**Fathering Across Cultures Website – Video Transcript**

**Rhyannon Elliott, Manager Refugee Dads and Kids Weekend, CatholicCare**

*Question: When and how did the program begin?*

[Rhyannon Elliott] Refugee Dads and kids program began initially as the African dads and kids program and that began about ten years ago probably more than ten years ago now with the newly established sunshine family relationship centre, so that was a consortium of Catholic air relationships Australia a McKillip Family Services and also community West.

They commissioned some research into what was the newly arrived Sudanese population at the time. What they found was that children were being resourced and supported through the school systems mums, women, were being supported through community networks social networks and also access to government funding, and the thought was that the dads in the community were really missing out in a lot of ways. They'd brought their families safely through trauma and torture to a new country and the decision was made to focus on the relationship between the dads and their children through a really intensive program of relationship building, of story, of challenging activities and of fun, to really build their skills here in Australia built their parenting confidence and build their relationship with their children.

The hope was that that relationship building would then extend outwards into the rest of the family as well. So since that time, since 2008 we've run almost 20 camps. We've run 19 and our 20th was meant to be in May this year and we're looking forward when we can all but get back together - to running more programs.

*Question: Who attends Refugee Dads and Kids Weekend?*

[RE] In 2017 we broadened the program from just African dads and kids to refugee dads and kids and are now very happy to welcome families from all communities. We have families from Iraq and Iran, from Syria, from Myanmar, from Afghanistan, as well as, dads and kids from African countries as well. So, dad brings along one of his kids for a weekend of challenge, of fun, of connection, and of relationship building.

*Question: What do participants gain from the program?*

[RE} So our camps, our weekends, are a combination of research-based relationship theory, which sounds really dry and we make it really fun, combined with challenge activities, such as giant swing abseiling, blind foxing, high ropes, we do orienteering, sometimes we do bush walking, we have campfires.. so we have a combination of working on strengthening the relationship and also on collaborating as a father-child team, but also as a wider team. We have the analogy of an emotional bank account and we say that in every interaction, in every moment of your day together there's opportunity to add to that emotional bank account and there's opportunities to withdraw and we look at ways of making sure that that emotional bank account is full, which allows us as a team, as a father-child team, to weather the storms of life and building and growing a healthy strong relationship.

We have a really great activity that dads and kids love to complete. It's on the very last day of camp and it's called ‘ask dad ask kids’ where we give both people a set of questions, in in their language if necessary, we have interpreters on-site as well and we have translated questions. And it's questions like “if you're a superhero, who would you be?”, “if you could have a magic power, what would it be?”, “what was it like for you growing up?”, “what is your biggest dream for me?” and we see lots of little heads bent together, answering those questions and quite often when we hear the evaluations at the end of the camp, it's been one of the special most special parts of the of the camp. So we hope that fathers and their kids, kids and their dads, come away from the experience feeling energized, feeling closer feeling more connected and able to take that strong relationship back into their family unit.

*Question: What has CatholicCare learnt from engaging with this cohort?*

[RE] Regardless of country of origin, the dads have the same griefs over the loss of family, loss of friends, loss of their country, they have the same fears of bringing up their children within the Australian context and they have the same ambitions for the safety and wholeness for their children and for their family.

*Question: Do you have any tips for service providers planning programs with migrant and refugee men?*

[RE] To listen to the voices of the community that you're working with. So listen to that voice and use that voice when you are planning your programs, planning your sessions. We’re always really conscious of co-creating the programs that we run, whether that's on the spot, on the camps, making sure that what we're doing with the families, with the dads, with the kids, is what they're wanting to be doing. And we also use evaluations at the end of the camp to further improve our processes, improve the sessions we run, even bring in new and interesting speakers that really answer the questions and answer the needs of the community.

*Question: What if Dads don’t feel confident with English?*

[RE] If they don't feel as confident as they would like, we make sure that we have interpreters on site to be able to allow them to participate as fully in the campus as they're able. We like to have a number of interpreters, particularly obviously for different languages, but even within language groups we like to have a number of different interpreters so that interpreters can work very closely with the dads.

Our way of working with the with the whole group is in a very interactive style, so we find that the use of interpreters really really crucial to actually be sitting with the dads and talking with them as we're talking. We don't generally tend to work in a in a present-interpret style. We tend to work in a in a style where we're all collaborating, and we have some very schooled interpreters who help us do that work.