



the Humanitarian  
group

ANNUAL REPORT  
2016-2017

Community focused legal services for people new to Australia

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Whilst not new to the Board, this was my first year as Chair. It is with much gratitude that I thank each member of the Board for their continuing work and commitment to The Humanitarian Group.

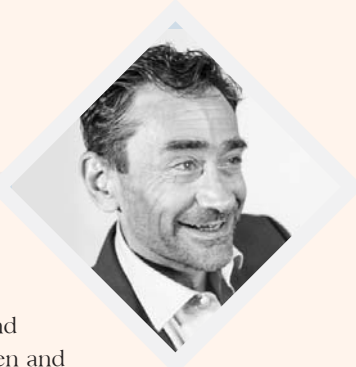
This year we experienced many 'head winds', including significant funding changes. Despite this, the Board, together with the unceasing efforts of CEO Helen Pearce and her team, have worked to ensure that funding is secured and the organisation can continue to help ensure people new to Australia from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds understand

their rights and are treated with equality and dignity. This year we benefited from an incredibly successful crowdfunding campaign, which helped us continue to provide free legal assistance clinics. We look forward to similar campaigns in the future to help bolster our services.

In addition to the dedicated staff, we are supported by a wide volunteer network, including bilingual volunteers, who between them speak 55 languages, and legal and administrative volunteers and pro bono lawyers, who help us to provide migration and legal

assistance. The Board acknowledges and thanks CEO Helen and her team for coordinating all these moving parts to ensure a professional service is delivered each day. Throughout the year I have been privileged to meet some of our clients. It is humbling to hear their stories and inspiring to listen to their plans, aspirations and dreams. It is those stories that inspire the Board to ensure that the work done by The Humanitarian Group continues.

AKRAM (AK) SABBAGH



OUR WORK IN 2016-2017

This year, global forced displacement reached unprecedented levels, with figures reaching the equivalent of 20 people being forced to flee their home every minute. Despite calls for increased international cooperation, the situation is expected to worsen, and will impact the landscape in which we work and the services we offer. The fast track assessment process for maritime arrivals has continued to be a focus for our service with 39% of those approaching us for help this year seeking assistance with temporary protection visa applications. To meet this demand we have had to divert resources from other areas of our practice and in April 2017 we

temporarily suspended family reunion and generalist services. As a result up to 600 hundred people were unable to access our services in April, May and June. It is in this context that we recorded 3,637 people approaching us for assistance in 2016-2017. They came from 80 different countries around the world and the majority have survived torture and trauma. Whilst we were able to provide advice and minor assistance to the vast majority of those people who approached us, closer to 4,253 people would likely have requested assistance if we had not suspended services. Our ability to assist so many people

has been possible due to the introduction of different and innovative models of service delivery to increase our capacity. This has required many of our clients to take on greater responsibility for their own matters than previously and we have worked with them and the community to establish appropriate support networks. This is consistent with our core purpose of empowering vulnerable people in a way that embraces diversity and strengthens communities. At the same time, we have been able to increase the level of assistance given to the most vulnerable of our clients with 16% of people we assisted in 2016-2017 being provided with full application and casework assistance.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

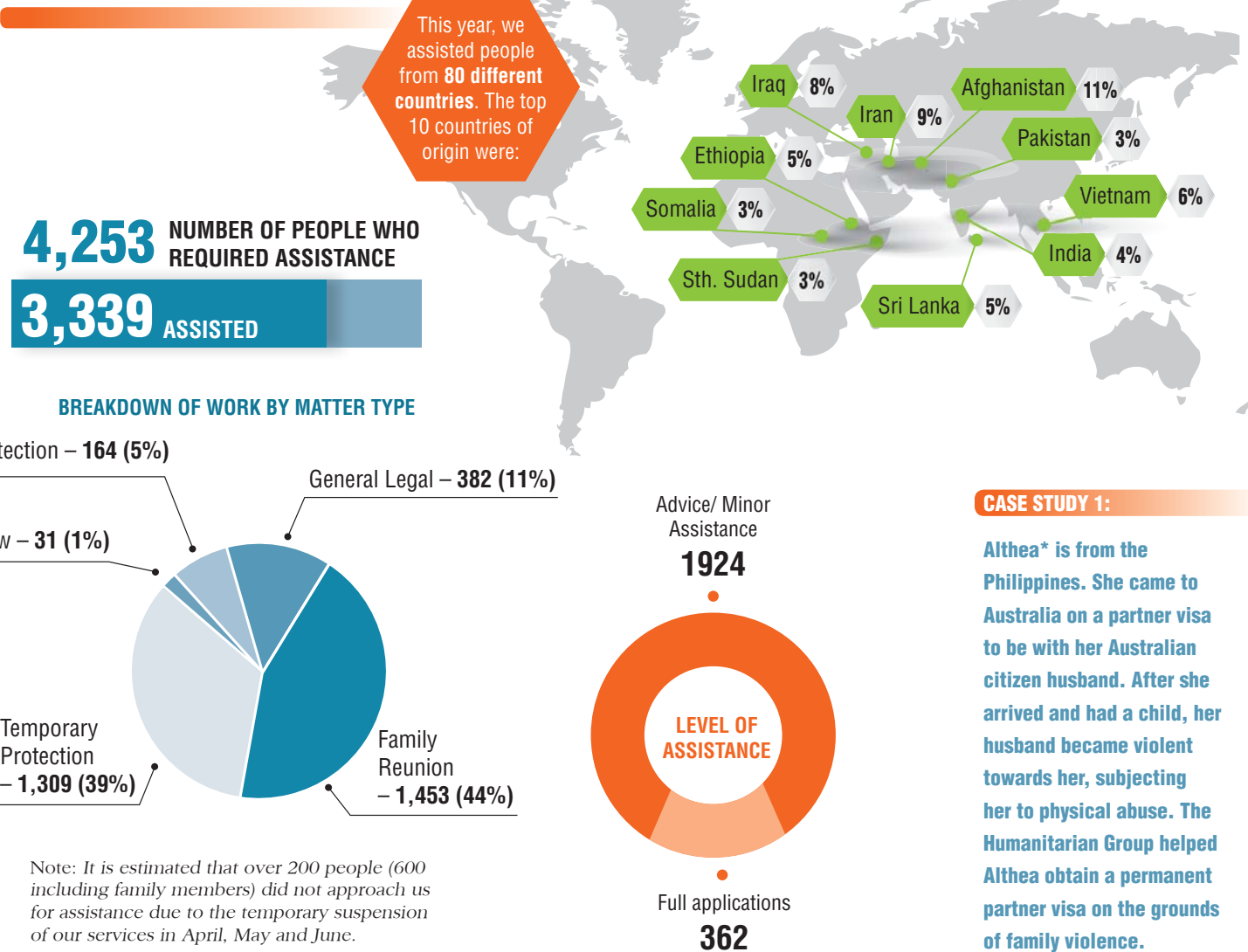
This year we provided assistance to 3,339 people and their families from 80 different countries around the world, the majority of whom have experienced torture and trauma. Sadly there were still hundreds of other people who were unable to access our services this year. Whilst we continue to work to increase our reach so that no person who needs our help is turned away, I would like to take this opportunity to focus on the positive impact we have made and how our organisation is perceived and valued by our clients and stakeholders. Our reputation as respected refugee legal advocates has been recognised this year with numerous requests to provide submissions

into Parliamentary Inquiries and invitations to participate in a variety of local, national and international forums including in Geneva and America. Our work done in assisting people seeking to apply for temporary protection visas was also acknowledged with our selection as a finalist in the Lawyers Weekly Australian Law Awards for pro bono program of the year. As we look forward to 2017-2018, we acknowledge that we will not be able to help everyone who needs help and the outcome for some of our clients will not be their desired outcome. What we can do is ensure that everyone who we do assist understands their rights and is treated with equality and dignity.

HELEN PEARCE



OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE





MIGRATION AND LEGAL SERVICES

This year we have continued to provide migration assistance to people seeking protection and to safely reunite families fleeing danger. Demand for assistance with applications for permanent protection visas has remained steady and we continue to provide a high level of application assistance in these complex matters.

We have introduced new projects and new service delivery models to meet increased demand for assistance across other service areas. In our Family Reunion practice, this saw us increase the number of people provided with family reunion assistance from 17% in 2015-2016 to 44% in 2016-2017. This is despite the temporary suspension of family reunion services in the later part of the year. We will be seeking to build on this successful model of service delivery in the new year as we look to open up our family reunion services again.

The Temporary Protection Visa Project (TPV Project) assisted a record number of clients. In November 2016, we launched the Asylum Seeker Hub in collaboration with a number of other agencies to ensure holistic service provision related to the legal, psychological, and social needs of people seeking asylum. We also provided further support for clients at evening clinics and provided full application assistance for asylum seekers identified as highly vulnerable by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Our General Legal Service faced unprecedented demand, particularly in the priority areas of family violence and specialist immigration, and we continued to provide family law, civil law and criminal law assistance. We introduced a drop-in advice day and commenced the Detention Phone Line and provided a broad range of community legal education sessions.

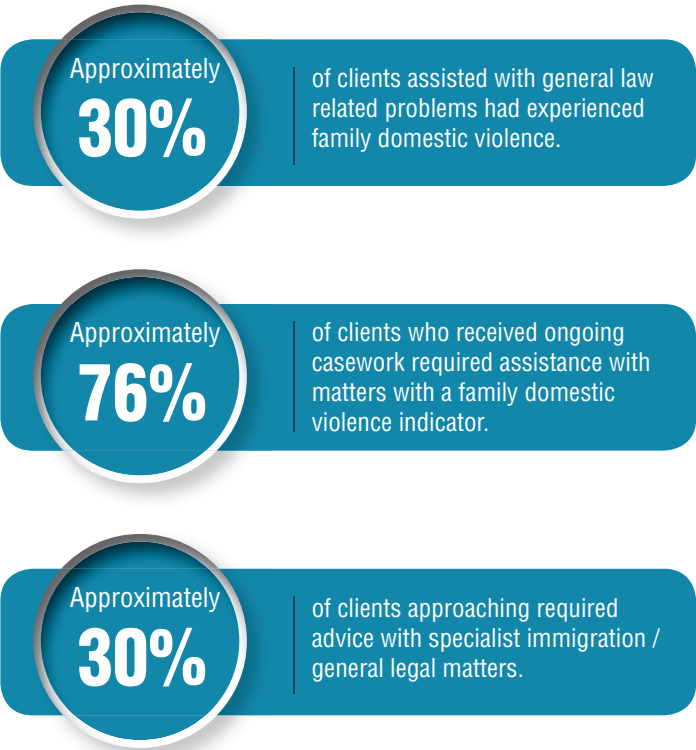
In 2016-2017 we also launched the Voice Project, which provides professional and accessible migration assistance, legal advice and education regarding family violence. The focus is service delivery to family violence victims and the delivery of education to community workers. To that end, we developed a 'Toolkit' to ensure a reduced risk of re-traumatisation during the migration application process. We look forward to continuing to provide holistic and multi-pronged support during the second year of this Project.

CASE STUDY 2:

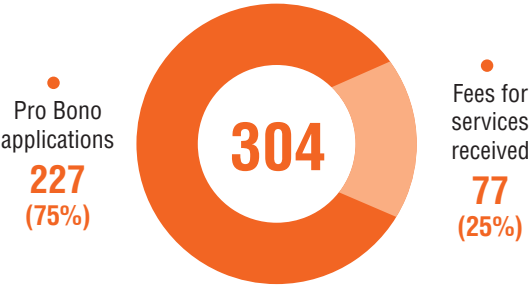
Benson\* is a refugee from Sudan. In 2016, he received a criminal sentence of more than 12 months. Although the sentence was only a suspended sentence, his visa was mandatorily cancelled. The Humanitarian Group provided Benson with advice and helped him make a strong request for the cancellation to be revoked. If the cancellation is not revoked, he faces either indefinite detention or being returned to harm in Sudan.



GENERAL LEGAL SERVICE KEY FIGURES



NUMBER OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION VISA APPLICATIONS LODGED



Number of advices and information given for our Temporary Protection Visa clients:

1,286

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRO BONO

Each year, we are overwhelmed by the generous pro bono, in-kind and other volunteer contributions we receive. In 2016-2017, our volunteers recorded an awe-inspiring 10,822 hours, which equates to approximately \$1,732,000.

Volunteers support us in all that we do, whether it is a welcoming face when people first walk through the door, playing a role in providing migration and legal assistance, providing interpreting support, assisting at community legal education and events, or their amazing fundraising efforts. Through their generous commitment and professionalism, they have exponentially increased our capacity to provide migration and legal

assistance to vulnerable people.

This year, we benefited from an active network of 63 legal and administrative volunteers and 137 bilingual volunteers. We have also continued our pro bono partnerships with a number of law firms, with 115 pro bono lawyers supporting us to deliver the TPV Project evening clinics. We have again partnered with the Piddington Justice Project (PJP) and provided practical legal training placements to 13 PJP law graduates. We also provided internships to university students in various stages of their degrees to complete practical components across a diverse range of units.

Through the TPV Project, we have

collaborated with a number of agencies, including the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS), Red Cross, MercyCare, Riverview Community Services, the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees (CARAD) and the Southern Communities Advocacy Legal and Education Service (SCALES). These agencies are also supported by volunteers and we have benefited from the thousands of hours of volunteer time spent to ensure people have received holistic support in addition to migration and legal assistance. We are also thankful for the continued in-kind support from UnitingCare West.



CASE STUDY 3:

Elewa\* is from Kenya. Her husband's family tried to abduct her and harm her multiple times because she is Christian and did not follow traditional tribal customs. Elewa and her husband escaped and came to Australia via a student visa. The Humanitarian Group helped Elewa to apply for protection in 2014, but her application was refused. We then helped her to successfully apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review of the decision. In 2016, she, her husband and their children were granted permanent protection in Australia.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We benefit from a diverse and experienced Board. This year, we bade farewell to Mike Best and Dr Anne Mathews, both of whom we sincerely thank for their contributions. We also welcomed Emma Watton, Maria Osman and Anna Lane, all of whom have brought new skills and experience.

**Chairperson:** Akram (Ak) Sabbagh

**Vice-Chairperson:** Dr Lisa Cluett

**Treasurer:** Han Nguyen

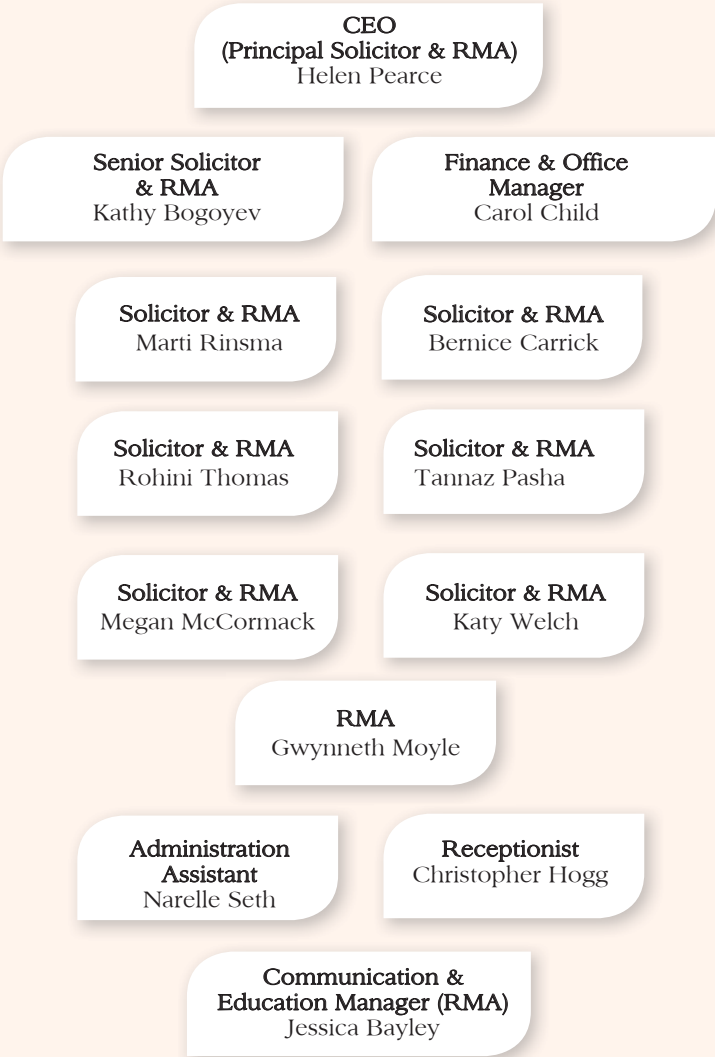
**Secretary:** Anne Durack

**Members:** Megan O'Rourke, Emma Watton, Maria Osman, Anna Lane

We are grateful to our dedicated and passionate staff. As a team, they continue to provide professional and accessible legal and migration assistance to vulnerable people in Western Australia.

We are sincerely thankful for our volunteers and pro bono providers. We could not assist as many people as we do without their generous support, which plays a vital role in achieving positive outcomes for our clients.

We are also grateful for the strong relationships we have with organisations across a number of networks. This allows us to work in partnership with non-legal service providers, so our clients benefit from holistic support. It is only with the invaluable support of these organisations that we can continue to provide access to justice.



RMA – Registered Migration Agent

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

The Humanitarian Group maintains a high standard of governance and financial accountability. The organisation prepares financial accounts in accordance with relevant accounting standards and the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 2015 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. The Humanitarian Group is an accredited community legal centre under the quality assurance scheme operated by the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC). We also participate in the NACLC Professional Indemnity Scheme.

The Humanitarian Group made a surplus of \$12,808 in the year 2016-2017 and remains in a healthy financial position

with reserves of \$339,000 and cash of \$504,000 at June 2017.

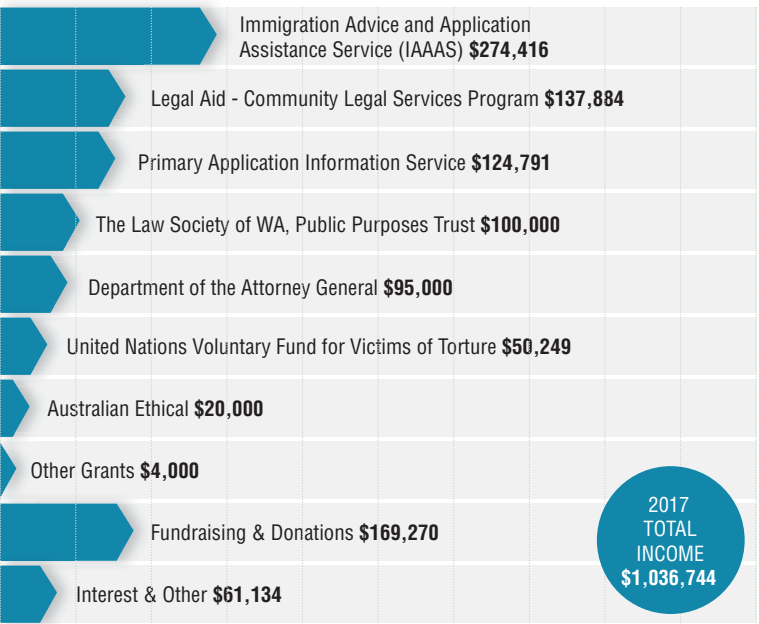
During 2016-2017 there was an 8% decrease in revenue to \$1,037,000. Grant income fell by 17% which was offset by increases in fundraising and fees. \$91,481 was raised for the TPV Project via crowdfunding. Our thanks must go to all of those involved in the Seeking Refuge WA campaign, particularly Elizabeth Williams and Caroline Fleay, both of whom contributed huge amounts of energy and time to make this campaign a success. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who donated directly to us.

The reduction in our grant funding was managed by reducing our employment

costs from \$885,000 to \$782,000, a decrease of 12%. The percentage of our costs expended on salaries and wages remains at 76% thereby ensuring the optimisation of our service delivery.

Other expenses amounted to \$242,000 and remained on par with 2015-2016. The cost of interpreters remains a significant expense, particularly in the Temporary Protection Visa area. We were fortunate in the year to receive income to help offset these costs.

Summaries of our finances are shown below. Full copies of our audited accounts are available and can be requested by emailing [finance@thehumanitariangroup.org.au](mailto:finance@thehumanitariangroup.org.au).



Profit and Loss	2016 \$	2015 \$
Grants & Fees	806,340	916,393
Fundraising & Donations	169,270	113,146
Interest & Other	61,134	78,165
Transfer from Reserves	0	24,463
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,036,744</b>	<b>1,132,167</b>
Salaries & Wages	782,069	885,177
Other Expenses	241,867	239,258
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>1,023,936</b>	<b>1,124,435</b>
Surplus for the Year	12,808	7,732

Balance Sheet	2016 \$	2015 \$
Fixed Assets	18,716	23,840
Current Assets	571,288	545,639
Current Liabilities	221,704	215,082
Non Current Liabilities	29,114	28,019
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>339,186</b>	<b>326,378</b>
Retained Earnings	113,649	100,841
Reserves	225,537	225,537
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>339,186</b>	<b>326,378</b>

CASE STUDY 4:

Dalir\* is a Hazara Shia Muslim from Pakistan. He was persecuted because of his religion and ethnicity. He escaped after extremists threatened they would kill him because of the work he did to support the Hazara community. We helped Dalir to apply for protection. He has now been granted a visa, but it is only temporary because he arrived by boat. To remain in safety in Australia on an ongoing basis, he faces the uncertainty of reapplying for protection every few years.

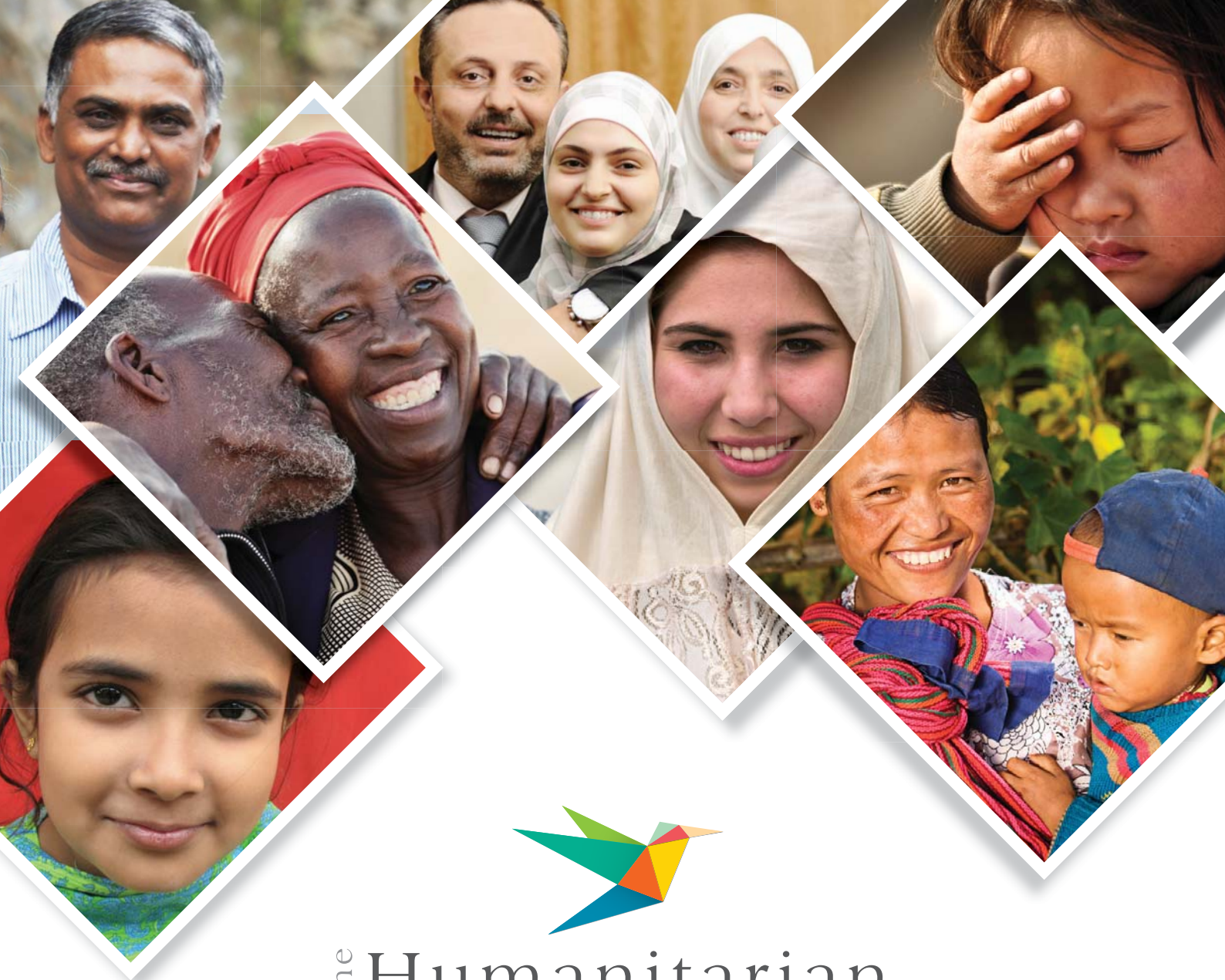


CASE STUDY 5:

Chriki\* is from Tanzania. She moved to Australia with her husband on his student visa. Shortly after they arrived, her husband became abusive. She was subjected to physical violence and threats of death. She obtained a restraining order, but feared that if she returned to Tanzania, her husband would still be able to cause her harm. With The Humanitarian Group's help, Chriki was granted permanent protection in Australia.

\* Clients' real names have not been used in case studies. We have withheld our clients' identifying details to respect their confidentiality.





# the Humanitarian group

Opening Hours  
Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm

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