



Supporting Communities,
Strengthening Voices

East Web

FACT SHEET

Sudanese Women's Singing Group - ISIS Primary Care

Music is part of all cultures' intangible cultural heritage. The 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defines intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills that communities, groups and, in some cases individuals, recognise as part of their cultural heritage. Music is found in every culture and plays an important part of a culture's living heritage.

Indeed music, according to UNESCO, is to be found "in the most diverse contexts: profane or sacred, classical or popular, closely connected to work, entertainment, even politics and economics that may call upon music to recount a people's past, sing the praises of a powerful person, or accompany or facilitate commercial transactions. The occasions on which it is performed are equally varied: marriages, funerals, rituals and initiations, festivities, all kinds of entertainment, or other social practices". Preservation of this important aspect of cultural heritage is particularly important for peoples resettled in countries outside their own.

As a newly arrived refugee in Australia, it may be easy to feel detached from the cultural and musical traditions of your country and culture of origin. This can be compounded by having few opportunities in contemporary suburban Melbourne to gather to share food, song and dance with other people from your community. ISIS Primary Care's Sudanese Women's Singing Group is a response to this.

The group provides women of Sudanese background with opportunities to gather together and to maintain the important cultural practice of singing together as a group. The weekly group provides a consistent opportunity for women to get together to recall, share and rehearse traditional songs. In this way, cultural heritage is maintained and the group provides important opportunities for valuing traditional culture in a new country. The provision of a warm, accepting space also enables the women to share other cultural practices and to maintain connectedness to other parts of their culture, as well as informally share important information about resettling in Australia, such as how to access particular services and resources.

The group aims to record traditional songs, to then master for a CD. In doing so, the group also aims to become self-sustaining through CD sales. The group's facilitator, refugee health nurse and musician, Jen Anderson, hopes that opportunities to record and share their songs will lead to reduced experiences of social isolation, and improved social connectedness for participants, not only within the group, but within the wider community who will have the opportunity to share in the rich, expressive nature of traditional Sudanese song.

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