mother had died when she was young, and her sister who was still in Sudan had raised her. She went on to say that the best thing that had happened to her in the past year was talking to her aunty and her sister, both still in Sudan, over the phone. Another young woman, also from Sudan, explained that the thing that most worried her was her family still overseas, while the thing that would make her most happy was “*I wish to see my dad, friends, cousin and grandmother*”. Many youth described the economic burdens of family separation and how they needed to work part time so that they could help their families send money back to relatives overseas:

“Most of the time I send money there to... some of them are sick, you know, so...my mum’s sick there... So I send money there and my sisters, they have children, ‘cause some of them are single.”

And when there is no money to send, they worry all the more:

“It’s just part of life but we just, you know, we worried a lot ‘cause though we don’t send anything but we still worry ‘cause when there’s nothing to send you’ll be worried, you know, ‘cause they will think that you don’t want to send something but there’s nothing, you know.”

A second key theme concerns the many changes in household composition among Good Starts participants. This includes family members coming and going from the household or the young person moving house to live with different family members. One young man had to move house in his first year in Australia both due to family conflict and because there were “*too many people in the house*”. In his second year he moved in with his two sisters, one of whom had a baby. In the third year he said that his sister’s husband had moved in—he had been reunited with his wife and had arrived from Egypt. However, this led to conflict and the young man moved to live with a cousin while looking for a place of his own. In the fourth year, this young man was very happy because his mother had just arrived from Africa. His mother was living in the household with his sister, her husband and their baby and he had moved back into this household to be with his mother. Smiling, he told the researcher “*we are all living in one house!*” Another young man, who was having many problems at school (consistently getting in trouble), told how he had moved house four times, lived in three different households and gone to eight different schools during his first three years in Australia.

A third key theme is the responsibilities that young people take on in caring for their siblings and helping out with the family:

“I have to clean up and all this stuff, yeah, I have to help her (mum)... you have to do all the work, look after the little ones and all this stuff... I have to do it, and sometimes my mum look after them, sometimes my mum tell me you not allowed to cook, you have to do your homework.”

Females were more likely than males to talk about housework and looking after siblings, and for some young women family responsibilities can be onerous:

“Too much stress, everybody is stressed out in the house... Too much people and sometimes they don’t do anything, and they eat, put things down, and you

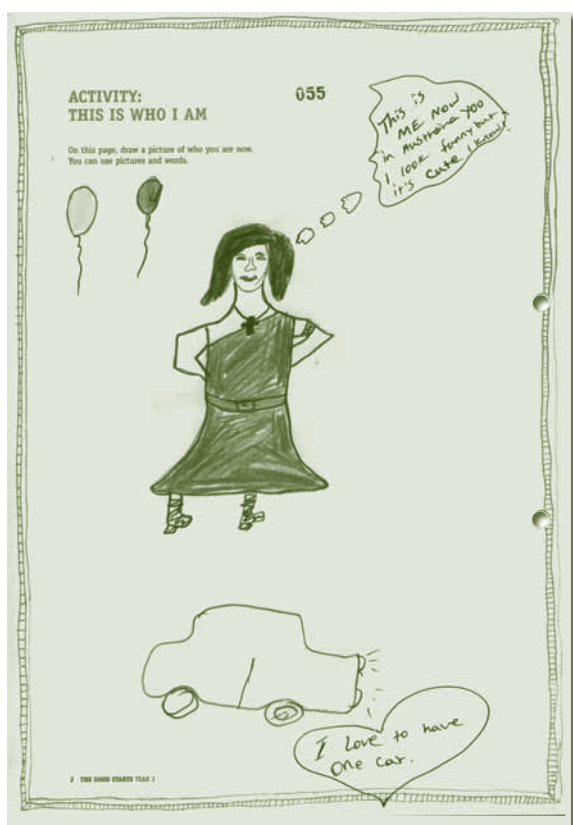


FIGURE 34:
KADANI, 15 YEAR OLD
ETHIOPIAN FEMALE
 Kadani, Ethiopia,
 Year Three Journal

have to cook for big—you know, it's too much, yeah... and so you have to clean every day, it's not like two people living in the house, yeah."

A fourth key theme is that of family conflict, which takes many forms—the most common examples revolving around issues of discipline. *"The conflict is all about me"* said one girl who described fighting a lot with her mother. She explained that her mother does not understand English and does not understand her daughter's life in Australia—her mother is worried and doesn't trust her. During the third year of settlement in Australia conflict between parents and children begins to focus on boyfriends and girlfriends, this is especially problematic for young women. One young woman told how her brother sometimes beats her when she goes out, but she would never report him because she does not want to get him in trouble. Another young woman recounted how she had gone interstate to visit a boyfriend and her uncles living interstate found her and beat her. When she was returned to Melbourne she received a further beating from her uncles there. In the third and fourth years of settlement, issues relating to arranged marriage began

to emerge as a source of conflict between a few girls and their parents. One participant's parents were trying to arrange a marriage with a cousin in America however the young woman explained that she did not want to enter into an arranged marriage planned by her family because she wanted to stay in school.

Finally, another common source of conflict related to parents' inability to cope. One young man expressed concern about his father who drinks heavily, is abusive to the family, hits the younger children, and drives after he drinks. This young man explained how worried he is about his father and his family—he told his mother to move out of the house and he wants to get his learners permit so that he can drive his father around. He also says that he won't leave the family home because he needs to protect his younger siblings. The examples above do not mean to suggest that there are no positive family experiences—there are. However, all of the families of Good Starts youth shoulder significant burdens that impact on the experiences of support, belonging and trust that the youth share with those they love most.

"My life at home is really good. Sometimes it's good, sometimes not. Because something good for my family because I live with my family and that's good for everyone is happy. And something bad just like we doesn't—they doesn't let us go with my friends sometimes and something like that... I always hope my dad to let me go with my friends just for shopping or come to library... I'm not going to drunk, I'm not going to have a cigarette, something like that, never... I'm not going with a boy or I kiss the boys or something like that, I'll never do that, yeah. That's why my father's scared about. Not just me, about my friends, about everyone."

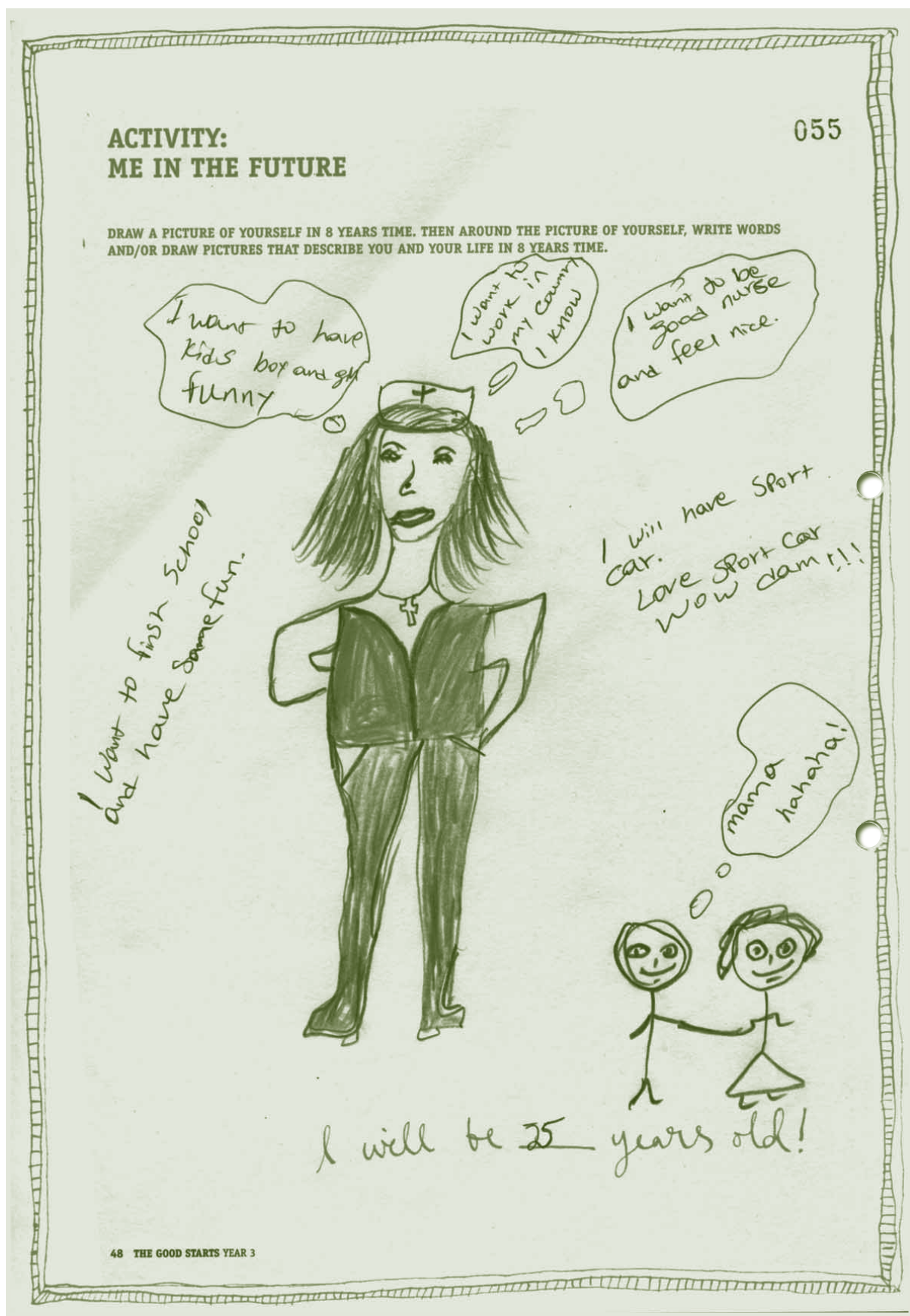


FIGURE 34 (CONT.): KADANI, 15 YEAR OLD ETHIOPIAN FEMALE
Kadani, Ethiopia, Year Three Journal

CHAPTER 5: OUR SCHOOLS

After family, school is the most important social context for supporting wellbeing and settlement for youth with refugee backgrounds, for whom getting an education is one of the top aspirations when they arrive in Australia. The school setting offers not only the opportunity to learn English and acquire formal qualifications for further study, it is also the key social environment providing youth with opportunities to learn about Australia, make new friends and create the important bonding and bridging relationships that are foundational for good settlement.

All Good Starts participants attended an English Language School (ELS) in their first year in Australia and these schools play an important role in preparing students for mainstream schools. The pre-arrival experiences of youth with refugee backgrounds affect their readiness and ability to engage with the educational setting, including academic tasks. They commonly have minimal or disrupted formal schooling (participants in this study had an average of 5.7 years of formal schooling), low levels of English literacy and traumatic experiences such as extreme violence, forced migration, disrupted or destroyed relationships and loss of family, all of which impact negatively on their ability to learn and thrive (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2004; Hek 2005; Kaplan 2009; VFST 2007). This chapter describes the young participants' experiences of the school environment, including ELS and transition to mainstream schools, and goes on to discuss the key factors associated with success, or lack of, at school for boys and girls.

THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

One of the first challenges for youth is to become accustomed to the Australian education system and school culture. The education systems in their countries of origin are often quite different from those in Australia and, among the youth who had been to school prior to arriving in Australia, we identified three key differences between pre-arrival and Australian schools:

- Schooling in pre-arrival countries had systems of mixed-aged classrooms in which students only progressed when they passed their exams
- Girls and boys were educated separately, and some girls explained that they were not allowed to go to school at all. Some had had home tutoring but had not attended an education institution

- Forms of discipline were different from those in Australia—some young people explained that teachers ‘beat’ students when they did something wrong

“In my country if you [not] do your homework, they hit you with a ruler here [motions to wrist] and sometimes here [motions to her bottom], but [in Australia] they give you detention”.

“No I didn’t [go] to school...the teacher came to my house [to] teach me... [for] about three years... I’ve seen school... but I couldn’t go... it was only [for] boys.”

Many youth explained that when they first entered their ELS they were not familiar with forms of discipline (e.g. detention and suspension), school rules or the requirement to be punctual and meet deadlines.

THE FIRST YEAR AT ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA

All the young people in this study attended an ELS during their first year in Australia. The purpose of ELSs is to teach intensive English and to help young people to learn about their new country. Classes are organised into primary and secondary levels around English language ability, comprising of a mix of ages. They also tend to be less structured than mainstream schools—students have only one or two teachers rather than a different teacher for each subject. Teaching of specific subjects is integrated into the English language curriculum. ELSs are smaller than mainstream schools and teachers have more opportunities to know their students. Teachers have more time to focus on the specific needs of students who are new not only to Australia generally, but also to the Australian education system. On the whole, ELSs are experienced as positive, supportive and friendly places where young people feel a sense of belonging. Good Starts participants enjoyed going to ELS, had high educational aspirations (discussed in Chapter 2) and especially valued the following aspects of the ELS environment:

- The cultural diversity of the student population
- The presence of other students who spoke their own language, became their friends and helped orient them to the ELS
- Friendly teachers who got to know them personally
- Multicultural education aides (MEAs) who spoke their language and assisted them and their parents/families, especially during enrolment and orientation to the school
- The sense of safety and belonging
- The flexible curriculum, with a main focus on English literacy
- Curriculum that allowed them to experience some learning successes
- The schools’ efforts to involve parents/guardians and make them feel welcome
- Teachers who actively intervened in fights/conflict between students
- Teachers who noticed and commented on their successes and relayed students’ achievements to parents

However, participants also identified some negative aspects of ELSs. 43 per cent reported being bullied or teased at school, 21 per cent reported student fighting as the main thing they did not like about the ELS and eight per cent reported experiencing discrimination at an ELS.

“Language school was good because of the teachers. They love us and everything... At language centre everybody is friendly...”

“The teachers was good. They helping me...the way when he spoke to some student, they (teachers) know how to speak, they know how to accept people...they (teachers) know how to talk nice word to you and then you will, have to do that thing right...”

“... my favourite was... excursions, ‘cause everywhere we went it was the first time for me... we went everywhere that I never saw—zoo, beach, museum, aquarium, cinemas, shopping... everywhere!”

“I like about teachers and about students. I like this school very much. I feel very happy everyday. I love this school...”

“I don’t like it when students fight, I don’t like the fighting sometimes... Last term some boys were fighting.”

TRANSITION TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOL: YEARS TWO AND THREE

In Victoria, at the time of this study, young people are generally allowed to spend up to four terms in an ELS, after which they are required to transfer to a mainstream school. In the second and third years, 87 per cent and 85 per cent of Good Starts youth continued their education at school or TAFE, respectively (see Table 3). While their overall experiences in mainstream schools remained positive the quantitative measures show significant decreases in a number of domains compared to ELS. Many had mixed experiences of mainstream schools and most found the transition difficult. The key challenges and concerns were:

- Not having the level of English required to achieve the academic requirements of the mainstream school:
- Not understanding the school system and having no one to explain things to them
- Having to adhere to strict rules about uniforms and getting to school on time
- Having to sit and concentrate for long periods of time
- Having different teachers for each subject
- Feeling less supported or accepted by teachers overall
- Not understanding why they could not enrol in Years 11 and 12
- Not understanding alternative pathways or split systems (e.g. doing half of Year 11 in Year 10)

TABLE 3: Education–work transitions in the first three years in Australia

Year in Australia	In school	In TAFE	In workforce ¹	Not in school or work
1 (N=120)	120 (100%)	0	N/A	0
2 (N=109) ²	87 (80%)	8 (7%)	8 (7%)	N/A
3 (N=100) ³	71 (71%)	14 (14%)	17 (17%)	1 (1%)

¹ Some participants were both studying and working

² Missing data: school/TAFE = 14 participants; workforce = 4 participants

³ Missing data: 1 participant

N/A data not available

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE (FIGURE 35) Overall, Good Starts participants reported high levels of perceived achievement at ELS. Although this remained high, these levels of perceived achievement decreased when they moved to mainstream schools (statistically significant; $p < 0.001$). This reported decrease was more prevalent among males than among females, though the difference is not statistically significant.

SENSE OF BELONGING AND SAFETY AT SCHOOL (FIGURE 36) In general, participants reported a high sense of belonging and feeling of safety at ELS. Again, although remaining high, these indicators decrease when they moved to mainstream schools (statistically significant; $p = 0.015$), among boys in particular (though the gender difference is not statistically significant).

SOCIAL STATUS AT SCHOOL (FIGURE 37) The mean score of social status at school remained fairly constant over time (6.5 in Year One; 6.3 in Year Two; 6.8 in Year Three). There were no statistically significant differences between boys and girls.

FEELING SUPPORTED AT SCHOOL (FIGURE 38) Youth report feeling high levels of support at ELS. However, these levels decrease significantly ($p = 0.001$) during the second and third years when they attend mainstream schools. Compared with females, males show lower levels of perceived support during their third year (though not to a significant degree).

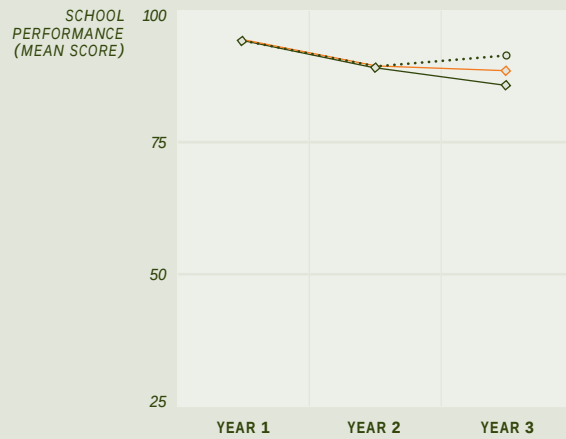
BULLYING AT SCHOOL (FIGURE 39) Overall, the levels of bullying decrease in the mainstream schools, though not to a significant extent. Females report higher levels of bullying in ELS, but lower levels in mainstream schools. However these differences, are not statistically significant.

DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL (FIGURE 40) There is a significant increase in experiences of discrimination at school over the three year period ($p = 0.036$). The percentage of boys who experienced discrimination at school increased from eight per cent in Year One (ELS) to 26 per cent in Year Two (mainstream school), and then decreased to 16 per cent in Year Three (mainstream school). Among girls, there was a consistent increase in discrimination over time: nine per cent in Year One; 14 per cent in Year Two; and, 17 per cent in Year Three. However, the differences between boys and girls were not statistically significant.

FIGURE 35:

Changes in mean school performance scores over the three year period, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [poor perceived performance at school]; highest score = 100 [good perceived performance at school])

— MALES
 FEMALES
 — ALL PARTICIPANTS

**FIGURE 36:**

Changes in mean school belonging and safety scores over the three year period, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [low perceived belonging and safety at school]; highest score = 100 [high perceived belonging and safety at school])

— MALES
 FEMALES
 — ALL PARTICIPANTS

**FIGURE 37:**

Changes by year of data collection in mean scores of social status at school for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 1 [low social status]; highest score = 10 [high social status])

— MALES
 FEMALES
 — ALL PARTICIPANTS

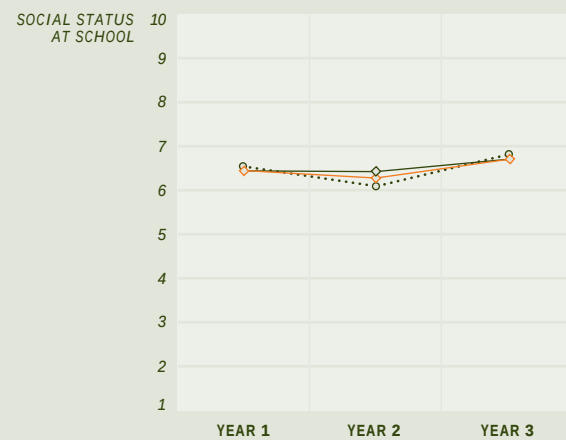


FIGURE 38:

Changes in mean school support scores over the three year period, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [low perceived support at school]; highest score = 100 [high perceived support at school])

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS

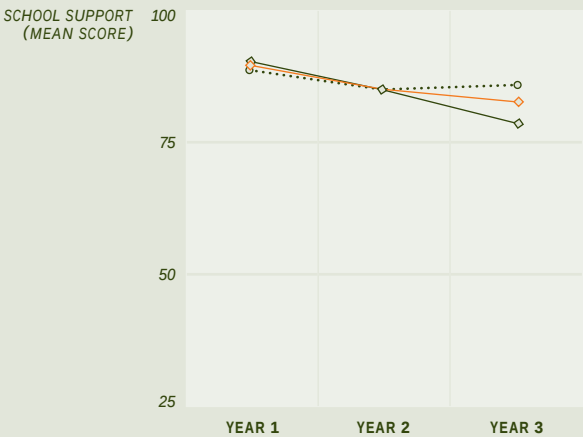


FIGURE 39:

Changes in bullying or teasing at school scores over the three years, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [low levels of bullying/teasing]; highest score = 100 [high levels of bullying/teasing])

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS

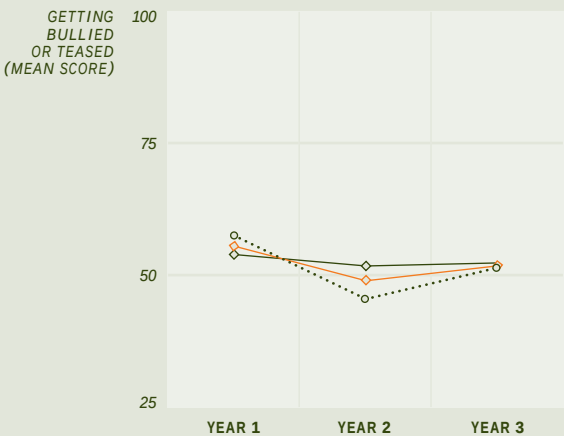
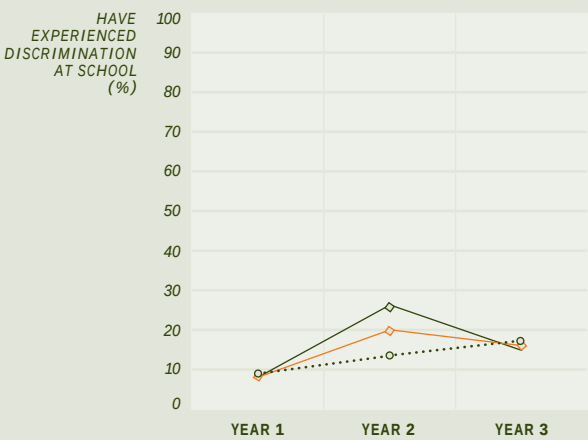


FIGURE 40:

Changes over time in experiences of discrimination at school, for all participants and by gender

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS



OTHER SCHOOL INDICATORS

ENJOY COMING TO SCHOOL (FIGURE 41) Overall, there is a statistically significant decrease in enjoyment in coming to school over the three-year period ($p < 0.001$). Girls report higher levels of enjoyment than boys (statistically significant; $p = 0.002$).

LIKE TEACHERS THIS YEAR (FIGURE 42) In general, there is a significant decrease over time in how youth rate how much they like their teachers ($p < 0.001$). Compared with girls, boys report that they like teachers less, but the difference is not statistically significant.

CHANCES TO BE INVOLVED IN SPORTS AND OTHER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES (FIGURE 43) Over the three-year period, there is a significant decrease ($p = 0.005$) in opportunities to become involved in sports and other school activities (in Year Two in particular). When compared across gender, males report greater opportunities than females in Years One and Two, but this trend reverses in Year Three (and in no period is this difference significant).

Qualitative data reveal some of the every day challenges that the young people experience when they leave their ELS for a mainstream high school or TAFE (some transit directly from ELS to TAFE). Transition to high school was met with both fear and excitement. Most felt that their level of English was not sufficient for them to do well in high school. One young man explained: *“I was just thinking about myself, I think I’m not good enough for my English to go to secondary college... I just say to myself ‘they don’t have to send me’. They have to keep me here (at the ELS) because if they send me to secondary college [I’m] not good enough”*. After three terms in his secondary college, this young man left to do an apprenticeship. Another young woman explained: *“High school is hard, language school is easy. Sometimes you don’t know a word and nobody can tell you. No help. There is not as much help in high school.”* A number of young people had received scholarships for tuition in specific subjects and they found this extremely helpful.

Bridging and transition programs that assist young people to make the transition from ELS to mainstream schools are very important. Bridging and transition programs vary in how they function and in how comprehensive they are. Their services range from giving basic information to students about what school they will go to and how to enrol, to providing an introduction to school culture, rules and expectations. Two young women told stories of how they were embarrassed on their first day of class because they did not know about the school dress code. The lack of a comprehensive bridging programme was a source of some distress among some Good Starts participants. One young woman described how the teacher pointed to her shoes in front of the whole class and told her that she had worn the wrong kind. Another young woman told about how on her first day of class the teacher pulled her to the front of the class and made fun of her braided hair and earrings and said *“where does she think she’s from, Kampala?”* Finally, one of the young women explained how she was upset when she left ELS as no one from her new school rang her to assist her in enrolling. She didn’t know which school she was supposed to go to and, because no one had rung her about her new school, she had missed many days. On the verge of crying, she described how worried she was about all the lessons she had missed, *“I used to be a happy person and now I’m just upset all the time”*. This young woman eventually sorted out her schooling, with the assistance of Good Starts workers who advocated for her, and ended up changing to a Catholic school, which she was very happy with.

FIGURE 41:
Changes over time in experiences of enjoying coming to school, for all participants and by gender

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS



FIGURE 42:
Changes over time in experiences of liking teachers, for all participants and by gender

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS

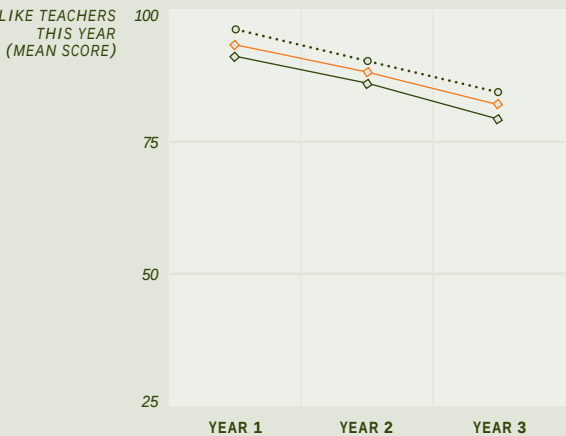
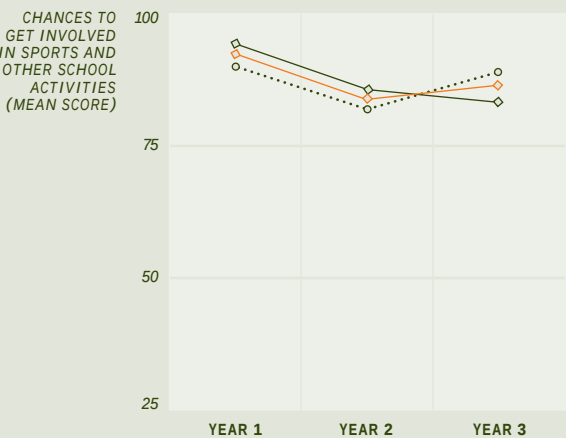


FIGURE 43:
Changes over time in experiences of being involved in sports and other school activities, for all participants and by gender

— MALES
..... FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS



Despite the many difficulties experienced, participants described many things about mainstream high school that they enjoyed and valued. The highlights were the range of subjects that students could study, the activities they could participate in, and the new friends they made. *“The subjects... in language school you didn’t choose the subject... but in Cleeland (high school) you can choose the subject whatever you want to do. It’s good, its better. I wouldn’t go back (to the ELS)...it looks stupid to me now.”* When asked by a researcher what makes her happy today, this young female participant replied *“When I come to school. Learning and friends. Because it’s important for me in the future, it helps when, because its important for when I get a job in the future, it helps my mum in Africa.”*

Some of the young people explained that despite wanting to go to high school after their ELS, because they wanted to continue to learn, they were directed to TAFE instead. Some explained that they were told they were too old for high school, while others were not sure of the reasons. One young man said he wanted to go to high school and was upset because one of his friends from ELS was allowed to go to high school and he was not. Although he had attended a TAFE and completed a VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) course, he still said he would prefer to attend high school but, because he was too old, he would not be allowed. Another young man explained that the contact hours at TAFE were too short, that he didn’t learn much and that the teachers only talked about employment. He said *“I don’t like to study about the jobs”*, explaining that he would rather be working than going to TAFE. A young woman explained how when she first arrived in Australia her dream was to become a lawyer, but that after ELS she was directed to TAFE. Looking back on her TAFE experience she says, *“I’m not saying bad thing about TAFE. I just will say the teachers is very good and the students too, and you will come with us to study and you will have friends forever... I’m not saying its boring, its not boring, its really, really very good like to study there. But it doesn’t have like something hard to study. I would like harder study... [I] would like to be at school... but now I want to [study] just child care”*. Another issue was the difficulty that some young people had in finding their own work placements, in which they were required to complete a set number of hours to gain relevant work experience. One young woman explained how her nursing TAFE course required 110 hours of relevant work experience. She had tried the local hospital, the local nursing home, and the local child care centre, none of which would take her. She was offered a placement at Safeway, but her teacher explained this would not count as “relevant” work experience. Finally, after much worry, she found a placement in a child care centre through someone whom she knew, but she was very worried that she would still fail the subject as it had taken her so long to find a placement. However, her teachers assured her that they would give her extra time to complete the subject.

Finally, a key theme emerging from the experiences of these young people was the difficulties they had in finding educational pathways. Many of the young people recounted stories of being confused about the many different educational pathways and were uncertain about how they could achieve a degree that would get them a job or a career that they envisioned. Many explained that they did not know the reasons why they may have been advised to go to TAFE instead of high school, or to transfer to TAFE instead of continuing with their VCE (years 11 and 12). Despite these challenges many of the young people remained determined to find a way to achieve

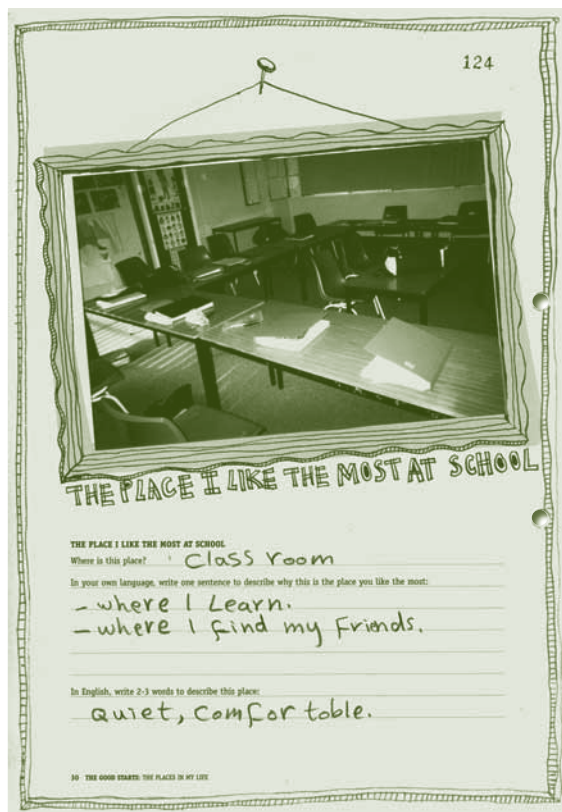
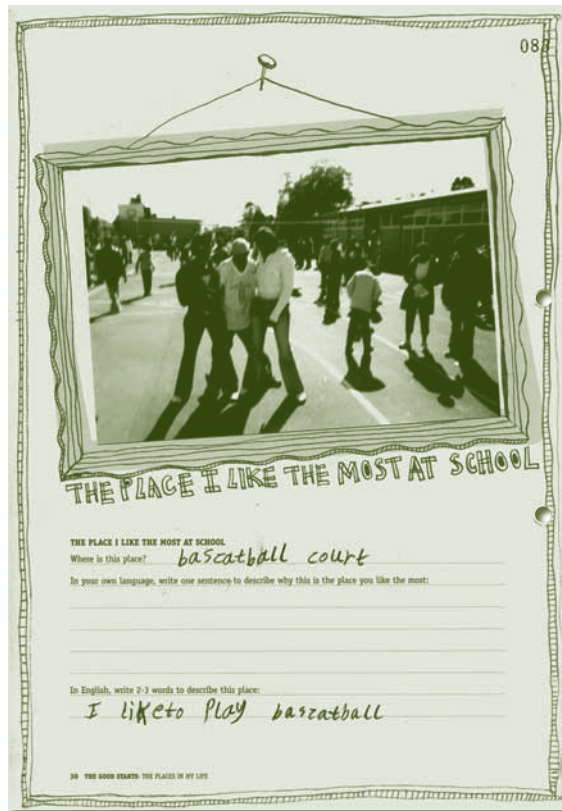


FIGURE 44: IMAGES OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Rebecca, Sudan, Year One journal

Hannah, Liberia, Year One journal

Naima, Iraq, Year One journal

Santino, Sudan, Year One journal

their educational dreams. For example, one young man had a clear plan to become a mechanical engineer. He explained: *“Now I’m gonna finish year 12... so next year if I go to TAFE... do mechanical engineering in the TAFE. I already plan it so I know when I pick this, say mechanical engineering here... I’m doing Certificate II ... so you have to go to Certificate III or IV... It could be like apprenticeship...maybe for three years, maybe two years... and then after that I have to go to Deakin... (A)nd after TAFE you can go to Uni... another way to go to Uni”*. Sadly, many young people were worried about their chances of finishing school and their chances of being able to get a job. The following young man explains: *“I am worried that I need to study for three years to get a job. Three years is too long (and) we don’t know if we are going to be in the life because we don’t know about the tomorrow and what’s gonna happen. I don’t think that I am gonna be too much in the life.”*

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

In the third year of the study about one third of youth had left secondary school and of these, half were doing apprenticeships. The other half were working (29%), looking for a job or waiting to start further studies (10%). Two participants reported being pregnant and one was looking after her baby. The main strategies that helped these youth to find jobs were the work experience programs at school or TAFE, followed by family/friends, job networks/case workers, and, the internet.

Among those who were working, the majority (65%) liked their jobs. The things they liked most were the people they worked with and the opportunities for learning that employment presented. Among the things they disliked were the hard and demanding nature of the work (e.g. long hours, occupational risks) and being mistreated by others (by bosses and co-workers). One participant reported being bullied or teased at work.

SUMMARY

This study paints an overall positive picture of the first year at ELS for Good Starts participants and, although their experiences of mainstream schools or TAFE remain high in Years Two and Three, there are significant decreases in their sense of achievement, belonging, and overall engagement with the educational system. Youth arrive in Australia with high aspirations for educational success and for the most part, their experiences of their first year in ELS, with the exception of teasing and bullying, are positive. However, the transition to a mainstream school is difficult, and a picture emerges from Years Two and Three of the study of these young people struggling to achieve their goals. Moreover, research indicates that schools are important places for providing a sense of belonging, a sense of safety and security, for establishing trust and acceptance, for social support, and for acting as a bridge to success in the broader community. Yet the participants’ experiences of mainstream Australian schools are less positive in these respects compared to ELS. By the end of the fourth year, one quarter of the young people still in the study had left school without completing secondary education to seek further technical training or employment.

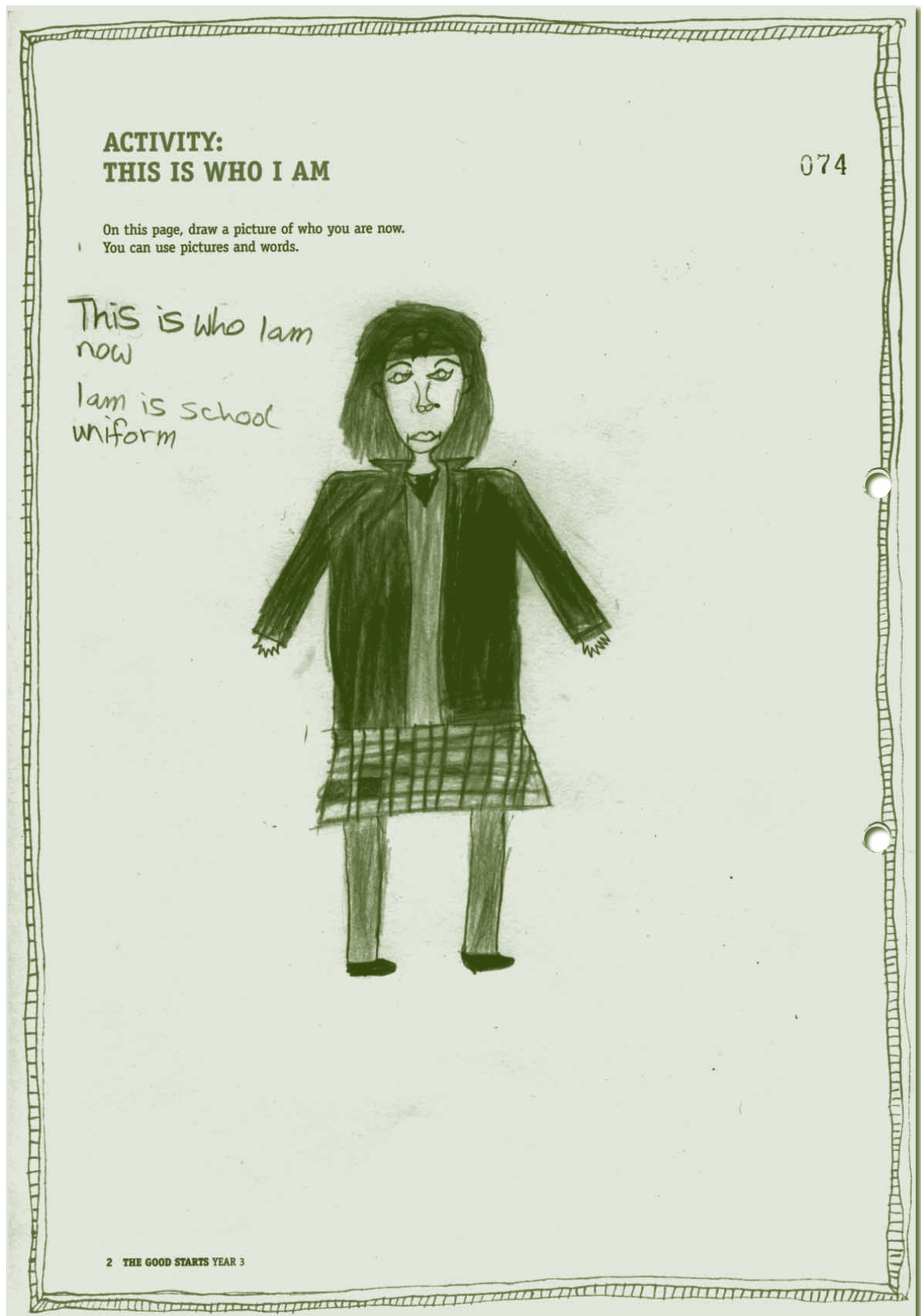
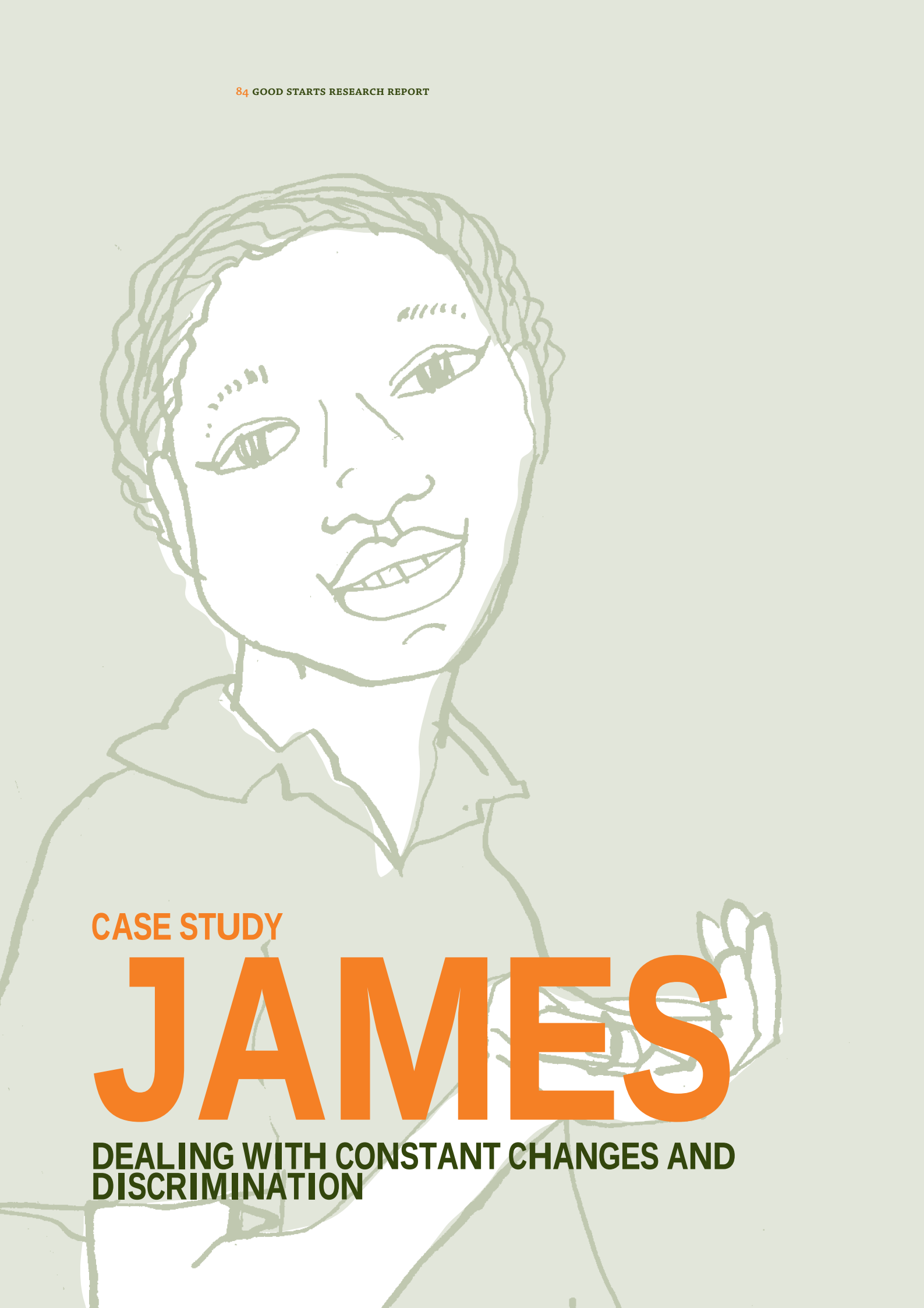


FIGURE 45: ASHAI, 14 YEAR OLD SUDANESE FEMALE
Ashai, Sudan, Year Three journal



CASE STUDY

JAMES

DEALING WITH CONSTANT CHANGES AND
DISCRIMINATION

James is a vibrant, intelligent young man full of energy and curiosity about the world around him. However, he struggles with strong emotions and a lot of instability. He arrived in Australia when he was 12 years old with his older brother. His mother and other siblings were still in Africa. His father died in Africa. James lived most of his childhood in a large refugee camp in Kenya.

When he arrived in Australia, he started going to ELS, which made him happy. He hoped one day to go to university and become a doctor, lawyer, pilot or engineer and have a family. His teachers were very important to him and he liked the other students but was easily provoked into fights. This upset him because he got his friends into trouble. He worried a lot about his family overseas and felt that he was always in a “blue” mood. After school he would often go home and have dinner by himself because his brother was at work. He found it hard taking the bus on his own and liked seeing his street because then he knew he was not lost. He was lonely at home, there was nobody to play with him.

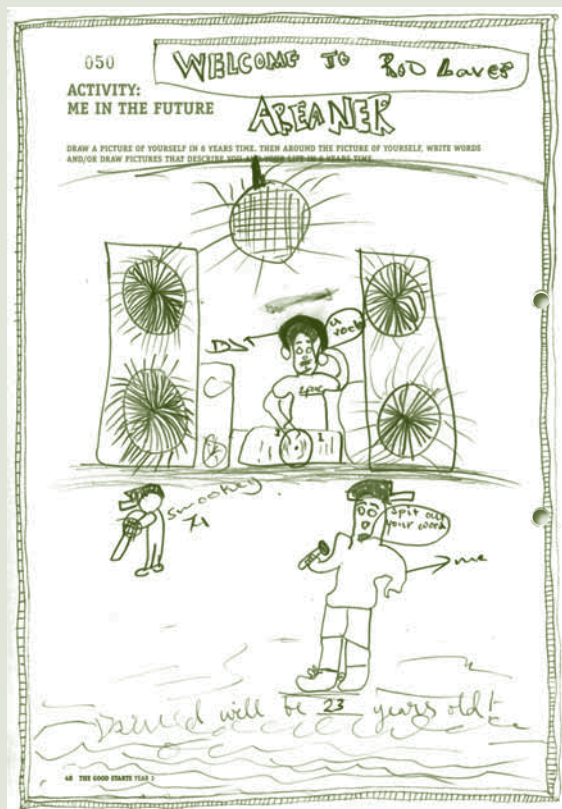
When he finished ELS he moved to a local primary school, but soon moved schools again when he moved in with some family friends. His brother had become very worried about him and thought it would be better if he lived with more people. James stayed in that house for over a year, finishing grade 6 and graduating to the local high school.

Towards the end of his first year in high school, James’s mother and siblings arrived from Africa. He moved in to a new household in a different suburb with his mother, brothers and sisters, and two other relatives. His new house of nine people was a busy place and James was not sure of the rules of the household. Sometimes people in the family argued and he did not like it when his mother asked him lots of questions, but he felt happy and safe at home. He loved watching television or playing computer games in the lounge room.

After moving house, James moved schools for the fifth time. Although he enjoyed going to his new school and trusted most of the teachers and students, he had some problems. He was teased a lot and experienced discrimination, which made him angry and want to fight. He had problems with one particular teacher whom he felt had misrepresented him to his mother. Another student told us that he had also had problems with this teacher but felt there was nothing to do about it so he just accepted it and ‘got on with things’. However, James found it harder to let this unfair treatment go unchallenged. These problems were compounded by the fact that he found it difficult to concentrate and had difficulty sleeping at night. He was also angered by negative comments made by members of the Australian government about Africans in Australia. He did not look forward to his future at school, although he wanted to complete high school.

Despite these challenges, he was successful at some of his subjects and felt that he could do things as well as most other people. He speaks English very well and is very gregarious and playful, teasing students and teachers and always asking questions, as if he can never learn enough about the world. He still felt downhearted sometimes but loved jokes and being in a good mood.

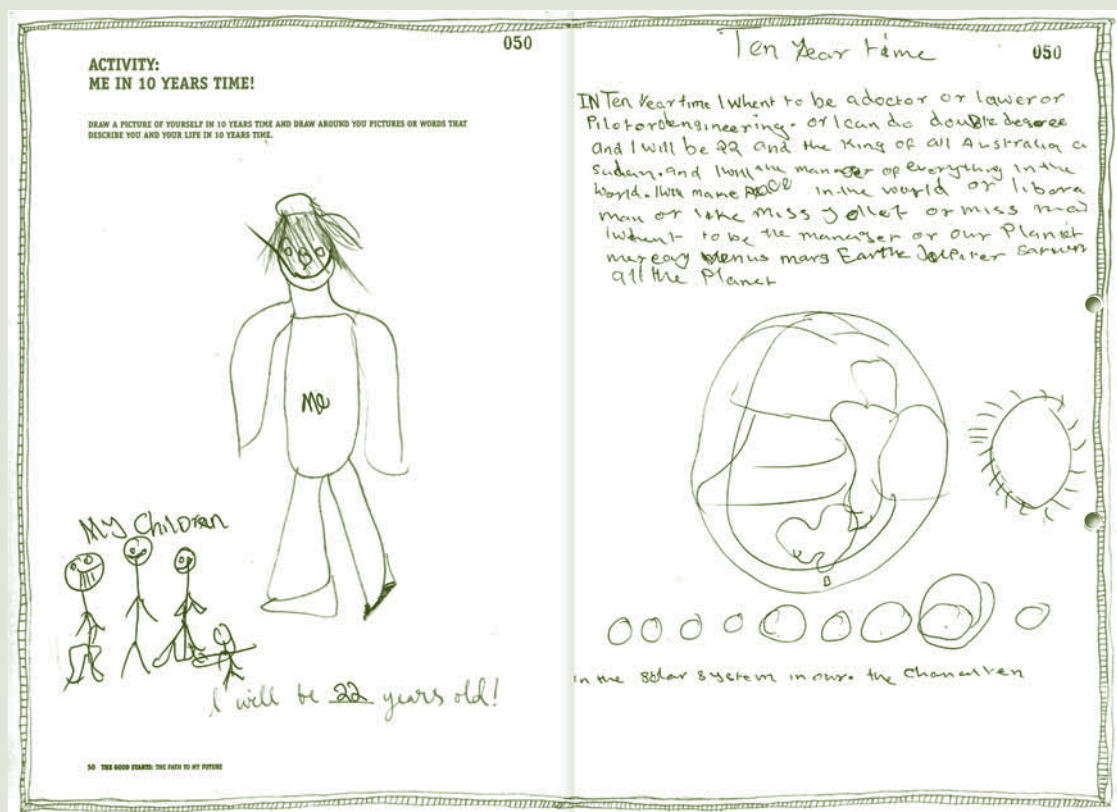
Over the next year, James worked on dealing with his emotions as part of an anger management course at school. He found ways to avoid fighting when other kids called him “nigger” or insulted him in other ways. He no longer got into so much trouble at



JAMES' JOURNALS

Year Three journal | Year One journal

Year Two journal | Year Three journal



school, however, he does not like talking about these experiences and doing so affects him in powerful ways. On a personal level, he no longer felt that he can do things as well as other people and there was little that he was proud of. Although he feels good about his cultural background, he felt his family has no status in Australian society and that he does not belong here. His mother thinks she might move back to Africa for a while, but is not sure when she might go. James wants to go with her to visit but knows they will not have enough money for him to go too.

Now aged 16, he has left school to take up a mechanics pre-apprenticeship. He uses some of the money to help support his family here and overseas. He loves playing around with words and music, and hopes he will become a famous musician or actor. He knows it takes a lot of work to get to that, so he thinks it would be a good idea to become a mechanic as a stable back-up. In the meantime, he is going to save enough money to buy music software for his computer so that he can make some demos to send to record companies.

CHAPTER 6: OUR COMMUNITY

Belonging to a community is one of the most important social determinants of wellbeing among young people in general and social inclusion is a key determinant of successful settlement for youth from refugee backgrounds both in the short and longer term. Being able to participate, feel valued, safe, and that they belong are necessary if young people are to reach their full human potential in their new homes. A mixed picture emerges of the Good Starts youth's experiences of belonging and establishing bridging relationships in their own and the new host communities. Having a strong supportive relationship to one's ethnic community is important both in the early years of settlement and for longer term integration (Ager and Strang 2008; Beiser 2005; Beiser, Shik, Curyk et al. 1999); having a positive or high sense of social status is also important for wellbeing and positive health (Goodman et al. 2001); and, freedom from discrimination is strongly linked to wellbeing and social inclusion (Beirens et al. 2007; Mesch et al. 2008). Good Starts participants had a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic community, which remained strong during their first three years in Australia (see Figure 46) (with no statistically significant differences between males and females). They also rank the social status of their family within their ethnic community and the wider Australian community as high, and this also remained relatively high over the first three years of settlement (see Figures 48 and 49). However, youth report a range of experiences of discrimination which negatively affect their wellbeing (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2009). These findings are discussed below.

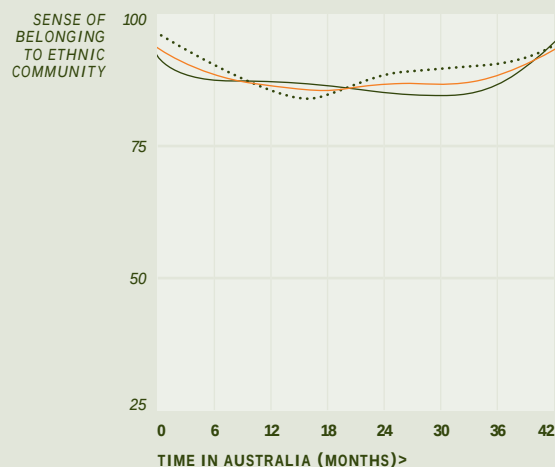
EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION (FIGURE 47) Experiences of discrimination are a major source of social exclusion among Good Starts youth. In Year One of data collection, 18 per cent of youth reported experiencing discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour, and this figure increased to 26 per cent and 35 per cent in Year Two and Year Three respectively (statistically significant; $p=0.004$). Males were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than females (though the difference is not statistically significant). However, by the third year, the reporting of discrimination among boys and girls was very similar (36% and 34% respectively). Young people born in Africa were more likely to have experienced discrimination than those born in other regions (statistically significant; $p=0.027$).

“This guy called me like I’m a nigger. I called him ‘You like white bread!’... because he looked like bread! He was Australian.”

FIGURE 46:

Changes in sense of belonging to ethnic community, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 25 [low sense of belonging]; highest score = 100 [high sense of belonging])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

**FIGURE 47:**

Changes over time in experience of discrimination, for all participants and by gender

..... MALES
— FEMALES
— ALL PARTICIPANTS



Many youth report being discriminated against before coming to Australia, for example in refugee camps and in cities they lived in after having fled their home country. *“(In Egypt) there was really terrible racism... we use to fight with them... there were not any Sudanese or African persons who went to Egyptian schools... ’cause if you went to their school it would be really bad.”*

WHERE DO REFUGEE YOUTH EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION?

- At school: As stated in Chapter 5, the experiences of discrimination in school reported by these youth increased significantly over time (see Figure 40).

“The first day (at school) some people were nice but on the second day... they’re mean! They do not respect black people. Like in the toilets, they write bad stuff...I can’t do anything even if I tell the teacher...”

- On the streets or in public settings: Experiencing discrimination on the street or in public places, such as shops or on trains, increased from 11 per cent in Year One, to 15 per cent in Year Two and 22 per cent in Year Three (statistically significant; $p=0.035$). Males were more likely to have experienced discrimination in public settings than females ($p=0.008$).

“We were walking in the street, me and my mate, coming from basketball, and the car stopped and they were calling us niggers.”

“I went just to get, like, to buy a few things. I went to the counter and he’s like ‘empty your pockets’. I’m like, ‘Why?’ He’s like, ‘cause you’re stealing.’ I just emptied my pockets, he checked me, and I had nothing. Then this other kid comes in, he was a white kid, but I’m not trying to be racist. He walks out and then just, beep, beep, beep and [he] starts running. I was pretty angry. I’m never going back.”

- Police: 13 per cent of young people reported experiencing discrimination from police since arriving in Australia.

HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE RESPOND TO DISCRIMINATION OR UNFAIR TREATMENT?

- In Year Three, nearly one in four young people accepted discrimination as a ‘fact of life’.

“There’s nothing much you can do about it (racism). First we know the police is racist and next thing you know people in the street are racist, next thing you know maybe most of the country are. There’s nothing much you can do about it.”

- Also in Year Three, one third of Good Starts youth kept their experiences of being unfairly treated to themselves, while two thirds told someone else about them.

“The students here, like they treat people badly, they try to be racist and stuff. I go and talk to the teachers about that and they talk to them. If somebody do something wrong we’ll go to the teacher.”

- Feeling discriminated against is a major cause of fights.

“This Year 12 guy, he was being racist... he came up to me and he pushed me and I just punched him straight away, then my friends jumped in.”

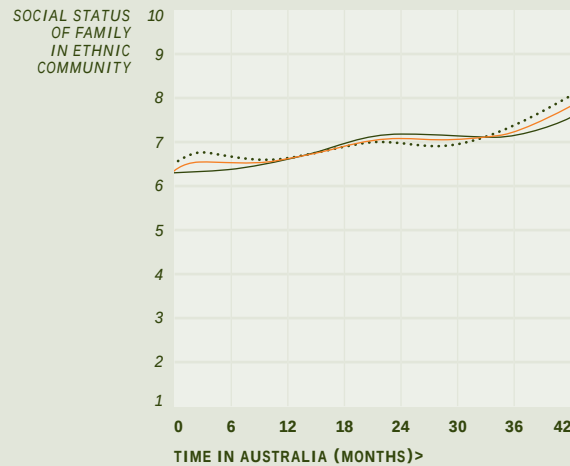
Importantly, discrimination impacts negatively on wellbeing. Youth who experienced discrimination in their first three years of settlement were more likely to have lower wellbeing scores in the physical and environmental domains of the WHDQol-Bref, and lower levels of happiness (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2009).

Subjective social status has also been shown to affect adolescent health and wellbeing (Ritterman 2007). In this study, subjective social status was assessed in relation to a young person’s status within their school, their family’s status within their ethnic community and their family’s status within the wider Australian community. Participants were asked to place an ‘x’ on the rung of a 10-rung ladder to indicate where they saw themselves in relation to the top and bottom rungs (Adler and Stewart 2000).

FIGURE 48:

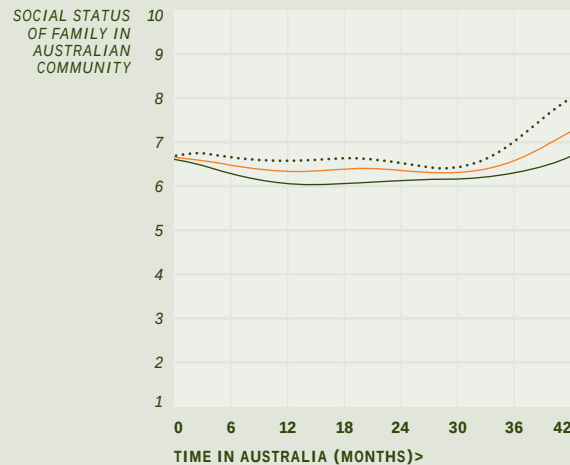
Changes over time in mean scores of the social status of young people's families within their ethnic communities, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 1 [low social status]; highest score = 10 [high social status])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES

**FIGURE 49:**

Changes over time in mean scores of social status of young people's families within the broader Australian community, for all participants and by gender (lowest score = 1 [low social status]; highest score = 10 [high social status])

— ALL
..... FEMALES
— MALES



SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILIES IN THEIR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES (FIGURE 48)

Overall, there is a statistically significant increase over time in the social status of participants' families within their ethnic communities ($p=0.040$). There are no significant differences between males and females.

SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILIES WITHIN THE BROADER AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY (FIGURE 49)

The mean score of social status of young people's families within the broader Australian community remained fairly constant over the first two and a half years in Australia, increasing moderately afterwards. Females report a higher status for their families than males, the difference is not statistically significant.

Importantly, subjective social status is associated with wellbeing outcomes in the first three years of settlement. Youth with lower subjective social status of their families in the wider Australian community were more likely to score lower in their wellbeing, subjective health status, and levels of happiness (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2009).

ACTIVITY:
THIS IS WHO I AM

109

On this page, draw a picture of who you are now.
You can use pictures and words.

I like to dance.

I like to read stories and magazine.

I like playing basketball.

I like dressing up.

I like put make-up.



FIGURE 50: AMIRA, 15 YEAR OLD FEMALE FROM KUWAIT
Amira, Kuwait, Year Three Journal

A SENSE OF BELONGING

In their first year in Australia, the Good Starts participants scored relatively highly in relation to their sense of belonging—to their family, friends, students at their school, the people in their neighbourhood, their places of worship and, more generally, to living in Australia. With the exception of feelings of belonging to their place of worship, which decreased significantly over time ($p=0.045$), feelings of belonging in all domains remained reasonably steady over the first three years in Australia. Compared with boys', girls' feelings of belonging to their friends and to their place of worship were significantly higher ($p=0.019$ and $p=0.003$ respectively).

Finally, making connections to place is an important part of the settlement process and youth seek out a range of places that can facilitate a sense of belonging. Through photographs and drawings of places in their lives, participants identified a range of place characteristics that were important in the early settlement phase of becoming 'at home'. These qualities include beauty, contact with nature, quiet, allowing for reflection, conveying a sense of safety, and supporting social activities and the making of new friendships. Good Starts youth actively seek out places that can be appropriated in their journeys to becoming at home in Australia and these 'therapeutic landscapes' are important in promoting a sense of belonging for them (Sampson and Gifford 2009).

In sum, Good Starts youth display a strong sense of belonging to the wider Australian community, to their neighbourhood, their ethnic community and to their friends and family. They perceive the social status of their families within their ethnic community to increase over time while status within the wider Australian community remains constant.

Importantly, youth with lower subjective social status of their families in the wider community report lower wellbeing in the first three years of settlement. Experiences of discrimination are a major source of social exclusion among youth with over one third reporting some type of discrimination by the third year of the study. Discrimination is targeted at their "difference"—their ethnicity, religion and colour—as such, it comprises powerful forms of structural violence that threaten the longer term integration success of these young people.

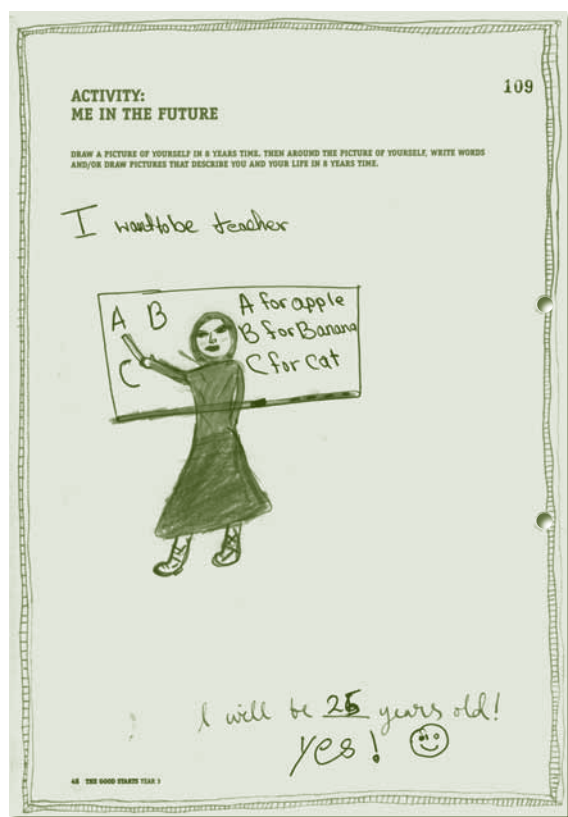
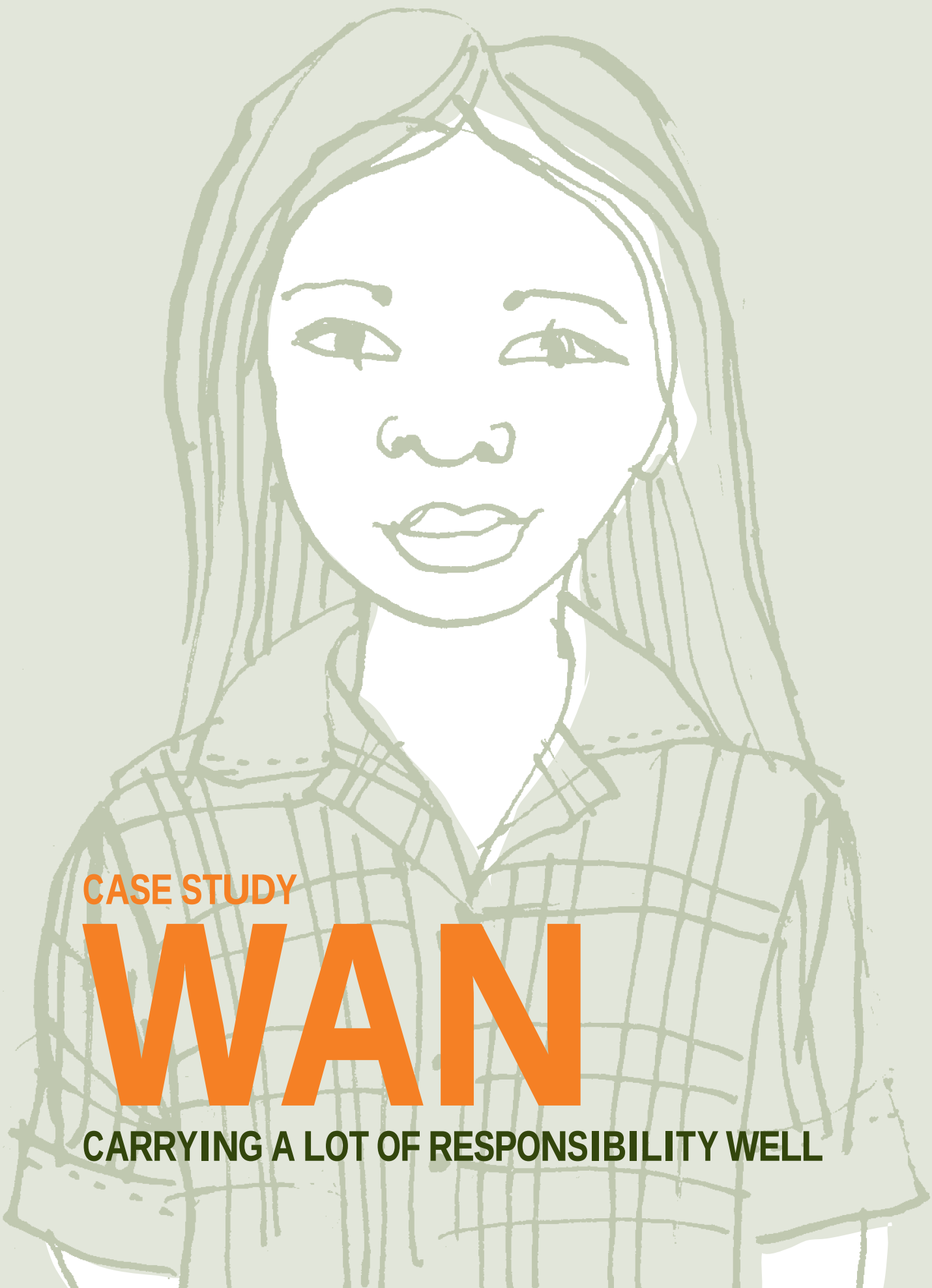


FIGURE 51: AMIRA, 15 YEAR OLD FEMALE FROM KUWAIT
Amira, Kuwait, Year Three Journal



CASE STUDY

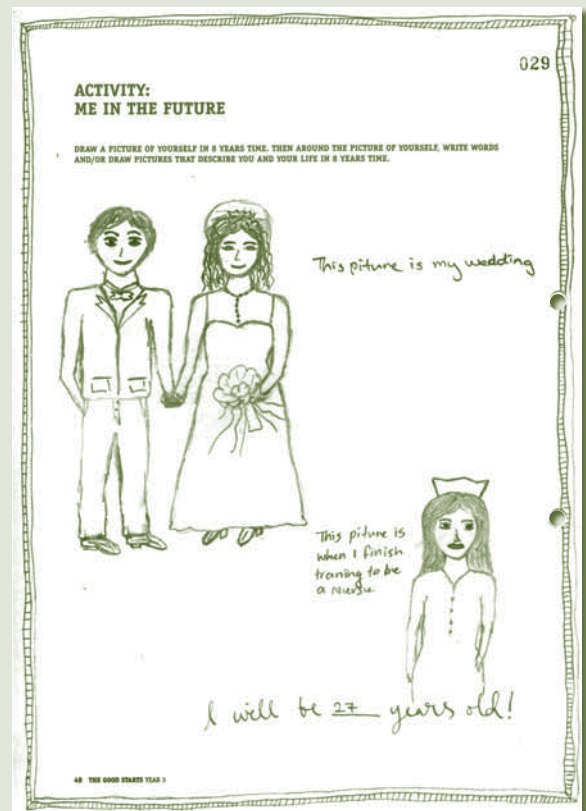
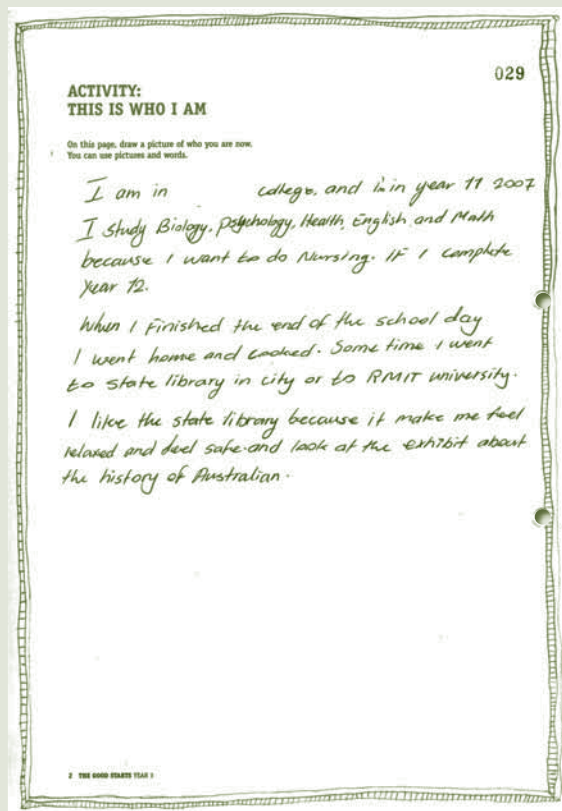
WAN

CARRYING A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY WELL

Wan is a young woman from Burma who dreams of becoming a nurse. She loves 'hanging out' with her friends, making jokes and singing. She arrived in Australia when she was 16, with her mother and younger brother and sister, after living in a refugee camp for almost six years. In the camp she helped her aunt, who was a nurse, to care for people, including attending births and distributing medication. Her family came to Australia to join her aunt's family. All her remaining extended family, including her beloved grandmother, have now arrived and are living in the local area. Wan feels her extended family is very important in supporting her in Australia: "If you don't have relative you always feel [you've] lost something, but if you have relative they always made you feel strong". Wan's father was killed before her family arrived in Australia. They keep a tattered black and white photo of him on their mantelpiece in the lounge room.

Wan arrived with a strong sense of cultural identity, which has been fostered by a local community that shares her language and cultural heritage and gathers together regularly at their local church. She has lived in the same house since arriving in Australia and is within walking distance of her school, a train station and a big park in which she likes to spend time with friends. She does not like walking past the pub on the way to the train because some of the men call out to her, making her feel unsafe.

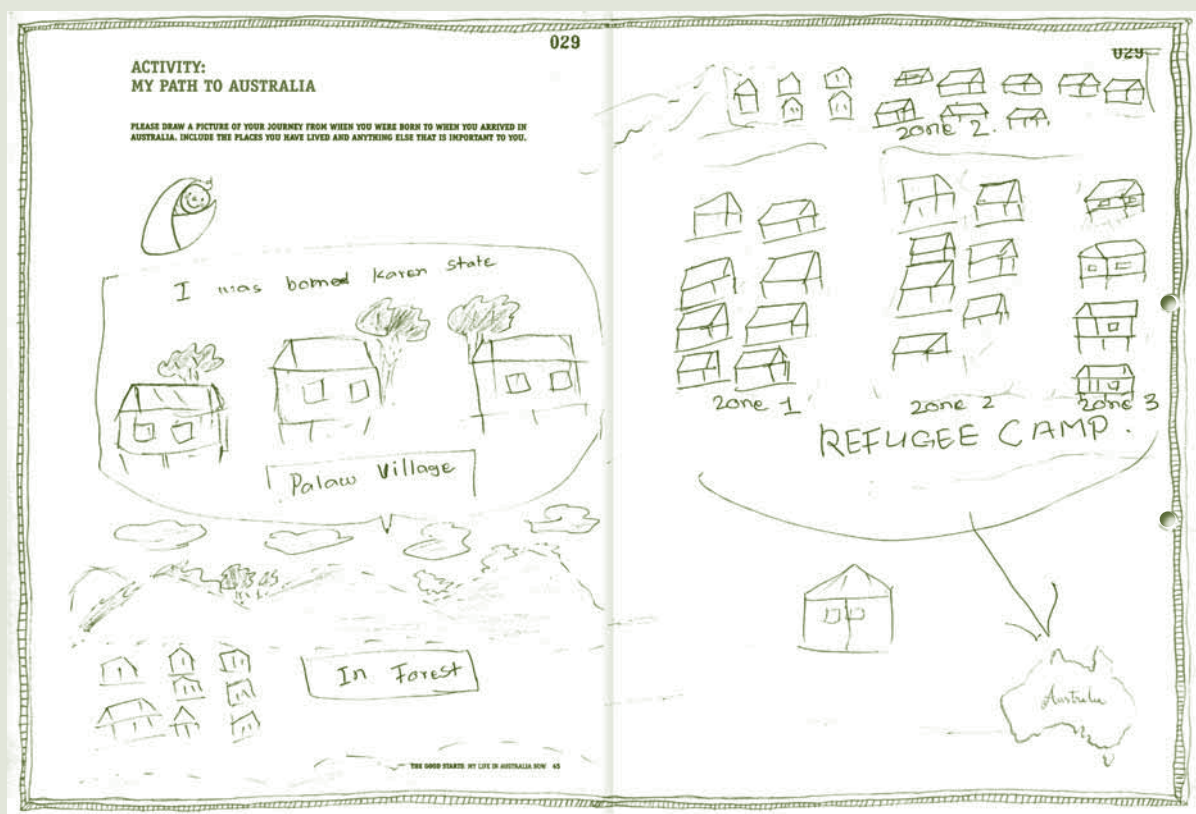
Wan had five years of schooling before coming to Australia. After one year at an English Language School, which she loved, she began at the local high school in the final term of Year 8. During the summer break, she travelled interstate to do some casual work, picking fruit, to save money for school supplies for the next year. She is now studying Year 12 at the age of 20. "I [am] happy because I have time to study and want my education to go well. This



time is a happy time not a sad time". Although she has had some difficulties at school, she feels that the school is safe and supportive, and that the teachers treat all the students equally. She did not like some of the students who excluded her and teased her about her English, but this has improved over time. The school welfare officer arranged some assistance with her textbooks and uniform, and in Year 11 she won a scholarship to pay for a tutor in biology and health, which she hopes will help her get in to a nursing course.

At home, Wan has many family responsibilities as she is the eldest child and knows more English than her mother. Her young sister has forgotten most of their first language, so Wan often translates between sister and mother. Wan is also responsible for dealing with the real estate agent, Centrelink and other institutions. She and her mother often fight. Wan thinks it is because her mother is worried about how the future will work out: "Her background is the old generation and now my generation is a new country, a new place, a new world, so I feel safe, I know what will happen to me, you know, but she's like so worried about my future, about my life, what will happen to me." They used to fight about her boyfriend, because he was not Christian, but the pair have since broken up. It was he who taught her to drive and told her more about how to get in to university in Australia. She is happy that she has met someone new who spends a lot of time with her at the house.

Although she works very hard at her school work, Wan is worried that her English will not be good enough to get in to nursing at university. She is also worried that she will not do well enough in her science classes because of all the special, scientific words she needs to learn. However, she remains optimistic about the future and feels that life is getting much better.



PART IV: REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS



CHAPTER 7: PROMOTING GOOD STARTS FOR RECENTLY-SETTLED YOUTH WITH REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

Looking back over the four years of the Good Starts study, a range of important insights emerge that not only inform how recently arrived young people can best be supported, but also about the research process itself. Rarely do studies give a glimpse of experiences from the point of view of the researchers or the participants. We begin this chapter with the voices of the researchers for whom the past four years of their working life was dedicated to this study. We then offer the reader an opportunity to hear from the Good Starts participants, to hear what their experiences were being part of such a demanding research project in their early resettlement years. We conclude with a discussion of the highlights of this report, what the young people themselves have to say about what made life easy and difficult for them over three years in this study. We also explore what the findings tell us about promoting health and wellbeing among recently arrived young people with refugee backgrounds.

REFLECTIONS OF GOOD STARTS RESEARCHERS CHRISTINE BAKOPANOS, RESEARCH OFFICER

A strong, ongoing commitment to refugee young people by Professor Sandy Gifford (La Trobe University) and Dr Ida Kaplan and others from Foundation House kept the motivation alive to secure funding for a longitudinal research study with refugee young people, despite several setbacks and many months of uncertainty in a very competitive and unpredictable funding environment. As a research assistant (RA), I completed the grant application forms with hope and optimism that they would lead to my future employment as a researcher on an exciting new project in an area I knew little about but was very interested in. Although I had done several years of research with people from diverse ethnic communities and had some well developed skills in data collection and data management, this was to be a very different project. Also, given the nature of funding and short-term positions, this would be a project that I could be working on for five years; a rare opportunity for an RA. Little did I know that it would be almost seven years of work over the last nine years of my life.

The formal beginning was in the latter half of 2000 when VicHealth provided a small grant for a one-year pilot project 'Off to a Healthy Start'. After applications to university, VFST and Department of Education ethics committees had been submitted and approved we were able to begin. The pilot project enabled our entry into English

Language Schools, providing a structured and trusted environment in which 50 refugee young people could participate in the research. Our sampling strategies, consent process, and data collection procedures and methods were tried and tested in this pilot, and the lessons were crucial to our future research. We completed the pilot study in mid-2002 and again began the process of applying for further funding. At the end of 2004 the chief investigators gained further funding from VicHealth for a five-year study to look more closely at the factors and contexts that enable refugee young people to have a good start in a new country, and the 'Good Starts Study' was born.

The following months were a buzz of hiring research assistants, revising and developing data collection materials and recruiting—now much easier given the good working relationships that developed with ELSs during the pilot study. Amidst the enormous amount of work that I needed to do to get this study off to a good start came good fortune in good people, which made this project a true team effort: a community worker who gave us insight and assistance in addressing concerns of parents during the consent process, and introduced me to a team of young bilingual workers who were available to assist in data collection in the first and following years; a graphic designer and illustrator who committed herself to the five-year project and provided her services *pro bono*, creating a logo, design and 'look' for the project materials over the years, which have celebrated the young people involved; and a team of investigators and research assistants who showed genuine interest in and respect for both the research participants and the research methodology and rigour.

The project had its ups, downs and transitions, with changes in staff, the dropping out of participants and the great challenge of maintaining contact with 120 young people. We set about making time to meet participants across Melbourne to collect data—which could take 6 to eight hours with some young people—and to manage, analyse and make sense of the vast amount of data that we were collecting each year. Furthermore, crises in the lives of some participants, which came to the attention of Good Starts workers elicited concerns and responses that went beyond those of a traditional 'objective researcher'. Duty of care and commitment to the wellbeing of participants and researchers meant that appropriate referral processes were developed, and supervision and debriefing (provided by Foundation House) were incorporated into the project.

The researchers in my team, who met and worked so closely with the young people, found it an enormous privilege to hear about their lives, and were committed to developing good researcher-participant relationships to make this possible. Their commitment was always evident, whether not giving up on finding a 'lost' participant or working flexible and odd hours to fit data collection into the very busy lives of the young people. The participants have been thanked and farewelled, and there is some sadness on the part of researchers and participants at the end of an important project, which gave many young people a place to be heard. We have learnt much about the strengths and resilience of refugee young people, but also their difficulties and worries about their future studies and employment, their families here and overseas who are still enduring hardship and separation, their relationships with friends and partners, and their place in the wider Australian community.

The Good Starts project could be seen purely as seven years of work; writing applications; developing materials; recruiting and sampling; collecting, managing and analysing data;

writing reports and papers. But it was much more. Every aspect of the project was underpinned by commitment and collaboration—among and between researchers; between researchers and funders, ethics bodies, schools and service providers; and, especially between researchers and participants. The majority of the young people who participated in this study were as committed to Good Starts as we were to them, agreeing to give us their time either at or after school to answer yet another question. “Working with the Good Starts project was the most fun project I ever been to. It’s really fun [to] work with you. I’m going to miss it a lot and the people I work with are really nice and helpful. I like the Good Starts a lot. Thank you for everything” (Achan, Sudan, Year Four, evaluation question).

ROBYN SAMPSON, RESEARCH OFFICER

Today, I took the train to Wan’s house so that we could meet after school to keep working on her Good Starts journal. It’s a big journal this year and it usually takes four or five meetings to get it done. The challenge is that each meeting has to fit in to her chock-a-block life: Year 11 at school, twice-weekly tutoring, Centrelink and doctor’s appointments, a weekend job, a younger brother and sister to look after and a household to help run. Add in illness, rainy days and my part-time hours and we had ourselves a logistical nightmare. Yesterday on the phone she suggested I come to her house after school, so here I am. But she has forgotten our appointment and is just leaving to meet a friend in the city. She is very apologetic and I start worrying about how long it will be before the next window of time opens up in her life. We make another time for next week and then walk together to catch the train towards the city.

As we walk, we start to chat and the stories of her life start pouring out. She talks about her new school and the great teachers who explain things slowly and do not let anyone fight. We sit waiting at the train station and she asks me about different universities, what you can learn there, whether she might get in, and how far away they are from her house. We get on the train and she tells me about the refugee camp where she lived, how she could not sleep because of all the people who were sick and moaning with pain and hunger; about the toilet block and the big tank of water for washing that would run out if you did not get there early; and the bad smell that always hung heavy in the air. She tells me about helping women who were giving birth and how her stomach churned while helping at amputations. I am so engrossed as she takes me further into her world that I almost miss my stop! I have to jump up and out of the train but we promise to continue talking next week. She smiles goodbye as the train pulls her away. The journal is no more complete, but we have found our way to conversation and story-telling and the meandering path of ethnographic research leads me further into the world of a young refugee settling in to life in Australia.

BELINDA DEVINE, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Working with Good Starts young people over the last four years has given me many memorable, enlightening, challenging and enjoyable experiences. It is impossible to capture in just a few words the privilege of being present in the lives of these newly-arrived young people, all of whom came to Australia with their own story to tell and their own vision for the future.

My first Good Starts experience took place in a crowded and energetic classroom at Western English Language School, when I was a university placement student in 2005. There I met 20 newly-arrived young people in their first stage of settlement. In

most of the conversations I had with the students in English, it was a struggle to get beyond *“Hello, how are you? It’s a nice day. See you next week”*. Despite this lack of shared language the room was full of warm, smiling students, very eager to learn and to get involved. As the term progressed so did our ability to communicate beyond the basics, and with this communication came the foundations of participant–researcher relationships that proved to be a real strength of the project.

Building on these relationships and keeping the young people engaged was crucial in the second and third years of the project. I fondly remember working with a group of one Serbian and six Sudanese young men at their secondary school. Despite the differences in our age, gender and culture, we found common ground by taking time to learn about each other, share our stories, and have a laugh along the way. In doing so, we found unlikely similarities between researcher and participant: who would have thought I’d meet a 17-year-old Serbian boy who loved the TV series ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ too? Or a 15-year-old Sudanese boy who wore the same Converse sneakers as me and meticulously laced my sneakers the ‘cool way’?

In this group I also worked with a car-loving 19-year-old Sudanese man who thought my Grandma’s rusty, falling-apart 1979 canary yellow Toyota Corona was fantastic. Each week we took a break and walked to the car park to have a look at the car I was driving that week (the old/borrowed/new car). My assisting this young man with car-related requests (*“where do I get my car windows tinted?”*) over the course of the project helped keep him connected and engaged. Over the years we worked together the participant failed his probationary driver’s license test twice, which he found extremely frustrating. When I saw him recently the first thing he did was proudly pull out his new license from his wallet to show me. I must say I felt very proud of him too.

During the last year of the project, many of our young people said that they would like the project to continue; some wanted *“Good Starts to keep calling and ask how I’m going”*. This year, we asked each young person to tell us what it has been like to be part of the project. They told us that it has helped them learn about life in Australia, they have valued being asked to share their experiences and stories, the project has given them the opportunity to reflect on their lives, their settlement experience and the future ahead, and they have valued the relationships built with other participants and the researchers.

Like many of the participants I, too, would love the opportunity to catch up with these young people down the track, to chat about their journey as we have been doing these last four years, and to let them know how proud we are of the lives they are making for themselves in Australia.

CAITLIN LEAHY, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

The term ‘data collection’ is an elusive one. For the last six months, I have been collecting data for Good Starts. However one understands it, I doubt that it would conjure the images in your head that it now does in mine: I think of photo shoots, lollipops, cups of tea and general ruckus in the Hume Global Learning Centre (the ‘Broadie library’ as the young people call it); I think of immaculately dressed young ladies in deep discussion about engagements, dresses and Bollywood; I think of rowdy boys sharing jokes and stories with each other and with us, and I wonder how we

manage to leave such sessions with complete journals containing rich information about so many new lives in Australia. But always, alongside these experiences are those of young people confiding in us and telling us about the aspects of their lives that are causing them angst and stress: about absent parents and siblings, difficult boyfriends, uncertain engagements, anxieties about school, jobs and the future are recounted to me not only at school or in the local library, but also on the phone. I have been calling many young people whom I have never met or spoken to before. All I have to say is, *“this is Caitlin from Good Starts”*, and no further explanation is required. It strikes me that our participants are willing to share a great deal with someone they have never met before, but I have come to realise that that is the nature of this project. As one young woman explained when I asked her what it was like to be part of Good Starts, *“... only the Good Starts people can ask me these questions”*. It is a project in which relationships have been created and the young people we meet feel comfortable and encouraged to share stories that perhaps they would not share with others. So yes, I collect data, but in this project at least, the term is unfit to describe all that the role involves.

REFLECTIONS OF THE GOOD STARTS PARTICIPANTS ON THEIR FIRST THREE YEARS IN AUSTRALIA

Each year, we asked young people to reflect on what had been most helpful to them in making their life in Australia and also, what had been the most difficult. In looking over their reflections, we investigate the ways in which responses change the longer they are in Australia. Their own reflections yield important insights for helping us to understand how to best support youth over the years of resettlement and these responses are summarised below for each of the three years of this study.

SINCE ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA WHAT HAS HELPED YOU START YOUR NEW LIFE?

Year One journal (108 participants) education, financial security and social support:

In the first year of the study, young people pointed most frequently to school, learning and education as helping them in their new life. Going to school and getting an education was identified as most important. As discussed in Chapter 5, for the most part these young people were enjoying their time in the English Language School;

“English help me make a new life in Australia.”

“Study to become someone later in life.”

“School is most important in Australia.”

Financial assistance was the second most common factor that young people identified as being of help to them in their first year in Australia;

“Centrelink is important to my life.”

“We have money.”

Finally, social networks and social support were identified as the third most common factor important in the first year of settlement. This includes having friends and family as well as support from their communities. Teachers were also identified as playing a key role in the social networks of participants.

Year Two journal (96 participants) education, social support and community and youth services:

In the second year of the study, education and studying continue to be the most common things that young people nominate as being most helpful in their lives, with teachers still featuring as important both in their learning and in their social support networks. Most youth transitioned into a mainstream school, and some into TAFE and vocational training, and these educational opportunities remain key;

“...I study hard and this is good for me.”

“The teacher helped me to read more book story.”

“My teacher told me to talk English she said I’m good at it.”

Friends and family were seen to be as important as education in the young people’s lives in Year Two. Having supportive people around them was also identified as a significant source of comfort;

“My friend help me with me life.”

“Making friends.”

“Being with my family.”

While financial assistance is still important for some young people, they are far less focused on Centrelink and finances as in their first year of settlement and instead, a focus on a wider range of Community and youth services was identified;

“CMYI helped me with work [and] settling.”

Year Three journal (63 participants) friends and family:

In the third year of settlement, it becomes clear that friends and family are the most important source of assistance for young people;

“Thing that helped me in my life was I get the person that I trust in my life.”

“I found the friends to show me the place and teach me how to learnt and teach me the place to go.”

“My family help me anything I need.”

Education, including teachers, school, TAFE, learning and improving English, were still very important for young people. However, as described in Chapter 5, many of the youth are experiencing difficulties with their studies and their schooling. For some, their educational experiences are improving;

“School is getting better.”

“And for the school I get more help than last two years ago.”

There is little mention of community or youth services and little mention of other social services including housing, transport and health in Year Three. Instead, other aspects of life such as employment, holidays and shopping are things that helped young people.

SINCE ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA WHAT HAS MADE YOUR NEW LIFE DIFFICULT?

When asked to write down the issues that made life difficult in each year of settlement, learning English was the single most commonly identified challenge in all three years of this study.

Year One journal (111 participants) learning English:

Not surprisingly, learning English presented the most difficulty for young people in their first year of settlement;

“Not knowing the language.”

“Problem to communicate... to other people.”

After the challenges of learning English, a range of other issues were described by youth as making life difficult in their first year in Australia. These include a lack of housing;

“Until this time I haven’t got my own home with my family.”

Transport;

“No car to drive around.”

“The thing that [hard] for me is to [catch] the bus or tram or trains.”

Laws and authorities;

“Problems with ticket inspectors.”

Not knowing systems or understanding rules, climate, food, roads and daily routines;

“People sleep early.”

“Life is difficult; it is different because it is new.”

Grief and loss were common issues that youth experienced. Many young people mentioned death of family members, being separated from friends and family, missing friends and feeling homesick;

“Lack of friends compared to what I had in Africa.”

“I miss my mum and dad.”

Difficult family relationships were also identified by some young people.

Year Two journal (77 participants) the English language, especially speaking, was still the largest obstacle for young people:

“...I can’t understand what other people says.”

School also presented difficulties in terms of school work and the transition from English Language Schools (ELS) to mainstream high school;

“Sometimes school work is hard. Sometimes reading and writing is hard.”

Young people mention bullying, being different and mixing with students as difficult aspects of transition from ELS to a mainstream school;

“Because I was the only African girl in my school.”

“Socialising with students.”

Not having friends or problems with friends was also difficult;

“It has been difficult to make new friends since I left [language school].”

Not having broad social networks continued to be an issue for some young people;

“The Australian ways was difficult for me because I didn’t know anyone in this country I just came in by the help of the UN...it were so [tough] for me.”

Grief and loss was still as common as in Year One, particularly missing relatives and friends;

“I miss my mum; I miss my sisters and brothers.”

“I don’t have many cousins here or my sister or my aunties and my uncle.”

Problematic family relationships continue to be of some concern;

“It’s getting harder with my dad and two of my brothers.”

Financial problems are mentioned;

“You know sometime money make my life so [hard] because to buy some [clothes].”

Transport is still an issue for some in Year Two, and health is also a concern;

“the doctor told me I might be suffering for a disease but not sure.”

Year Three journal (63 participants) school and study:

Schooling and study are the cause of the key concerns of young people by Year Three. However, whereas problems with school were often more social than academic in Year Two, in Year Three concerns focus mostly on homework, exams and anxiety about VCE and future study;

“Not knowing what to study.”

English language still presented problems but was not mentioned as much as in Year One and Year Two. Instead, being able to finding a job and having financial problems were more common in year three;

“I would like to work but difficult to find a job”, “[not] having enough money.”

In Year Three, only one participant mentioned grief at being apart from relatives as difficult;

“being without my mum.”

Family relationships continued to be a problem for some;

“[When] my sister got pregnant that was difficult [for] my mother and father and me.”

“Moving away from the house; fighting with my aunty.”

Young people also mentioned difficulties in their relationships with friends, especially when these relationships broke up. More young people in Year Three identified a lack of self confidence and fighting with peers as difficulties.

Overall, in the third year of the Good Starts project, young people are beginning to experience the longer term challenges of making a life in Australia—educational achievement, finding a job, dealing with discrimination, and ongoing impact of their refugee past on their family life. However, they continue to meet these challenges with courage and optimism;

*“I am listening to what my brother tells me, I do things that are good for me, like work, my job, and I help my family and my country.
I understand more now. I try hard to help my family, my country.”*

WHAT WERE THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATING IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY?

Rarely do research projects actually ask participants about their own experiences of participating in the research. Because the Good Starts Study required a substantial commitment from youth, both in terms of the demands of data collection and in staying with the project over four years, it was important to gain some insight about the impact that the study might have had. This was especially important as the study took place during their early resettlement period and we were concerned about the additional impact it might have had on their lives. At the close of the study, we asked participants to reflect on their own experiences of Good Starts. Their reflections were overwhelmingly positive. Of course, those who had dropped out of the study may have had other responses, but for those who stayed with us over the four years, participation provided an opportunity to engage with a broader network and set of activities that were seen to support their settlement experiences. Below we summarise the responses of 80 participants who offered an answer to the question ‘what was it like to be part of the Good Starts project?’

Learning new things: Good Starts offered important opportunities for young people to learn new things, including helping to learn English and about life in Australia;

“I think it’s good for me. I learn so much thing from it”

“I got to know the meaning of some words”

“Learned some stuff about Australia”

“I learned many thing example how to lives in Australia and [take] care of myself.”

Self-reflection: Young people particularly valued the space that Good Starts offered for self reflection;

“Reminds me of where I came from and where I’m going, who I was before now and appreciate how far I’ve come.”

“...we talk about what will happen to you, how happy I’m feeling now, and stuff.”

“Good to share private things. Is like a diary of life.”

“Gives me some ideas about what I would like to do in the future.”

“Made me discover more about myself and life in general.”

“It’s good to be asked these things.”

“Good because it’s asking about how you are feeling, yourself and your background.”

Social Connections: The social connections were particularly valued by Good Starts youth;

“Meet with other people... with different languages. Feeling more confident when we meet with people.”

“...show that ideas can be shared with each other, sitting in a group and sharing things; the way things were in Africa and how they are in Australia.”

“...the program allows me to see my friends again and talk about our life and what we are doing.”

“Meeting good people and have a lot of friends.”

“I could introduce myself to new people.”

“I felt like I belong somewhere.”

“...especially a person like me who doesn’t like to be lonely it was good.”

Creative self expression: The opportunities afforded for expressing experiences of settlement through drawings, photos and verbally were highlighted as important, especially as most were struggling with learning English. This made them feel good about themselves and made them feel valued;

“Being in the Good Starts you have the opportunities to talk about your life and to be free to talk about yourself, and listening to other people’s story as well, wow, what a good feeling.”

“It’s a chance to express yourself about living in this country.”

“...talk about things I never talk to anyone about.”

“It’s a good thing—no one’s asking you this stuff.”

“...Helpful, makes you tell people about yourself.”

“I can tell them whatever I feel like telling.”

“...you could write everything down even if you can’t tell somebody.”

“Only the Good Starts people can ask the questions and it’s important.”

A sense of achievement: When asked to think back over their time in the project, many participants in Good Starts felt a sense of achievement and were proud of what they had accomplished;

“I worked hard in Good Starts”

“It is a good idea to be part of its project, it is very nice to care about the new people (refugees), and I feel proud of it.”

“...when reading the question I give the answer perfect this time!”

“I liked getting my journals back.”

“It’s a good thing and I’m proud of it.”

“By working with the Good Starts project I’ve learnt more and now feel confident about life in Australia.”

“I learn new stuff and I feel good.”

“Good, it really changes people’s lives.”

Helping others: Some participants had thought about how the project might help other young people from refugee backgrounds;

“It was pleasure being part of the Good Start project knowing that the research we did may help new arrivals get along easier in new society.”

“they need to ask what your life is because they need to know.”

“...helping young people to find their right ways and their future what will face to them.”

“It’s a good project for young people to do these things. It will be good if they will have more than this.”

Good Starts was designed to promote participation of young people and provide a positive experience for the duration of the project. We believe that research is important both for what it reveals and for the experiences it affords to all those involved in the process. The Good Starts youth highlight how research can add value to early resettlement experiences, offer opportunities to make new social connections and to provide a source of continuity while making a life in a new country.

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

This report has described the key findings from the Good Starts study that followed a group of recently arrived young people with refugee backgrounds over their early years of settlement. The quantitative outcomes for this group of youth have been reported over three years and these findings have been enriched with insights from the qualitative data gathered over four years. The picture that emerges is of a group of young people who, despite their traumatic past, bring many personal resources to the challenges of settlement. They are a group of young people with high levels of optimism, self-esteem and happiness, who have a moderate sense of control over their lives. These attributes do not diminish over the three years of the study. In short, these young people arrive in Australia with high hopes for making a good life and this is important for helping them face settlement challenges.

In terms of health, Good Starts youth show a relatively high level of subjective health and wellbeing. However, they complain of a range of chronic conditions and their risk factors for some health related behaviours (use of alcohol, smoking and gambling) increase over time—particularly for males. Sexual and reproductive health also emerged as a key concern.

Getting a good education is the single most important achievement in the early years for these young people, and their first year in an English Language School (ELS) is in general, a positive experience. They form strong relationships with their teachers, feel valued, safe and that they belong in their ELS. They enjoy the cultural diversity of the student population and importantly, are able to experience educational success. However, teasing and bullying in the ELS is a major concern for the young people and this detracts from their overall positive experience. Transition to a mainstream high school presents a range of difficulties. Many feel they have not yet acquired a sufficient level of English to enable them to engage successfully with the educational requirements, many have difficulties understanding the school 'system' and have no one they can turn to help them negotiate this new environment. They feel less supported by their teachers and their levels of perceived achievement at school decrease. Significantly, their feelings of belonging and safety decrease compared to the ELS and there is a significant increase in experiences of discrimination at school over the three years of the study. By the end of the third year of this study, one third of the young people had left their mainstream high school to seek further technical training or employment.

In terms of social support, families are key for Good Starts youth. Very few of the young people arrived in Australia as part of an intact family. Over the three years of this study household change and family instability featured as a core aspect of family life for many. Two thirds of the young people moved house at least once within the three year period and the composition of the household also changed for many. Youth are living in families with many burdens; the worry for family members still overseas, financial obligations to support these family members and the settlement challenges faced by parents, siblings and other relatives. The supportive context of the family weakens over time—discipline decreases, conflict increases and family attachment decreases.

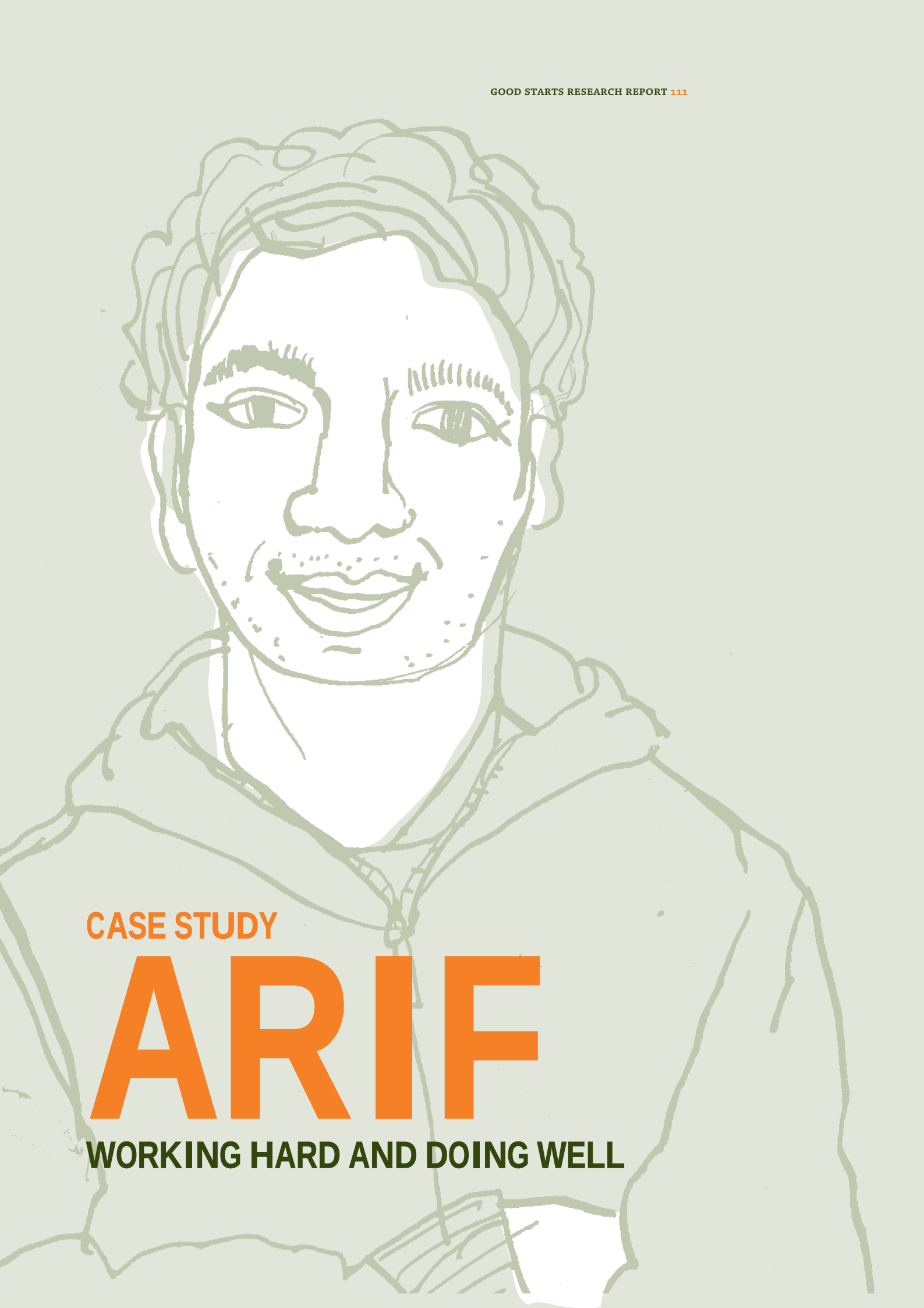
In terms of their connections to the wider community, these young people value their relationships with their ethnic community and the presence of their ethnic community is an important resource for wellbeing in the early settlement years. Youth also feel valued by the wider Australian society and most rank the social status of their family as medium to high, both within their own ethnic community and within the wider Australian community. However, experiences of discrimination are of major concern among these youth - by the third year over one third had experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour. Males were more likely to report discrimination, as were young people born in Africa. Many young people report experiences of discrimination prior to arrival in Australia and the Good Starts study has revealed that these powerful forms of social exclusion not only continue in Australia, but increase over time. This is important because experiences of conflict and violence are key concerns for these youth and the qualitative data in particular highlights how violence—verbal and physical fighting—is one of the key challenges that face these youth as they make their life in Australia.

One of the most important insights of this longitudinal study is that it paints a picture of young people's settlement journey as one of continual change. It is a journey in which they engage with considerable personal resources but which yields both ups and

downs. A young person doing well in one year may struggle the next and then do well again in the following year. Importantly, the study reveals a group of young people who arrive in Australia with considerable potential to do well, to make a good life and to contribute to their new country. However, they face a range of challenges which are far from supportive. For most, the transition to mainstream schools is difficult and their experiences of educational achievement decrease significantly compared to an ELS. Although these young people look to their families as a key source of their social support, families are struggling with many settlement challenges as well as dealing with the worries of relatives left behind. Strengthening families so that they can better support their youth is a key priority for the host community.

Like all adolescents, sexual and reproductive health is an issue of concern, with at least 16 per cent of the female participants becoming pregnant over the four years of this study. Although sexual and reproductive health promotion is a difficult area to tackle, this study suggests that there are gaps in mainstream and youth services in relation to meeting the reproductive health needs of recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds.

Finally, discrimination has emerged as a major source of social exclusion. This is a form of structural violence—that it increases over the three years of this study and that it has a negative impact on the wellbeing of these young people is a chief concern. If there is one overall message to emerge from this study it is that these young people bring with them personal strengths to do well in their lives in Australia. However, most encounter a range of challenges in the host environment which impact on their ability to achieve their dreams.



CASE STUDY

ARIF

WORKING HARD AND DOING WELL

ACTIVITY:
THIS IS WHO I AM

On this page, draw a picture of who you are now.
You can use pictures and words.

ID: 025
Date: 05/10/05
GROUP: NPELS 1
LANGUAGE AIDE: —
RESEARCHER: DEBI TAYLOR

I am 18
I want to be a mechanic
I like soccer and music
I like sad songs

1. GOOD STARTS YEAR 1

Arif is a hard-working young man from Afghanistan who loves playing soccer, watching movies and listening to music. He arrived in Australia with his mother and three younger siblings at the age of 17, after living in a country of exile since he was 10. His father died when he was a child; his older brother remains overseas. When he arrived in Australia, Arif really wanted to learn English and get an education. Although he worried about his mother, missed his older brother and sometimes felt depressed, he was optimistic about the future. He liked the street he lived on because it was safe. He loved being at English Language School where he made some good friends.

After a year at the ELS, Arif went into Year 10 at the local high school. His family had fled Afghanistan when he was in grade four and he had not been to school since. He started working when they left Afghanistan, first making jeans and t-shirts in a sweatshop, then making shoes by hand. By the age of 13 he had started his own shoe-making business, where he took on an old man as his apprentice. In Australia, Arif loved being able to go to school and see friends, but struggled to concentrate on his school work and did not pass many subjects. Facing further failure, he decided it would be better to leave school and find a job to continue supporting his family.

025
ACTIVITY:
THIS IS WHO I AM

On this page, draw a picture of who you are now.
You can use pictures and words.

I am hard worker
and I wish to study but I can't
because I have a lot of problem
in my life.
And I like soccer volleyball.

2. THE GOOD STARTS YEAR 1

Arif would have liked to find a job making use of his experience in shoe-making, but he found that shoes here are mainly imported from China or made with machines instead of by hand. He decided instead to try to become a mechanic, trying a few things that he thought might help, including working for free to get some experience and attending a short course on cars. However, he could not find a place that would take him on as an apprentice. He got some work in a factory on the 3pm–midnight shift for a few months, then his employment officer found him a full-time job as a spot-welder, where he stayed for over a year.

Arif is now working in a car parts factory on the 5am–3pm shift but is worried that he might be laid off soon because the boss has said they might have to cut staff. He took a loan to buy a car and is now saving to buy a house. He regularly sends money to his older brother who has had to flee Afghanistan for Iran and is struggling to survive with his wife and young children:

ARIF'S JOURNALS

Year Two journal

Year Three journal

"I wish he'd come [to Australia] and sometime I help him, I send him money...I was in Iran...I know how life look like. Now is harder than before". Arif believes that his English is improving at the factory because there is no-one else there who speaks his own language. He would like to study more but feels it is too late for him now. He still gets depressed sometimes, but overall is happy and feels that life is getting better. His greatest hope for the future is to get a better job.

025

MY FAVOURITE PLACE AT MY HOUSE

Where is this place? Computer in my brother's room

Write one sentence to describe why this is your favourite place at your house:

I use this thing to talk to people
over seas

MY FAVOURITE PLACE AT MY HOUSE

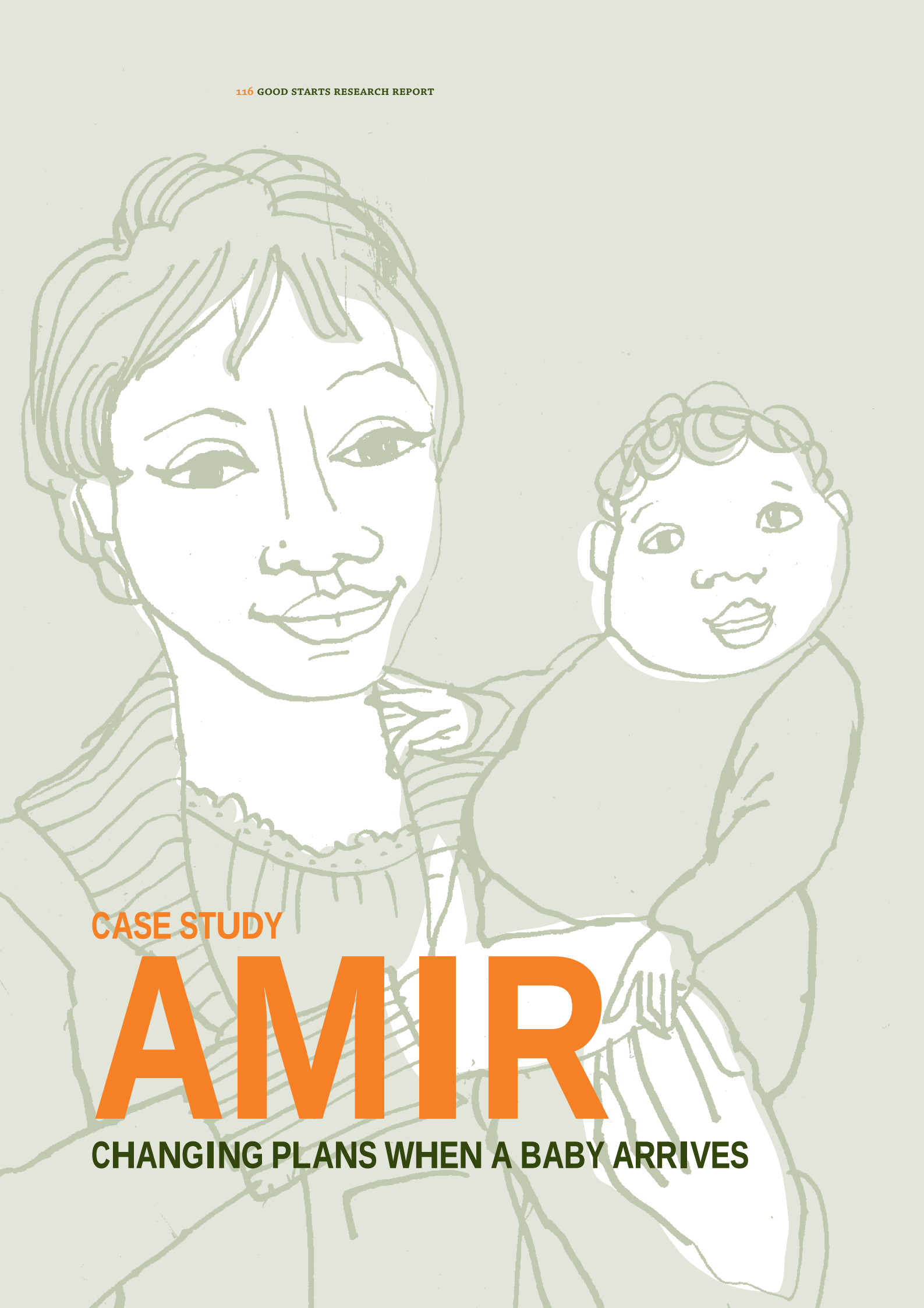


THE GOOD STARTS YEAR 3 29

REFERENCES

- Adler, N. and J. Stewart. 2000. 'The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status'. Summary prepared by Nancy Adler and Judith Stewart in collaboration with the Psychosocial Working Group. J.D. MacArthur and C.T. MacArthur Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health. Available at: <http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/Research/Psychosocial/notebook/subjective.html> (accessed 8 February 2009).
- Ager, A. and A. Strang. 2008. Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(2): 166–91.
- Ahearn, F. (ed.) 2000. *Psychosocial wellness of refugees: Issues in qualitative and quantitative research*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Anderson, S. 1995. Social scaling in children's family drawings: a comparative study in three cultures. *Child Study Journal* 25(2).
- Angel, B., A. Hjern and D. Ingleby. 2001. Effects of war and organized violence on children: A study of Bosnian refugees in Sweden. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc* 71(1): 4–15.
- Atwell, R., S.M. Gifford and B.D. McDonald-Wilmsen. 2009. Resettled Refugee families and their children's futures: Coherence, hope and support. Accepted for publication 13/03/09, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*.
- Backett-Milburn, K. and L. McKie. 1999. A Critical Appraisal of the Draw and Write Technique. *Health Education Research: Theory & Practice* 14(3): 387–398.
- Beirens, H., N. Hughes, R. Hek and N. Spicer. 2007. Preventing social exclusion of refugee and asylum seeking children: Building new networks. *Social Policy & Society* 6(2): 219–29.
- Beiser, M. 2005. The health of immigrants and refugees in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 96(Suppl 2): S30–S44.
- Beiser, M. 2006. Longitudinal research to promote effective refugee resettlement. *Transcultural psychiatry* 43(1): 56–71.
- Beiser, M. and F. Hou. 2001. Language acquisition, unemployment and depressive disorder among Southeast Asian refugees: A 10 year study. *Social Science and Medicine* 53: 1321–34.
- 2006. Ethnic identity, resettlement stress and depressive affect among Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. *Social Science & Medicine* 63: 137–50.
- Beiser, M., S. Noh, F. Hou, V. Kaspar and J. Rummens. 2001. Southeast Asian refugees' perceptions of racial discrimination in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XXXIII: 46–70.
- Beiser, M., A. Shik and M. Curyk. 1999. New Canadian children and youth study literature review. Prepared for Health Canada, March 31. Available at: <http://ceris.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/health/shik1/shik.html> (accessed 8 February 2009).
- Berman, H., M. Ford-Gilboe, B. Moutrey and S. Cekic. 2001. Portraits of pain and promise: A photographic study of Bosnian youth. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research* 32(4): 21–41.
- Bernard, R. 2000. *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publication.
- Bond, L., A. Giddens, A. Cosentino, M. Cook, P. Hoban, A. Haynes, L. Scaffidi, M. Dimovski, E. Cini and S. Glover. 2007. Changing cultures: enhancing mental health and wellbeing of refugee young people through education and training. *Promotion & Education* 13(3): 143–9.
- Bond, L., L. Thomas, J. Toumbourou, G. Patton and R. Catalano. 2000. *Improving the lives of young Victorians in our community: A survey of Risk and Protective Factors*. Melbourne: Centre for Adolescent Health.
- Boyden, J. and J. Ennew. 1997. *Children in focus: A manual for participatory research with children*. Stockholm: Radda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children).
- Brough, M., D. Gorman, E. Ramirez and P. Westoby. 2003. Young refugees talk about wellbeing: A qualitative analysis of refugee youth mental health from three states. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 38(2): 193–208.
- Buss, S. 1995. Urban Los Angeles from young people's angle of vision. *Children's Environments* 12(3): 340–51.
- Carlsson, J. M., D.R. Olsen, E.L. Mortensen and M. Kastrup. 2006. Mental health and health-related quality of life: a 10-year follow-up of tortured refugees. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders* 194(10): 725–31.
- Chapman, R. and A. Calder. 2002. *Starting over: Young refugees talk about life in Britain*. London: The Prince's Trust.
- Clark, C. D. 1999. The autodriven interview. A photographic viewfinder into children's experience. *Visual Sociology* 14: 39–50.
- CMYI. 2006. *Refugee young people and resettlement*. Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.
- Correa-Velez, I. and S.M. Gifford. 2009. Social inclusion and wellbeing among recently arrived refugee youth: The first three years of resettlement in Melbourne, Australia. Unpublished manuscript.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria. 2004. *Meeting the needs of secondary ESL learners with disrupted schooling. Planning bridging programs*. Melbourne: DEECD, Victoria.
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship. 2007. *Settlement Database*. Canberra: DIAC.
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. 2004. *Settlement Database*. Canberra: DIMIA.
- Diggle, P.J., K.Y. Liang and S.L. Zeger. 1996. *Analysis of longitudinal data*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Dobson, A.J. and A.G. Barnett. 2008. *An Introduction to Generalised*

- Linear Models*. 3rd edition. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Ennew, J. 2003. Difficult circumstances: Some reflections on 'Street Children' in Africa. *Children, Youth and Environments* 13(1).
- Gifford, S. M., C. Bakopanos, I. Kaplan and I. Correa-Velez. 2007. Meaning or measurement? Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly-arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(3): 414–40.
- Goodman, E., N.E. Adler, I. Kawachi, A.L. Frazier, B. Huang, B. and G.A. Colditz. 2001. Adolescents' perceptions of social status: Development and evaluation of a new indicator. *Pediatrics* 108(2): 1–8.
- Hastie T., R. Tibshirani and J. Friedman. 2001. *The elements of statistical learning: Data mining, inference and prediction*. Springer-Verlag: New York.
- Heikkinen, M. 2000. Social networks of the marginal young: A study of young people's social exclusion in Finland. *Journal of Youth Studies* 3(4): 389–406.
- Hek, R. 2005. The role of education in the settlement of young refugees in the UK: The experiences of young refugees. *Practice* 17(3): 157–71.
- Kaplan, I. 2009. Effects of trauma and the refugee experience on psychological assessment processes and interpretation. *Australian Psychologist* 44(1): 6–15.
- Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. 2000. *The Social Capital Community Benchmark, Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America*. Available at <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/communitysurvey/docs/survey-instrument.pdf>.
- Kilbride, K. M. and P. Anisef. 2001. *To build on hope: Overcoming the challenges facing newcomer youth at risk in Ontario*. Toronto: Ontario Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement.
- Krieger, N., K. Smith, C. Naishadham and E. M. Barbeau. 2005. Experiences of Discrimination: Validity and Reliability of a Self-report Measure of Population Health Research on Racism and Health. *Social Science and Medicine* 61: 1576–1596.
- Kumsa, M. K. 2006. 'No! I'm not a refugee!' The poetics of belonging among young Oromos in Toronto. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19(2): 230–55.
- Maegusuku-Hewett, T., D. Dunkerley, J. Scourfield and N. Smalley. 2007. Refugee children in Wales: Coping and adaptation in the face of adversity. *Children & Society* 21: 309–21.
- McDowell, I. 2006. *Measuring health: A guide to rating scales and questionnaires*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McMichael, C. and S. M. Gifford. 2009a. "It is good to know now... before it's too late": Promoting sexual health literacy amongst resettled young people with refugee backgrounds. Accepted for publication 18/06/09, *Sexuality and Culture*.
- McMichael, C. and S. M. Gifford. 2009b. Narratives of sexual health risk and protection amongst young people from refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. Accepted for publication, 01/09/2009, *Culture, Health and Sexuality*.
- Mesch, G. S., Turjeman, H. and Fishman, G. (2008). Perceived discrimination and the wellbeing of immigrant adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(5): 592–604.
- Morrow, V. 2001. Using qualitative methods to elicit young people's perspectives on their environments: Some ideas for community health initiatives. *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice* 16(3): 255–68.
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network Refugee Trauma Taskforce. 2003. *Review of Child and Adolescent Refugee Mental Health*. Boston, MA: National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- Ollif, I. and J. Couch. 2005. Pathways and pitfalls: The journey of refugee young people in and around the education system in greater Dandenong, Victoria. *Youth Studies Australia* 24(3): 42–50.
- Orellana, M. F. 1999. Space and place in urban landscape: *Learning from children's views of their social worlds*. *Visual Sociology* 14: 73–89.
- O'Sullivan, K. and L. Olliff. 2006. *Settling in: Exploring good settlement for refugee young people in Australia*. Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.
- Patton, M. Q. 2001. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pearlin, L. I. and C. Schooler. 1978. *The Structure of Coping*. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 19: 2–21.
- Phinney, J. S. 1992. The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 7(2): 156–76.
- Porter, M. and N. Haslam. 2005. Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displaced persons: A meta-analysis. *Journal of American Medical Association* 294(5): 602–12.
- QSR International. 2006. NVivo Version 7.0.189.1, QSR International Pty. Ltd.
- Ritterman, M. L. 2007. *Perceived Social Status and Adolescent Health and Risk Behaviors: A systematic review*. Berkeley, CA: Institute for the Study of Social Change.
- Rosenberg, M. 1989. Self attitudes and other attitudes. Society and the adolescent self-image. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Rumbaut, R. 1994 'The Crucible within: Ethnic Identity, Self-esteem, and Segmented Assimilation among Children of Immigrants', *International Migration Review* 28(4):748–794.
- Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America. 2000. *The Social Capital Community Benchmark*. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
- Sampson, R. and S. M. Gifford. 2009. Placemaking, settlement and well being: The therapeutic landscapes of recently resettled youth with refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. Accepted for publication, 01/09/2009, *Health and Place*.
- Scheier, M. F., C.S. Carver and M.W. Bridges. 1994. Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A re-evaluation of the life orientation test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67(6): 1063–78.
- SPSS. 2007. SPSS Version 15. Chicago: SPSS Inc.
- UNHCR. 2002. *Refugee resettlement: An international handbook to guide reception and integration*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- 2008. 2007 *Global Trends: Refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Valtonen, K. 1994. The adaptation of Vietnamese refugees in Finland. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 7(1): 63–78.
- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. 2007. *The education needs of young refugees in Victoria*. Refugee Education Partnership Project. Available at: http://www.survivorsvic.org.au/resources/publications_and_resources.htm (accessed 8 February 2009).
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. 2007. *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health: Discrimination affecting migrant and refugee communities in Victoria, its health consequences, community attitudes and solutions*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
- Watters C. 2007. *Refugee children: Towards the next horizon*. Rutledge: Milton Park, Oxford.
- World Health Organization. 1996. WHOQOL-BREF: *Introduction, administration, scoring and generic version of the assessment*. Geneva: Programme on Mental Health, WHO.



CASE STUDY

AMIR

CHANGING PLANS WHEN A BABY ARRIVES

Amir is a young woman from Sudan who loves singing, shopping and going out with friends. She arrived in Australia with her mother, step-father and younger siblings. She was not sure of her age, but thinks that she was probably 14 years old at that time. She and her family fled Sudan when she was 11 and lived in Egypt for two and a half years. Her father had died in Sudan. She had nine years of schooling before arrival and could speak a little English.

When she arrived, Amir enjoyed going to English Language School and was satisfied with what she achieved there. She liked her teachers and other students and mostly trusted them. She did not experience bullying or discrimination, but she did not like the fighting there. She was able to concentrate relatively well, had quite a lot of energy for everyday life and was very satisfied with her sleep. She was worried about going to a new school because she did not know anyone there.

Amir reported little family conflict at home and felt the rules were clear, though she argued with her mum about being able to buy the things she wanted and going out with her friends to parties. Her friends and boyfriend were older than her and were allowed to go out more. She often looked after her younger siblings. She felt happy and safe at home but wanted to move out. She liked her street because she could ride her bike there. Although she sometimes experienced 'blue moods' or depression, Amir enjoyed life immensely. She was happy, felt that life was getting much better, was highly optimistic and felt she had some control over life. Going out with friends and to school made her happy. The things she hoped for most in the future were to be a singer, be married with children and living in America.

After leaving ELS, Amir went into Year 10 at the local high school where she mostly liked and trusted her teachers and other students, though she enjoyed going to school less than before. She was less satisfied with her achievements, felt less safe and less successful in her subjects. She missed many days of school for a range of reasons including illness, helping family and not wanting to go. She often just wanted to sleep because school was too hard even though she tried her best. She was very worried that Year 11 would be too hard for her.

At home, she felt safe and relatively happy, though she and her mother argued often about her going to parties and about her boyfriend, whom Amir wanted to marry. After a particularly big argument, Amir stayed at a girlfriend's house for a few days. She and her mum were able to sort it out and Amir felt things got better between them after that. Her mum started to give her more freedom so that she would stay living at home.

Amir was still very happy although she was less optimistic about the future and felt she had less control over life. Although she still could concentrate and had enough energy for everyday life, she had some problems sleeping. She sometimes slept in her little sister's bed because she had bad dreams. She said she often felt unsafe in her bedroom due to an incident with her neighbours. Sometimes she had 'blue moods' and was scared and worried for no reason. However, she had many people she could go to for help or whom she helped, including her mother, sisters, friends and boyfriend. She liked staying up late watching Egyptian movies on cable TV.

Amir stopped going to school when she found out she was pregnant. She did not think she was too young to have a baby. "It's not easy [being pregnant] but it's good anyway

because...you can't wait to see your baby... It's good if you have somebody with you, like you have mum or maybe your husband, they can take care of you". She decided to stay living with her mother for a while after the baby was born so that there would be someone to help with the new-born child. She thought she would move in with her partner in another place after a few months but found the thought of leaving sad: "I'm a little bit sad 'cause I love Melbourne, it's good and I have friends and my parents are here, my mum and sisters, yeah and there I have nobody, only my baby's dad, and there I have no friends, I have nowhere to go". She and her partner thought they would get married when she was older.

Amir has had a lot of experience looking after babies: "my sister she born here in Australia, I used to take care of her 'cause my mum she go sometime to her friend house, to go shopping, so I stay with the baby, and I take good care of [her]". But having her own baby brought changes: "when I was at school I don't have somebody like to worry about. If I go somewhere I can just have fun and stay there maybe four hours, three hours. But now if I go somewhere I can't even take more than two hours out 'cause I've been worried about my baby at home, how she's doing, maybe she's crying". During this period Amir was happy and felt life was getting a bit better.

Amir is now 18 and still living in Melbourne with her mother and family, and looking after her little girl. It is a busy house and sometimes she and her sisters argue. She is hoping to enrol in TAFE soon. She has passed the citizenship test and is now a citizen. Although she believes her family has a very high status within her own community because they are a good family and happy, she believes that within the wider Australian community her family has very little status. She reported that she has experienced discrimination in public places from "stupid people".

As for her future, Amir plans to visit her partner again but does not want to live where he lives because it is expensive and she is bored there. She thinks one day she will have another baby, but not for at least five years. She is not sure she will become a singer because nobody wants her to do it: "But if I didn't be a singer maybe my baby is gonna be a singer (laughs). Like from four years old or five I'm gonna let her go to singing lesson, so she can love it and when she grow she can be a singer! Yeah and she gonna like have more English, hundred per cent, she can sing, she know every word, she can read and write so it's more easier for her". If the English is not too difficult, Amir would like to get a job in an office. She is very happy and believes that life is getting much better.

APPENDICES

- I. THEMES FOR EACH DATA COLLECTION SESSION
- II. STANDARDISED SCALES AND METHODS USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
- III. WEBSITES TO ACCESS THE INSTRUMENTS FOR THE STUDY
- IV. CODING FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITATIVE DATA
- V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE MEASURES USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
- VI. DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES
- VII. PUBLICATIONS
- VIII. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND PRESENTATIONS
- IX. POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS, STUDENT PLACEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER PROJECTS
- X. RELATED STUDIES
- XI. LIST OF ALL STAFF WORKING ON THE STUDY
- XII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE GOOD STARTS STUDY
- XIII. FUNDING BODIES

APPENDIX 1: THEMES FOR EACH DATA COLLECTION SESSION THE FIVE DATA COLLECTION SESSIONS

- 1. WHO I AM:** The first session focuses on personal demographic information, identity and self-esteem, and participants' perceptions of their social status in school, ethnic and Australian community contexts.
- 2. THE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE:** This session focuses on participants' connections with people, trust, social support and social networks, including family, friends and other significant relationships both in Australia and overseas.
- 3. THE PLACES IN MY LIFE:** In this session connection to place and sense of belonging is explored, focusing on school, neighbourhood and other important places
- 4. MY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA NOW:** This session focuses on resettlement and wellbeing, what has helped or hindered settlement in Australia, social participation and barriers, sense of belonging, discrimination, risky behaviour, coping styles, subjective health and quality of life.
- 5. THE PATH TO MY FUTURE:** The final session looks at optimism and sense of control/mastery, and hopes and aspirations for the future.

APPENDIX II: STANDARDISED SCALES AND METHODS USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY VARIABLE INSTRUMENT/ITEMS

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY AND BECOMING

- MY PATH TO AUSTRALIA** Journey maps (young people's experiences prior to arrival in Australia)
- SELF-ESTEEM** Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, 10 items (Rosenberg, 1989)
- OPTIMISM** Optimism—Life Orientation Test, 7 items (Scheier et al, 1994)
- SENSE OF CONTROL** Mastery Scale, 7 items (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978)
- HAPPINESS** 'How happy are you now?' (1=not at all happy, to 4=very happy)
- WHO I AM** Self-portrait (Boyden & Ennew, 1997; Ennew, 2003)
- ETHNIC IDENTITY** Affirmation and belonging subscale—Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure, 6 items (Phinney, 1992)
- ME IN 10 YEARS TIME** Drawings—Who I want to be
- EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS** Educational Aspiration Scale, 2 items (Rumbaut, 1994)

CHAPTER 3: SUBJECTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- SUBJECTIVE HEALTH STATUS** 'In general, your health is' (1=poor to 5=excellent)
- WELLBEING DOMAINS** WHOQOL-BREF; 25 items, 4 domains: physical, psychological, social relationships, and environment; (World Health Organization, 1996)
- BEHAVIOURAL RISK FACTORS** Items from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey (Bond et al, 2000); 'Have you ever...smoked

cigarettes...drunk alcohol without parent's permission... tried other drugs...tried gambling?'; 'In the past month have any of your closest friends... smoked cigarettes... drunk alcohol without parent's permission...tried other drugs...tried gambling?'

CHAPTER 4: OUR FAMILIES

- THE PEOPLE I LIVE WITH** Household composition
- MY SOCIAL CIRCLE** Heikkinen Social Circle (Heikkinen, 2000)
- FAMILY DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT** 7 items from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, Family & Home section (Bond et al, 2000): 'rules in my family are clear', 'my parents want me to call them if I'm going to be late', 'my parents ask if I've done my homework', 'when I'm not at home, one of my parents knows where I am', 'my parents would know if I did not come home on time', 'my family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use', 'if I drank alcohol without my parents' permission, I would be caught'
- FAMILY ATTACHMENT** 8 items from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, Family & Home section (Bond et al, 2000): 'my parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them', 'my parents ask me what I think before making decisions that affect me', 'if I have a problem I can ask one of my parents for help', 'I feel very close to my parents', 'I share my thoughts with my parents', 'I enjoy spending time with my parents', 'my parents often tell me they are proud of me', 'my parents notice when I'm doing something well and tell me'
- FAMILY CONFLICT** 3 items from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, Family & Home section (Bond et al, 2000): 'people in my family often insult/yell at each other', 'people in my family have serious arguments', 'we argue about the same things in my family over and over'
- TRUST** Items adapted from the Social Capital Community Benchmark instrument (Kennedy School of Government, 2000): 'Do you trust your family?'; 'Do you trust your parents?'; 'Do you think your family trust you?'; 'Do you think your parents trust you?'

CHAPTER 5: OUR SCHOOLS

- SCHOOL PERFORMANCE** Items from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, School section (Bond et al, 2000)
- SCHOOL BELONGING AND SAFETY** 6 items: 'feel satisfied with achievement at school this year', 'feel successful at some of my subjects this year', 'looking forward to my future at school', 'try my best at school', 'feel accepted by my teachers at school', 'teachers notice when I'm doing something well and let me know'
- SCHOOL SUPPORT** 6 items: 'feel comfortable in class, like I belong', 'like the students in my class', 'students are friendly to new students in my class', 'feel good about my cultural background when at school', 'feel safe at my school', 'feel accepted by other students at my school'
- SOCIAL STATUS AT SCHOOL** 5 items: 'feel I'm partly responsible for making this school a good place', 'find it easy to talk over my problems with at least one teacher', 'school is helpful if I'm having troubles in my life', 'there is an adult I can go to at this school if I need help', 'care about

quite a few people in my class’

BULLYING AT SCHOOL The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler and Stewart, 2000)

DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL ‘I get bullied or teased at school by other students’ (1=NO! 2=no 3=yes 4=YES!)

ENJOY COMING TO SCHOOL Experiences of Discrimination Scale (Krieger et al, 2005); 1 item: ‘ever experienced discrimination [at school] because of your ethnicity, religion or colour?’

LIKE TEACHERS THIS YEAR Item from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, School section (Bond et al, 2000)

CHANCES TO BE INVOLVED IN SPORTS AND OTHER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES Item from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, School section (Bond et al, 2000)

IMAGES OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT Item from the Adolescents Health and Wellbeing Survey, School section (Bond et al, 2000)

CHAPTER 6: OUR COMMUNITY

SENSE OF BELONGING TO ETHNIC COMMUNITY Photo Novellas (Orellana, 1999; Buss, 1995; Morrow, 2001; Clark, 1999; Berman et al, 2001)

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION Social Capital Community Benchmark (Kennedy School of Government, 2000); 1 item: ‘feeling of belonging to people who share your cultural background’ (1=NO! 2=no 3=yes 4=YES!)

RESPONSE TO UNFAIR TREATMENT Experiences of Discrimination Scale (Krieger et al, 2005); 1 item: ‘ever experienced discrimination because of your ethnicity, religion or colour?’ (1=No 2=Yes)—‘Which situations? At school, getting a job, at work, from the police, in public places’

SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILY IN ETHNIC COMMUNITY 2 items from the Experiences of Discrimination Scale (Krieger et al, 2005)

SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILY IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler and Stewart, 2000)

SENSE OF BELONGING Social Capital Community Benchmark (Kennedy School Government, 2000); 6 items: belonging to ‘your friends’, ‘people in your neighbourhood’, ‘living in Australia’, ‘your place of worship’, ‘students you go to school with’, ‘your family’ (1=NO! 2=no 3=yes 4=YES!)

APPENDIX III: WEBSITE TO ACCESS THE INSTRUMENTS FOR THE STUDY

Qualitative methods and quantitative instruments used in the study can be found in the yearly settlement journals at http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/refugee_youth.html

APPENDIX IV: CODING FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITATIVE DATA— GOOD STARTS, MAY 2008

1. **DISCRIMINATION** This code is for anything that has to do with actions/feelings related to loss of status or being threatened or shamed because of race, ethnicity, cultural background or gender. The key here is an action from one person towards another that is negative,

specifically because of an attribute of race, ethnicity, culture or gender. It does not include actions that for example, might include general name calling (e.g. bitch) or general fighting (e.g. over girlfriends, being drunk and responding to a ‘shove’).

- 1.1 **RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION** This code includes any comments about how participants respond to or deal with discrimination. It includes active responses (talking back, fighting, hitting) or passive responses (turning away, keeping quite, saying ‘there is nothing you can do about it’). It can also include statements about how participants feel (‘I feel bad...I feel angry...’).

2. **SCHOOL** This code includes anything that relates the school environment; what happens at school, school experiences, fighting at school, school work, school discipline, or anything else that happens in the school setting. It does not include educational aspirations such as wanting to finish university, wanting to go to TAFE, wanting to finish Year 12. Nor does it include people at school; teachers, friends and peers are coded under ‘social relationships’.

- 1.1 **PRE-ARRIVAL SCHOOLING** This code is about participants’ experiences of school before they arrived in Australia.

- 1.2 **ELS** This code is about experiences of schooling in the first year in Australia, which for our participants was at an English Language School.

- 1.3 **MAINSTREAM SCHOOL** This code is about experiences in the mainstream school. It includes experiences of transition from ELS to mainstream school.

- 1.4 **TAFE / APPRENTICESHIPS** This code is about any further education after secondary school but not university. It does not include ‘wanting’ to go to TAFE.

- 1.5 **UNIVERSITY** This code is specifically about experiences with University. It does not include ‘wanting’ to go to university.

- 1.6 **OTHER LEARNING ACTIVITIES** This includes educational and training programs like SAIL program, homework clubs, mechanics short courses etc. This is not formal education (i.e. through educational institutions.)

- 1.7 **LEARNING ISSUES** This code is specifically about what participants say about learning; challenges and difficulties, but also achievements.

3. **SEX/INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS** This code is about sexual and reproductive health, having babies, having girl/boyfriends and sexual relationships. It is broad at this time, so anything that falls broadly under this (e.g. HIV, getting pregnant, having a boyfriend or a girlfriend, getting married) would be coded here. It does not include issues of marriages of parents or other relatives, but is specifically about the relationships young people themselves are having.

1. **DRIVING AND CARS** This code is anything to do with cars and driving in Australia or before coming to Australia. It is about P plates, crashes/accidents, wanting to get L plates, drink driving, speeding fines, etc.

1. **WORK** This code is about being employed, part-time or full-time. It is about experiences of work, looking for

work, applying for work, the kind of pay, what kind of work it is and where it is, as well as work environment. It is general at this point, so anything about work should be coded. It is about the actual experience of paid employment. It is not about what kind of job participants would like to do in the future. It is not about, for example, wanting to be a pilot or a model. Where it is about work prior to arrival, double code this with 'work' and 'pre-arrival'.

1. **FIGHTING AND CONFLICT** This code is for anything that has to do with fighting and conflict. It can be in any context and at any time. The code is open at this point in time so anything about physical and verbal conflict fits. It includes verbal and physical fighting and/or physical punishment at home, school, anywhere. It includes bullying, but not where bullying is racism. It is possible that we will break this code down further in the future (maybe into sub categories of at school, at home, between friends, between family, between strangers, between same ethnic group, between different ethnic group, between authority figures) but for the moment, keep this broad and code anything that has to do with fighting in this category. There is a lot about slapping, knives; punching, pushing, alcohol related fighting, etc.—all these, and similar, should be coded here.
1. **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT** This code is for anything that has to do with the police and other law enforcement persons or systems such as security guards, transport inspectors, lawyers and courts etc. It can be either in Australia or prior to arrival, but if prior then double code with 'pre-arrival'.
1. **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS** This code is about anything participants have to say about alcohol and drugs. It comes up in relation to partying and fighting, but code anything related under this code.
1. **POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT GOOD SETTLEMENT** This code is for anything that stands out about really positive influences or factors that participants identify as being really important to help them settle. It should be specific, for example when one girl said 'It is really good when my teacher tells my parents what I am doing well at, that I am a success because then my parents are really proud of me' (not the exact quote but something like that). Use this coding with description—be specific and include strong factors/influences.
1. **GOOD QUOTES** This code is for any quote that is outstanding. A quote that clearly illustrates a point. Even if the quote requires editing, code it.
1. **SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS** This code is for anything about relationships with friends, family, peers, teachers or others (e.g. neighbours). We may create sub-codes for family, friends, peers, teachers, others, but for now code all these as social relationships. It is not about intimate partner relationships with boyfriend/girlfriend, fiancé, husband/wife, etc.
1. **FUTURE** This is for anything participants say about their future, their dreams and hopes and aspirations.
1. **PLACE** This includes neighbourhood, streets, train stations, parks, the city, etc.

1. **PRE-ARRIVAL** This is anything participants say about their life before arrival in Australia. It is about experiences in their home country or any another country they lived in before arrival.
1. **CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES** This is what participants say about their worries and about the things that make their life difficult. It can be in different contexts and different situations. This is not our interpretation of what is hard; it is what they say, when they say '_____ is hard for me'. It includes financial difficulties, settlement difficulties and relationship difficulties. Can double code here for context or relationships etc. It is not about learning difficulties, which are coded under 'learning issues'.

APPENDIX V: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE MEASURES USED IN THE GOOD STARTS STUDY VARIABLE FINDINGS

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY AND BECOMING

SELF-ESTEEM High levels of self-esteem over the three years. No difference between boys and girls. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

OPTIMISM High levels of optimism over the three years. Females are slightly less optimistic than males on arrival in Australia, but the trend begins to reverse by the third year. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

SENSE OF CONTROL Moderate levels of sense of control on arrival. Statistically significant increase on mean scores over time. Males report a higher sense of control than females (borderline significance).

HAPPINESS High levels of happiness on arrival. By Year Three, girls' happiness increases while boys' happiness decreases. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

ETHNIC IDENTITY High levels of ethnic identity over the three years. Mean scores decrease slightly during the second year in Australia and continue to increase during the third year, especially among boys. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS High levels of educational aspirations on arrival with a slight decline over time. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

CHAPTER 3: SUBJECTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SUBJECTIVE HEALTH STATUS High levels of subjective health status over the three years. Females rated their health status lower than males but the difference is not statistically significant.

WELLBEING DOMAINS

PHYSICAL High levels of wellbeing in the physical domain over the three years; slightly higher among boys than girls (not significant). Changes in mean scores over time are not statistically significant.

PSYCHOLOGICAL High levels of wellbeing in the psychological domain over the three years. Boys report higher levels than girls over the first two years; by the third year similar levels are reported by both groups. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS High levels of wellbeing in the social relationships domain on arrival and these levels increase over time, especially among females. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender are not statistically significant.

ENVIRONMENT High levels of wellbeing in the environment domain on arrival, and these levels increase over time (statistically significant). Boys report slightly higher levels than girls (not statistically significant)

BEHAVIOURAL RISK FACTORS Overall increase in risk behaviours over time, especially among males. Statistically significant increase in smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol without parents' permission over the three year period. Males were more likely than females to have drunk alcohol without parents' permission and to have tried gambling (statistically significant).

CHAPTER 4: OUR FAMILIES

FAMILY DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT Good levels of family discipline and management on arrival but these show a statistically significant decline over the three year period. Females report more positive levels over time than males (statistically significant).

FAMILY ATTACHMENT High levels of family attachment on arrival; statistically significant decline over time. Females report slightly higher levels than boys over the first two and a half years (not statistically significant).

FAMILY CONFLICT Low levels of family conflict on arrival; statistically significant increase over the three year period. Boys report higher levels than girls during the second year, but the trend reverses during the third year. Changes in mean scores by gender are not statistically significant.

TRUST High levels of trust towards parents and family over the three years. No significant differences between males and females. When asked whether or not their parents and family trust them, youth reported high levels on arrival, which decreased significantly over the first three years. No significant differences between boys and girls.

CHAPTER 5: OUR SCHOOLS

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE Youth reported high levels of perceived school performance over the three years. Performance was higher at the English Language Schools (ELS) and decreased when youth moved to mainstream schools (statistically significant). This decline was more prevalent among males than among females (not statistically significant).

SCHOOL BELONGING AND SAFETY High levels of sense of belonging and safety over the three years, being

higher at the ELS and decreasing when they moved to mainstream schools (statistically significant). The decline was more prevalent among males (not statistically significant).

SCHOOL SUPPORT Youth reported high levels of perceived school support over the three years. Support was higher at the ELS and decreased during the second and third years when they attended mainstream schools (statistically significant). Boys reported lower levels of perceived support during the third year (not statistically significant).

SOCIAL STATUS AT SCHOOL Moderate levels of perceived social status at school. Changes over time and by gender were not statistically significant.

BULLYING AT SCHOOL Moderate to low levels of bullying over the three years. Perceived bullying decreased in the mainstream schools (not statistically significant). Compared to boys, girls reported slightly higher levels of bullying at the ELS but lower when they moved to mainstream schools (not statistically significant).

DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL Statistically significant increase in the percentage of youth who experienced discrimination at school over the 3-year period. A greater percentage of boys reported discrimination in year 2 (mainstream school) compared to girls (not statistically significant).

ENJOY COMING TO SCHOOL High levels of enjoyment in coming to school over the 3 years. Statistically significant decline from year 1 (ELS) to years 2 and 3 (mainstream schools). Girls reported higher levels of enjoyment than boys (statistically significant).

LIKE TEACHERS THIS YEAR Overall, youth liked their teachers over the three year period, more so at the ELS than at mainstream schools (statistically significant). Compared to girls, boys reported that they liked teachers less (not statistically significant).

CHANCES TO BE INVOLVED IN SPORTS AND OTHER SCHOOL

ACTIVITIES Overall, youth reported good levels of opportunities to be involved in sports and other school activities over the three years, more so at ELS than at mainstream schools (statistically significant). Boys reported greater opportunities than girls in Years One and Two but lower in year three (not statistically significant).

CHAPTER 6: OUR COMMUNITY

SENSE OF BELONGING TO ETHNIC COMMUNITY High levels of sense of belonging to the ethnic community over the three years. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender were not statistically significant.

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION Statistically significant increase in the percentage of youth who experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour, over the three year period. A greater percentage of boys reported discrimination than girls in the first two years (not statistically significant).

SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILY IN ETHNIC COMMUNITY Overall, youth reported moderate to high levels of perceived social status of their families in their ethnic communities. Perceived status increased significantly

over time. Changes in mean scores by gender were not statistically significant.

SOCIAL STATUS OF FAMILY IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

Moderate levels of perceived social status of youth's families in the broader Australian community over the three years. Changes in mean scores over time and by gender were not statistically significant.

SENSE OF BELONGING Over the three years, youth reported relatively high levels of sense of belonging to families, friends, students at their schools, people in neighbourhood, their places of worship, and more generally, to living in Australia. Only feelings of belonging to place of worship decreased significantly over time. Compared to boys', girls' feelings of belonging to their friends and to their place of worship were significantly higher.

APPENDIX VI: DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES

	Wan	Arif	Amir	Zoran	Leyla	James
GENDER	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
AGE AT ELS	16	17	14	14	17	12
COUNTRY	Burma	Afghanistan	Sudan	Serbian (Croatia)	Iraq/Turkey	Sudan
FAMILY HERE	Mum, younger siblings, lots of relatives	Mum, younger siblings	Mum, younger siblings	Parents and siblings (i.e. intact family)	Siblings Parents overseas	Older brother, then mother now left again
DAILY ENDEAVOURS NOW	Year 12	Factory work	Baby	University	TAFE	Pre-apprenticeship
ASPIRATIONS	Nurse, married	Mechanic	—	—	Hairdresser, Mum	—
WELLBEING	Doing well	Carrying a lot of responsibility well	Doing well negotiating changes in plans with baby	Doing very well	Struggling with isolation, wants work	Struggling without mother, friends

APPENDIX VII: PUBLICATIONS

PUBLISHED PAPERS

- Gifford, S. M., C. Bakopanos, I. Kaplan and I. Correa-Velez. 2007. Meaning or measurement: Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(3): 414-440.
- Atwell, R. and S. M. Gifford. 2009. Resettled refugee families and their children's futures: Coherence, hope and support. Accepted for publication, 13/03/09, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*.
- McMichael, C. and S. M. Gifford. 2009. "It is good to know now...before it's too late": Promoting sexual health literacy amongst resettled young people with refugee backgrounds. Accepted for publication, 18/06/09, *Sexuality and Culture*.
- Sampson, R. and S. M. Gifford. 2009. Refuge and recovery: The therapeutic landscapes of recently resettled youth with refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. Accepted for publication, 01/09/2009, *Health and Place*.
- McMichael, C. and S. M. Gifford. 2009. Narratives of sexual health risk and protection amongst young people from refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. Accepted for publication, 01/09/2009, *Culture, Health and Sexuality*.

BROADSHEETS

- Broadsheet#1—Refugee Boys and School
- Broadsheet#2—Refugee Youth and Partnerships with Police
- Broadsheet#3—Refugee Girls and School
- Broadsheet#4—Refugee Youth and Discrimination
- Broadsheet#5—Refugee Youth and the School Environment
- Broadsheet#6—Promoting Sexual Health Amongst Refugee Youth
- Broadsheet#7—Refugee Communities and Driving

APPENDIX VIII: CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND PRESENTATIONS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

- Gifford, S. M. 2009. 'Wellbeing and resettlement among young people with refugee backgrounds in Australia'. Invited Keynote. International Association For Human Development. Asia Pacific Workshop. 4-5 July, Flinders University, Adelaide, S.A.
- December 2008. 'Rethinking settlement in an unsettled world'. *Thesis Eleven* research symposium, India.
- 2008, 'Rethinking resettlement'. Invited seminar, 25 June, University of Kent, U.K.
- May 2006. Keynote address: 'Innovation in the care of forced migrants: Perspectives from Australia'.

International Workshop, European MA in Migration, Mental Health and Social Care. University of Kent, UK.

——— June 2006. Invited seminar: 'Psychosocial determinants of refugee youth health in Melbourne, Australia'. Rehabilitation Centre for Survivors of Torture, Copenhagen.

——— February 2005. Symposium paper: 'Building partnerships and community strengthening through applied research into refugee health and wellbeing'. *Resilience, recovery, reconciliation: Promoting human rights, integrity and social responsibility conference*. International Society for Health and Human Rights, Vadodara, Gujarat.

Gifford, S.M., I. Kaplan and J. Mitchell. February 2005. Symposium paper: 'Frameworks for integration: Bridging policy, research and practice for recovery and resettlement of refugee children and adolescents'. *Resilience, recovery, reconciliation: Promoting human rights, integrity and social responsibility conference*. International Society for Health and Human Rights, Vadodara, Gujarat.

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Bakopanos, C. July 2007. 'Unpacking the settlement experiences of refugee youth: Tracking refugee young people's wellbeing'. *Unpacking The Suitcase: Maintaining the wellbeing of newly arrived young people*. Conference of the South Eastern Migrant Resource Centre, Melbourne.

——— May 2007. 'Good Starts for refugee young people: Contexts and psychosocial factors that support health and wellbeing in the first years of settlement'. *Are We There Yet? National Youth Affairs Conference*, Melbourne.

——— December 2006. 'The Good Starts study for refugee youth: Determinants of wellbeing and settlement and implications for policy and practice'. *Australian Sudanese Youth Conference*, Melbourne.

Bakopanos, C., I. Correa-Velez and Gifford, S.M. October 2005. 'Good Starts: Indicators of wellbeing for recently-arrived refugee youth'. *Diversity in Health National Conference*, Melbourne.

Bakopanos, C. and Gifford, S.M. November 2004. 'Researching the wellbeing of newly-arrived refugee youth during their first five years in Australia'. *The Health and Wellbeing of Refugees and Asylum Seekers Conference*, APS International Conflict Resolution Centre, Melbourne.

Correa-Velez, I. and S. M. Gifford. September 2008. 'Psychosocial determinants of wellbeing among recently-arrived refugee youth in Australia'. *From Margins to Mainstream, 5th World Conference on the Promotion of Mental Health and the Prevention of Mental and Behavioural Disorders*. Melbourne.

Gifford, S. M. November 2007. 'Wellbeing and resettlement for refugee youth'. *Asylum Seekers Conference*, University of Melbourne.

——— October 2007. 'Integration and Australian youth'. *Truth, Lies and Mediascapes*, Victoria University,

Melbourne.

Gifford, S.M., and C. Bakopanos. June 2005. 'Methodological challenges of longitudinal studies: Good Starts study of newly arrived refugee youth'. *Researching Refugee Health Conference*, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Gifford, S.M., C. Bakopanos and I. Correa-Velez. November 2005. 'Family, friends and community; supporting wellbeing among newly arrived refugee youth in the first year of settlement'. *Hopes fulfilled or dreams shattered? Refugee resettlement conference*. Sydney.

Plontz, A., B. Williams. and S.M. Gifford. September 2007. 'Policy-oriented refugee research: Analysing small sample survey data from a culturally heterogeneous population of new refugee arrivals in Victoria'. *42nd Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society*. Brisbane.

LECTURES AND SEMINARS

Bakopanos, C. September 2007. 'Good Starts for refugee young people: Contexts and psychosocial factors that support health and wellbeing in the first years of settlement'. Invited guest lecture, 1st Year Youth Work, Victoria University, Melbourne.

——— March, 2007. 'People from refugee backgrounds living in Australia and their health'. Invited guest lecture, 1st Year Health Sciences, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Correa-Velez, I. October 2008. 'Undertaking research with young people from a refugee background'. Invited guest lecture, Bachelor of Education, School of Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane.

——— March 2008. 'Challenging common refugee health myths'. Refugee Health Symposium—Year 2 Medical Students, University of Queensland, Brisbane.

——— August 2006. 'The health of refugee communities in Australia: Building up the evidence'. Invited guest lecture, Community Groups and Public Health, School of Public Health, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

——— September 2006. 'The health of refugee communities in Australia: Building up the evidence'. Invited guest lecture, Psychosocial Perspectives on Public Health, School of Public Health, 3rd year subject, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Gifford, S.M. May 2007. 'Ethnography and longitudinal studies of refugee youth'. School of Social Sciences seminar, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

——— October 2006. 'Navigating settlement transitions: Ethno-epidemiology and refugee youth wellbeing'. Centre for Health and Society, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

——— December 2005. 'Good Starts Refugee Youth research project: First year findings'. Refugee Health Research Centre seminar series, Melbourne.

——— August 2005. 'Wellbeing amongst newly arrived refugee young people'. Seminar presented to the Centre

for the Study of Mother and Children's Health, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

——— November 2004. 'Researching the health and wellbeing of newly-arrived refugee youth: Methods, logistics and ethics'. Refugee Health Research Centre seminar series, Melbourne.

Plontz, A., B. Williams and S.M. Gifford. November 2007. 'Policy-oriented refugee research: Analysing small sample survey data from a culturally heterogeneous population of refugee youth recently resettled in Melbourne, Australia'. Postgraduate festival, School of Public Health, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Sampson, R. August 2007. 'The health of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia: Building up the evidence to promote healthy policies'. Invited guest lecture, Psychosocial Perspectives on Health and Illness, School of Public Health 3rd year subject, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

——— May 2008. 'Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: issues for health workers'. Invited guest lecture, Health Skills Development, School of Public Health 2nd year students, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

SERVICE PROVIDER PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

Bakopanos, C. November 2006. 'Transitions: The experiences of English Language School and mainstream schools and the role of the school context in supporting settlement'. *Migrant and Refugee Youthlink Subcommittee Meeting*, North West Migrant Resource Centre, Melbourne.

——— October 2006. 'Good Starts for refugee young people: Their experiences of English Language school and mainstream school and transition, and the role of the school context in supporting settlement'. *Department of Education & Training, Professional Development Day for Multicultural Education Aides*, Melbourne.

——— July 2006. 'Ethical issues in research with refugee youth: A case example from the Good Starts study'. *Health Ethics Committee Training DVD*, Centre for Ethics in Medicine and Society, Monash University, Melbourne.

Bakopanos, C. and R. Sampson. May 2006. 'Good Starts for refugee young people: The role of the school context in supporting settlement in the first year of arrival'. *New Arrivals Program Professional Development Day*, Melbourne.

Correa-Velez, I. October 2008. 'Psychosocial determinants of wellbeing among recently-arrived youth from refugee backgrounds: The first two years of resettlement'. *Mental Health Week Seminar*, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, Brisbane.

——— August 2008. 'Health and wellbeing of recently arrived youth with a refugee background: The first two years in Australia'. *Staff Meeting*, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, Brisbane.

——— August 2006. 'Adolescent refugee health'. Presentation, Northern Division of General Practice,

Melbourne.

Correa-Velez, I. November 2005. 'Psychosocial determinants of subjective health and wellbeing for recently arrived refugee youth'. Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network, *Whittlesea Community Connections*, City of Whittlesea, Melbourne.

Gifford, S.M. November 2005. 'Good Starts for recently arrived refugee youth'. *Adult Multicultural Education Program (AMEP) national forum: Meeting youth settlement needs in the AMEP*, Melbourne.

Sampson, R. December 2007. 'Good Starts for Refugee Youth: Promoting health and wellbeing during settlement'. *Centrelink Multicultural Services Officers*, Melbourne.

APPENDIX IX: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS, STUDENT PLACEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS

Aude Plontz (2006–09) *Good Starts for refugee youth: An ethnographic longitudinal study of the determinants of wellbeing and settlement*. PhD candidate, La Trobe University.

This research focuses on the methodological challenges of combining quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate wellbeing among a refugee population over time.

Madeleine Tempany (2005–08) *Concepts of mental health and wellbeing held by Sudanese youth*. Doctor of (Clinical) Psychology candidate, Monash University.

This research explores the ways in which Sudanese youth understand mental health and wellbeing, including those factors which are seen to cause mental ill health and which support recovery.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Belinda Devine (2005) *Giving and receiving support: The support networks of refugee young people*. Third year Bachelor of Development Studies placement, La Trobe University.

Debi Taylor (2005) *The hopes and aspirations of young refugees and the challenges of disrupted education*. Third year Bachelor of Development Studies placement, La Trobe University.

Nina Guethert (2006) *Transition from English Language School to High School: Development of a booklet for students leaving an ELS for mainstream secondary education*. Third year Bachelor of International Relations placement, La Trobe University.

Luella Monson (2007) *Literature review: 'Connections to Place' and refugee youth*. Bachelor of Anthropology (Honours) placement, La Trobe University.

Verity Nicholson (2008) *Qualitative data analysis: The changing hopes and aspirations of recently arrived youth over the first three years of settlement*. Third year Bachelor

of Development Studies/Bachelor of Health Sciences placement, La Trobe University.

VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS

Jami Jones (2006) *Disseminating results to the community: Development of a Good Starts public exhibit.* Volunteer project.

Verity Nicholson (2007) *Qualitative data analysis: Connections to place among 20 newly arrived youth.* Volunteer project.

APPENDIX X: RELATED STUDIES

The Good Starts study has given rise to a number of related projects which are designed to investigate further some of the issues that came out of the project:

GOOD STARTS ARTS: VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SETTLEMENT AMONG NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEE YOUTH

Funded by ARC Linkage, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) 2006–09.

Good Starts Arts is an innovative visual anthropology and community arts project involving Somali, Sudanese and Afghani young people. The project aims to elicit qualitative data about subjective experiences of settlement while also producing a variety of audio-visual materials for public distribution. See www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/goodstarts_arts.html

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON WELLBEING AND SETTLEMENT AMONG RECENTLY ARRIVED YOUTH: A PILOT STUDY OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

Funded by La Trobe University Central Large Grant 2006.

This study aimed to identify the key characteristics of the family and household environment that promote psychosocial wellbeing among refugee youth during resettlement. Ten families with participants in the Good Starts study were interviewed to explore how families envisage and support the futures of their adolescent children. The study was conducted in partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI). It led to the development of post-graduate research by Meredith Levi as part of her professional doctorate in Health Psychology, La Trobe University. Her research, *Mothering in a new country*, explores issues in the parenting of adolescents for mothers with refugee backgrounds.

PROMOTING SEXUAL HEALTH AMONG REFUGEE YOUTH

Funded by the Department of Human Services 2007–08.

This study aimed to investigate how refugee youth access, interpret and use sexual health information. The findings will be used to develop appropriate strategies to promote sexual health and sexual health literacy among refugee youth in Victoria. The study was being carried out with the CMYI and Footscray Youth Housing Group. A report, released in early 2009, is available at www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/documents/sexual_report.pdf

SETTLEMEN

Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

This SettleMEN project is a longitudinal descriptive study aiming at gaining a deeper understanding of the health and resettlement experiences of recently arrived adult men from a refugee background who are living in Brisbane and Toowoomba (Queensland). This project is a partnership between LaRRC and QPASTT (the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma). See www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/projects.html

APPENDIX XI: LIST OF ALL STAFF WORKING ON THE STUDY

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Sandy Gifford 2004–08

ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATORS

Ida Kaplan 2004–08

Ignacio Correa-Velez 2004–08

RESEARCH FELLOW

Samantha Abbato 2007–08

RESEARCH OFFICERS

Christine Bakopanos 2004–08

Kirsty Sangster 2004

Marcus Nicol 2006–07

Pam McGrath 2004

Robyn Sampson 2005–08

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Adeng Mabor 2004

Aja Makuei Deng 2004

Amy Camilleri 2005–06

Andrew O'hide Ohuli 2004, 2006

Anthony Rodriguez Jimenez 2008

Apiyo Auma 2004–07

Ashraf Abdul-Ridha 2006–07

Belinda Devine 2005–08

Caitlin Leahy 2008

Caitlin Nunn 2005

David Lukudu 2004

Debi Taylor 2005–08

Deng Tor Yong Deng 2004

Don Vicendese 2008

Jami Jones 2006–07

Lavirick Rizig 2004–05

Madeleine Tempany 2005–06

Mauro Tarquinio 2005

Rebecca Atwell 2005

Richard Aluier 2004

Samuel Yerimia 2004

Tekeste Aynalem 2004–07

Tulsi Bisht 2005

APPENDIX XII: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE GOOD STARTS STUDY

We would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of the following people:

Mr and Mrs Spitzer

Lyn Walker, Rob Moodie, Irene Ambrozic, Phillipa McLean and Mark Boyd of VicHealth

Katherine Chadwick and Andrew Budge of Designland and Kat Chadwick Illustration

Chaun Soh of iDeazz & Concepts

Ros Beaton, Manager, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, Department of Education, Employment and Training

Yolette DeZilwa (Principal), Smara Piskopos (Welfare Coordinator) and the teachers of Western English Language School

Enza Calabro (Principal), Poppy Christodoulou and the teachers of Noble Park English Language School

Christine Pipka (Principal) and the teachers of Broadmeadows English Language Centre

The student welfare officers, teachers and administrative staff of all the schools and TAFEs who have supported the project.

The many interpreters who worked with the project team.

Ida Kaplan and Ros Leary of Foundation House for debriefing and referral support.

To the 120 young people who participated in the Good Starts Study through 2004–08, we thank you for your time, openness and commitment to meeting with us and sharing so much about your lives with this project. We wish you all the very best for your futures.

APPENDIX XIII: FUNDING BODIES

- The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)
- La Trobe University
- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House)
- The Sidney Myer Fund & The William Buckland Foundation (through a grant from Foundation House)
- Mr & Mrs Spitzer
- Designland and Kat Chadwick Illustration

