**“Social Support for CALD Communities”**

**Host: Pauline Vetuna**

**Guests: Interpreter, Fon Ji, Mini, Shamira**

**Transcription by Leilani Fuimaono**

PAULINE: You're listening to Power from the Margins. 3CR's Disability Day broadcast. I'm Pauline Vetuna. Recently I spent a morning with Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (or ADEC) Werribee office, to learn more about the services they provide for culturally and linguistically diverse people. I also spoke to two of their Korean speaking clients with the help of an interpreter.

INTERPRETER: Before I come to ADEC, I haven't go any where, or any services.

INTERPRETER: And I come to ADEC's services, like I get to know about the speaker also came here to talk about the health.

INTERPRETER: This place is a really important too for me. And so more benefits for me as well.

INTERPRETER: Yes. I come here four times a month.

INTERPRETER: They take me to the garden and also they take me to have a barbecue. Go out and have a barbecue.

INTERPRETER: Three groups who come into this agency. So in my group, I have 10 people in my group.

INTERPRETER: This place, I see, is important for our community group as well. And so for the families group as well. So we come here to see them and we get to know the family to live peacefully and as well as for our community who needs help.

INTERPRETER: Okay. The leader of our community told me to come to the ADEC.

INTERPRETER: Guess the first things I want to say it is that this service, it has helped me to in the physical health as well.

INTERPRETER: Okay. Like last month we had a meeting here and I see with a two girlfriend and two couple. And so they talk about in this community so we have to love each other and like not to look down each other, to live in love and peace.

*[second person speaking]*

INTERPRETER: Korean community leader contact me and lets me know that about to come to this service.

INTERPRETER: I come to this group or I get to know more above the health and also wellbeing and also guest speaker also come here to talk about the also health and we get to know more about the information of the health.

INTERPRETER: Between 20 to 30 come with the groups that come. All Korean people.

INTERPRETER: Have many activities like the health activities and also doing yoga activities as well.

INTERPRETER: One of the staff teaching me how to have a dance, but I don't know the names of the dance. Yes, we like it and I like it too and we are all happy.

INTERPRETER: Actually I would like to say it is good services and also because we get to know more things and we get more information and also I know things are like the ADEC services and helps our group to work with them and we get to hear and I get to hear many things in the services.

*[first person speaking]*

INTERPRETER: The first things I would like to tell is every time I come to the meeting or come here to the meetings, so the facilitator or the person who leads the meeting prepare everything such as foods and drinks and also they are kind people for our groups and for the Korean community. So I would like to say thank you very much.

INTERPRETER: And the second things is I feel like a welcoming in this ADEC services here because all the staffs here are nice people and they welcomed me as a smiley face and every time when I feel down and come to this services, when I saw the face of the staff, I feel becoming improving, like becoming good, and so really happy.

INTERPRETER: Okay. The other things I would like to say thank you to the community leaders as well. And they call me and invite me to come and introduce me to know with the ADEC. And I saw because when I come here to ADEC is also the person who talked about how we become with the wellbeing, in the health and wellbeing. So we could not be isolate in the house. So we have to be get out and also do some exercise, depend on our health situation. Also the ADEC person let us know and introduce us to know how to get to be not isolated and have our wellbeing to get out and do an exercise.

INTERPRETER: Okay. The last thing I would like to say, thank you very much. I come here this morning so I see all of the smiley faces and feel welcoming to me. So really happy and I would like to say thank you.

*[music plays]*

SHAMIRA: My role is Social Support Services Coordinator. So I look after ADEC Social Support Program, which is around close to 40 groups of carers, disabilities, exercise, high need groups and wellbeing. So Korean communities have three programs, which as part of my program, one is Social Support, the other one is Carers Program and High Needs. So Carers program is for people that caring for someone with disability or could be from mental health and it's for carers and care recipients. So they attend the program. That's just a break for caring role. So being for because they can be very overwhelmed and isolated, you know, due to the heavy role that they have. And the program gives them a bit of a break just to, that they'll have a time for themselves.

PAULINE: And the other groups that you mentioned?

SHAMIRA: The other group, Social Support is again for, it doesn't just specifically for carers. It's for people who are isolated socially, people with mental health, and day care recipient and could be just... So it doesn't restrict only for carers. Could be someone that isolated or the people with physical disability or just frail age. And a high need program is for someone to be, again, frail age, have a physical disability. So the program is just, they get picked up and dropped off taking them on outings, excursions, could be educational and they get a lot of information through our facilitators or some time information sessions. So basically we try to skill these people and educate them to know how to get to especially public transport or going to doctor's, how to get to hospital, how to get to GP.

SHAMIRA: So if I'm there might make it easier for them and they are not socially isolated because that's very important for them to be involved in their community. We have three offices by this one. Werribee, Preston and Dandenong. So some of the facilitators are based in the south. They work from there and some are in the West, mainly in Preston.

SHAMIRA: Why they isolated? Because they are from ethnic background and they don't know much about that. You know, language barriers is the main one because they cannot understand and speak to they socially isolated, because they cannot speak so they can't understand. So when we have these groups forum it's like meeting someone from their community and they are in their home. So it's very traditional-wise. But they love it because they get together, they get skilled in a lot of education session but mainly is for just to speak to each other and exchange information, share the experiences and they're very happy. And mentally and physically change the attitude because they just feel like when you talk to someone from your own background, it's different than they can't understand you. And that's what you want.

SHAMIRA: They want to feel at home and comfortable and they're happy. They are much happier from the day they started. It's a big difference. So the age range starts from, we have people under six but age range could start from 50, 50+. And older people, 65+ they, you know from Commonwealth Home Support Services program and also have people which a lot of disability under 64 which they sometime they use the NDIS program. Or they can, or they not, so it's various. It depends on their like... mental health could be even 40 plus. It's different.

SHAMIRA: So with social support program we have around nine languages. People come from Arabic, Afghan, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Turkish and Vietnamese and Korean. And they all have a facilitators from their own communities speaking a language. And yeah, nine languages. So the key to find these people is mainly to get through the community leader. That's very important. Sometimes it depends on each community. Like Arabic, some Christian or different, through the churches, through mosque or through... So the main connection is through the community leaders. Word of mouth, that's the most powerful one. And church leaders or any community leader could be someone got to be from the same community, otherwise it's hard to get into that community.

SHAMIRA: Sometimes we organize a different activity for our clients. Like this year we organized some camping for them and it was, we had various client, you know, some of the clients that we've been like 16 years, haven't been on any, not even a small trip. So this made a huge difference in a month. We had so many feedbacks on our account site, probably close to a hundred feedback I've received, but more verbally, that this was a... Example is this lady that she was caring for her husband and for her mother-in-law for 16 years and this was the first time that she got out of the house going on a trip, actually just for three days. And they have never been, they said that we wouldn't be able to get around if this wasn't organized for us. We couldn't even afford it. So there's a lot of feedback, you know. What else can I say?

PAULINE: You can talk about the exercise classes.

SHAMIRA: Yeah. Exercise classes. We have various exercise classes, but there is one for Afghan community in the south, that every week they go to these exercise classes and the number of clients has increased. And Kip, now she has a wait list for the clients because they just love enjoying it. They do yoga, they doing gentle exercise, they go for a walk. It's a walking group and then after that they have refreshments. And this is supported from city of Casey. And they loving that. Yeah, we look after about close to 800 clients within Social Support Program. Our program is very popular and we even exceeded our target, so we had a good feedback from department.

PAULINE: But that also makes me think about just how many people have disabilities in culturally diverse communities. Could you talk a little bit about that?

SHAMIRA: There are so many people from ethnic background with physical disability and sometimes we can't accept all of them because usually just not having enough from won't be able to run it because the groups are so popular that they find it through word of mouth and they just want to get in. So we just create this wait list and if someone stopped coming or when they get... Usually they don't leave the groups, but the only time they leave the groups when they end up in nursing home. And that's the only time that we have to, then we give the...

SHAMIRA: Or sometimes we rotate them because you know everyone wants to attend the program. So facilitator, I rotate them, and give the other one chance to... But we will have couple of extra groups next year because the amount is so much. So management decided to have extra groups to run. Well, I just like to say that some of the organisation that support us. I like to thank them for their support and especially ADEC management's been very flexible and great to our clients I can say, because I get a lot of good feedback from our clients for my management.

PAULINE: Thank you.

SHAMIRA: Thank you.

*[music plays]*

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to Power from the Margins on International Day of Peoples with a Disability. If you've just tuned in and want to know more about today's special broadcast, go to 3cr.org.au/ disabilityday2019.

MINI: So my name is Mini and I have been working at ADEC now for about five and a half years. I'm the Projects Manager for the Capacity Building Team and we have about two capacity building officers. And a few NDIS support transition specialists. And we also have a social support group's coordinator who works in the Capacity Building team across Melbourne. We are located in Werribee, Preston and Dandenong and we have been expanding the capacity building services over the last couple of years, especially since the NDIS has come in.

PAULINE: So could you talk a bit more about ADEC and what it does?

MINI: Yeah, sure. So ADEC stands for Action on Disability within Ethnic communities. We have been there for about 36 years and we have 95 staff from 27 different countries who speak 33 different languages. We support people with disabilities, their carers and family members who are from an ethnic background. And we are also committed to the proposition that all people in today's society have a right to quality services that meet their needs and are inclusive. And in order to deliver such services the communities have to be respected.

PAULINE: Could you talk a little bit more about the capacity building of ADEC at the moment and what you're focusing on?

MINI: Sure. So ADEC provides a number of services apart from the Capacity Building Program. We also provide advocacy services, access and support, disability support and aged care services. The capacity building department is focused on building capacities of people with disabilities and their family members and the communities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. So we have been focused on clients and communities that are socially isolated, that have mental health issues, whether they are diagnosed or undiagnosed, and we run a range of programs across Melbourne to support this cohort.

MINI: I'll give you a couple of examples. So we have a project that is called the ILC project, which is funded by the NDIA, and what we are doing through that project is working with eight different communities and I'll just name the communities. These are the Turkish, Vietnamese, Burmese, Korean, Arabic, Chinese, African and Afghani communities. And we are trying to raise awareness of gender equality, their rights in society and also LGBTQI tolerance. So we have partnered up with agencies such as Victorian Equal Opportunities, Human Rights Commission and Gender Equite Victoria and also worked with agencies such as MacKillop family services to deliver information sessions that are around rights and people understanding the rights here.

MINI: Because a lot of our clients are people who have lived in refugee camps. They do not understand the meaning of rights and that they have the right to speak up. This program has been quite successful. We are in the second year of this project and we have run workshops for about 284 clients now from these different communities and whilst doing that we have noticed that we are building their capacities and skills and knowledge in these areas.

MINI: We do continually evaluate our projects as well to find out whether they're working or not. So we do collect feedback from the clients who attend these workshops as well. So we are hoping that as time goes we can expand on these services and keep building their skills. Another area that I would like to probably highlight is the NDIS' transition support program. Now this is funded by the DHHS and through this project for the last couple of years we are trying to build capacities of family members around the NDIS. So ever since the NDIS was introduced I think it's well known now that the uptake of the NDIs and the ethnic communities is quite low. So ADEC is committed to helping our clients to transition to the NDIS. So what we are doing right now is running two kinds of projects to do that. So one is one-on-one client work.

MINI: So we have NDIS transition support specialists who will assist clients who are from an ethnic background to transition to the NDIS by providing planning and preplanning support. They will attend planning meetings with the client to help them understand what the whole process is. And then we also provide a workshop based, a workshop based program where we go out into the communities and talk to the communities about the NDIS, and we will usually do this in their language and in their language. So we'll have a bilingual facilitator or an interpreter who can translate this information. Another initiative that we've taken to increase their knowledge about the NDIS developing NDIS videos in ethnic languages. So we've got NDISs videos in Mandarin. We had an amaze and Arabic. And you can find them on our website. We are also trying to run mentoring programs where we are creating champions in the community who can actually talk about NDIS and these mentors could come, could be children of people with disability or family members.

MINI: So we are helping them understand NDIS so they can give that information to the participant. So this project is quite important because I think although we are only funded for a couple of part-time staff, the demand's quite big. We are exceeding our targets. We're supporting more people than we can imagine. So there's only three part-time staff. We're now working with about 300 clients. So that's in the last two years. And we still have a waiting list, but we try to keep it short so we can help anyone who comes through the door.

PAULINE: That's staggering, the number, because I don't think it's really understood just how many people with disabilities are from culturally diverse backgrounds. Services aren't, even though there's ADEC, there needs to be more resources poured into-

MINI: The NDIA they have a bulletin or a journal. And I think the NDS publications on their website also report the figures, so I think if you go onto the NDS website, National Disability Services, they are keeping the numbers there and I think the uptake of NDIS has increased to about 11.9. I don't know if that number is correct, but it has increased slightly in the last year or so. And I know services are working quite hard to include people from ethnic backgrounds to transition to the NDIS but I guess there is more work involved because there are additional barriers or challenges that people from ethnic backgrounds face while accessing any new scheme. We often find that our clients that come to us, they struggle to understand the NDIS because the terminology is difficult and sometimes the translation of some words can be quite difficult for even the interpreters to make.

MINI: I'll give you an example. Like schizophrenia is quite hard to translate in the Burmese language, I've heard from an interpreter and they go more by the symptoms rather than by the illness, the term of the illness. The NDIS plan can be translated, but a lot of our clients don't know that. So when they receive their plan, they're not aware that their plan can be translated. So that's an area where our staff members will help our participants understand how the NDIS kind of works. Another barrier that I think for some of our people is that they do not understand the distinction between NDIS and Medicare and other secure social security systems. So to educate them about that kind of takes time as well. And I think every service is resource dependent so you can have support coordination in your plan, but a support coordinator cannot spend a lot of time just explaining to you what services are out there and how NDIS is different.

MINI: So a lot of ADEC staff, the capacity building team is actually focused on providing that information to clients so they're informed. The other barrier that I can think about is just the cultural barrier. I mean disability in itself has a stigma attached to it in a lot of our communities. I mean, I'm from an Indian background and I know that in our families we don't really discuss disability with the community. It's something that's hidden. So for a lot of people who have never received any support for a disabled family member, it is like starting from scratch. So they're engaging them, building rapport, building their trust takes a while before we can actually get them onto the NDIS. So I think that's also an area where we need to put in more staff members resources to kind of support the ethnic communities to transition to the NDIS and also taking them through the whole journey.

MINI: Like the preplanning, planning the implementation and then if they need a review, helping them understand their rights, then helping them build the confidence to actually advocate for themselves. That's another area. So if they get a plan that does not meet their needs, then you know, we are also running some other projects to build confidence and assertiveness. So, and I'll just give you an example. We've recently run a 12 month program where we focused on self-advocacy skills. So we worked with four different communities and we ran some information sessions on NDIS. We also talked about self care, we linked up with some mental health services to talk about the importance of looking after yourself while you're supporting someone. We have also resources and we also have speakers at ADEC itself who talk to people about abuse, about rights, about asking for help. So there's all those different levels of support that ethnic communities need that we are trying to cater for in different ways. So there's, there's a huge need out there to just deal with those barriers. So this gap can reduce.

PAULINE: Yeah, I can't even imagine because I've spoken to other people as part of the day. A lot of them are English speakers and even people who are fluent in English find the NDIS so ridiculously challenging to access and you know, 32 page applications and having to translate that and then push that cultural understanding gap. I can't even imagine the amount of work that must go into this.

PAULINE: A quick interjection from the future. Make sure you tune in to our 5:00 PM show, Africans with Disabilities where you'll hear from Hamile Ibrahim a person who assists other African community members who need support navigating the health system, employment and government services. You hear her Hamile discuss the tremendous barriers to accessing the NDIS that exists for Africans on the margins of the margins. Let's get back to the program.

MINI: What we find here is that the NDIS is a great scheme because it is trying to empower the person with disability, helping them make the choice for what kind of services they need, how they want to live well but for ethnic communities it is not just that person. It is kind of the whole family that needs that education. So we can, because of language barriers and education. I mean 51% of our clients are really trained in their language as well. So we are focusing on providing support to the whole family. So when there is one member in that family accessing the NDIS or getting onto the NDIS, we often find that the whole families is involved, the carer, the siblings, and they all want to understand what's happening. So we are trying to focus more on supporting the whole family because it's culturally that's how it happens in some of our communities.

MINI: So I think with the, we are taking a whole community approach and it's client-centered as well, but it's more family-centered too, if you know what I mean. So we are investing more services and support into that area and we are finding better results with that because I think when we do work one on one with the client we find that if the family members are there they feel better when they know what's happening with the participant as well. So we are trying to involve them in the meetings as well with the preplanners and LACs and also they can all be informed about what's happening with the NDIS. I think another thing to say, just finding and training the right bilingual staff is quite important. I think that would help with increasing the confidence of the ethnic communities in accessing NDIS as well.

MINI: And we provide support in different areas as well. I mean some of our clients are not tech savvy so just educating them about creating an email, the myGov accounts and all of that, we have to find the resources to invest in that kind of support as well. But I know that the department, the NDIA and lot of other organizations, are investing into those areas and I think over the next few years we will see an improvement. But at the moment I think that's also an area, a gap where we need to kind of build their confidence and their capacity to be able to go on to a computer, log on, and manage their funds or manage their email accounts.

MINI: The capacity building program at ADEC has increased quite significantly in the last year and we are finding that more of more and more of our work is going into building capacity around the NDIS but we are not trying to forget that our primary goal was also to increase the understanding of people from ethnic backgrounds about mental health issues, about mental health support that is available because I think it's very important for people to understand that seeking help for an issue that is affecting their quality of life is quite important.

MINI: So we are still working in that area to build a bridge between services and our ethnic communities so that they're able to access mental health support as well. We are still working on educating them about mental health issues because now again like disability, mental health also has a stigma attached to it and we find that people do not openly talk about it. My colleague Shamira earlier talked about social support groups and I must say that the significance of groups of people coming together and just having that weekly meeting or monthly meeting, talking to each other, talking to people who might be in the same situation as them, caring for a partner who has a disability or a family member. I think that's a very important part of our programs because that connection, that social cohesion actually improves their quality of life and they look forward to it.

MINI: And I think that the client as well earlier, Hannah and *[inaudible]*, mentioned that as well. They like coming here and it's a change from their daily routine. Definitely we do need more resources to support people from ethnic communities in the NDIS. I think we've highlighted that. So the capacity building team works tirelessly to get grants and funding in to run projects to do that. It's getting very competitive but we are still focused on our work and we are quite enjoying the grassroots work that we do at the moment.

PAULINE: Did you mention African communities earlier?

MINI: We used to work with the Somali community a couple of years ago, but very recently we have started working with the Edo Club of Australia. We are still trying to create links. We have worked a little bit with them on one of the projects previously, and we are looking forward to working on our Safeguarding from Abuse Project with them.

MINI: This project's based basically on increasing awareness around different kinds of abuse and a way to ask for help. So we are hoping to work with the Edo Club and I think, I'm not sure the Yoruba community as well. So at the moment we do not have a social support group for African community, but that's just our kind of links for that. Yeah. Yeah. And I also wanted to mention that we do provide NDIS services like support coordination and we have an appeals officer. We have two appeals officers actually who can help with reviews and abuse for clients who are from ethnic backgrounds. And so we are trying to cover the whole spectrum. We've got help support with preplanning, planning, then we've got support coordination as well. And we've got support for appeals as well. Yeah.

PAULINE: Great.

MINI: Yes, that's about it. I think I've kind of covered it all. Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. Thank you.

MINI: You're welcome.

*[music plays]*

MEREANI: Ni sa bula vinaka! Na yacaqu o Mereani Qalavokawasa. You're listening to 3CR's International Day of People with Disability broadcast.

FON JI: So hello, my name is Fon Ji. I've been ADEC for about four years. I work in different teams from the Group Support Facilitator and then NDS for coordination until now. So I'm currently working for capacity building officer. Yeah. So as Mini mentioned before, so for NDIS is transitioning, transitional support programs. We are building the capacity of participants from ethnic backgrounds and we also work for the wellbeing programs and also different workshops based on the funding and projects. Okay. Do you want me to talk about the transitional support program? So just to make example, I have a one client, a single mother and from Arabic refugee background. So she has a seven years old son with Down's Syndrome and her daughter is four years old with development delay.

FON JI: So she'd been referral by the refuge nurse to get a support for us as to NDIS. We'd contact the NDIA to make assess request. Then we found out this seven years old boy actually has had NDS plan 10 months ago and the funding hasn't been touched. So what do we do? We provided information about NDS and explained NDS terminology to the mother. Also we contacted the planner to request a plan meeting as the plan did not meet her son's needs. We also asked the mother to request the medical report and the school support letter or some evidence to show why we need to request other meeting. And we discussed the with mother about the goals and difficulties in daily life. So before the plan meeting we made it a plan summary with mother and assisted her to join plan meeting and we encouraged the mother and helped her learn how to make others and how to find the service providers once the new plan approved.

FON JI: So assisting the mother with the whole process. Helped her learn the NDS process and also gain confidence to be able to manage her son plan. At least she had the correct guidance as to who to contact if she need help. This support that we provided is not support coordination but more about one on one capacity building support for clients and their family members around NDIS. And that there is a huge need out there in ethnic communities for these kind of support.

FON JI: So as a capacity building officer, my work also focuses the January workshop based on the projects that improve wellbeing of clients. So I can give other one example of a wellbeing program. Okay. So recently we have been working together with participants of Korean backgrounds and their family members. So the carer's socially isolated or have undiagnosed mental health issues led by a Korean bilingual facilitator.

FON JI: We have organized sessions that improve the physical and emotional wellbeing. And other occasion sessions about the health issues such as cervical cancer, wellbeing activities such as the arts and craft workshops. Physical activity sessions are like yoga, dancing and gentle exercise. Either wasn't mentioned by the previous group members. For the program I forgot to mention about the Family Violence Workshop Program. So this one is for members of CALD communities is delivered in a culturally sensitive manner using a consultative and participatory approach. Workshops are focused on enhancing the quality of life for CALD women by providing a proactive pathway to deal with family violence and improve the mental state of women experiencing or in fear of experiencing family violence, improve the social cohesion of women in CALD communities and women with skills, confidence and knowledge to understand and to erase these issues.

FON JI: So why am I so important? Because I feel like I'm the person from different perspectives. So I worked from the basic group and to, so I can say if I'm the person contact or the clients directly. I can say, "They need help." And they don't know where to seek help. And also they sometimes they don't realize there's some service available for them. So for us, we really important to building up the confidence to approach a service. And it's okay if you're not happy, it's okay if you need help. And so this one just encourage them speak out. So this is very important for the people from CALD communities. Maybe because some of these parents, like for example, for some people from refugee background, they're just scared to say no, they're scared to seek help.

FON JI: So for us we can give them more evidence and more confidence. Give them more solutions, some more options. So it's okay, you can tell, it's okay if you're not happy. So for me, like my experiences, like when I see the people for example, for this client, the mother. So we assisted her to order products like online shop. So it's first time that she can order the products by herself. So she was so excited. She called me, "Fon Ji, yes, I just made it. I get the continents products here, they deliver to me." So this kind of thing. I'm happy, I have to say, they received the service they're supposed to receive. So yeah, then also, every time we make maybe small things, but for them it's big change.

PAULINE: Great. Thank you.

FON JI: All right.

PAULINE: You're listening to Power from the Margins. 3CR's Disability Day broadcast. I'm Pauline Vetuna. Thank you for listening.

*[music plays]*