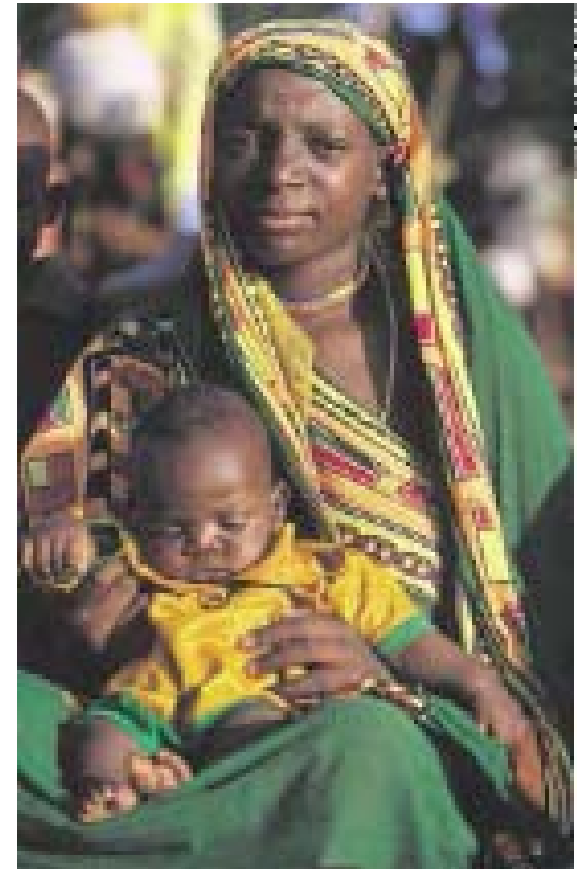


Somali Bantu Refugees: Cultural Considerations for Social Service Providers

Lyn Morland, MSW

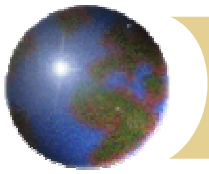


UNHCR/B. PRESS/CS•KEN•2002

BRYCS – Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services

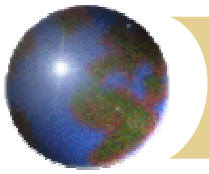
A joint project of LIRS and USCCB

Funded by ORR / ACF / DHHS Grant No. 90 RB 0018

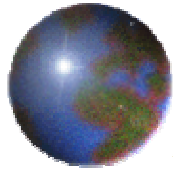


The Somali Bantu - background

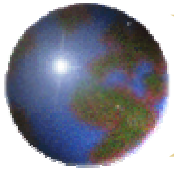
- The first of 12,000 refugees began arriving to the U.S. in spring 2003; arrivals have been delayed so that only about one-quarter are here
- History of severe oppression and discrimination in native Somalia, so that few have formal education, are literate in own language, or have exposure to Western culture and lifestyles prior to arrival.



- **60% of these Bantu are under 17, and 31% are under the age of 6 (IOM). Families have an average of 4-8 children.**
- **Most Somali Bantu over 15 received up to 80 hours of cultural orientation from IOM in the refugee camps, including “mothers’ classes” that address parenting issues in the United States**
(helpful, but just the beginning...)



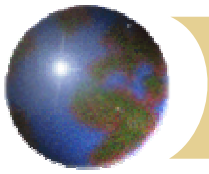
UNHCR/B. PRESS/CS•KEN•2002



Cultural Issues



UNHCR/B. PRESS/CS•KEN•2002



Cultural Differences in Childrearing Six Dimensions*

■ ***Obedience***

■ ***Achievement***

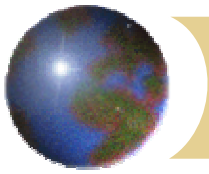
■ ***Responsibility***

■ ***Self-reliance***

■ ***Nurturance***

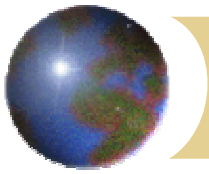
■ ***Independence***

* LeVine, R.A. (1996). *Child Care & Culture: Lessons from Africa*. NY: Cambridge University Press.



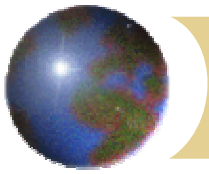
Role of Extended Family & Community

- **Helps with child care**
- **Watches out for children's safety, disciplines children**
- **Helps resolve family disputes**
- **Provides advice and support**



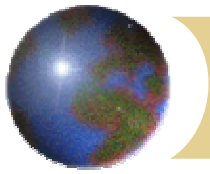
Parental Authority and Discipline

- Children expected to obey adults, have respect for elders
- Parents use range of discipline, including physical
- Children disciplined by parents, other family members, teachers, community members
- Parents' authority reinforced by larger community



Responsibility in the home...

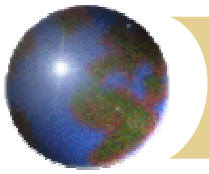
- Children expected to assist with housework, chores, and caring for younger siblings (especially girls)
- Teenagers expected to work to help support the family



Childrearing Issues in the U.S.

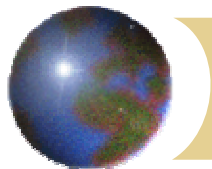


UNHCR/B. PRESS/CS•KEN•2002



Issues so far...

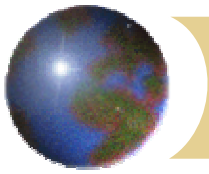
- Some families feel isolated, miss family members, Bantu community
- Reports of unsupervised children, especially preschoolers
- Need for tutoring for school-aged children, especially for older teens
- Parents report confusion over their ability to discipline children; assume no physical punishment is allowed, and so become permissive



Lessons Learned



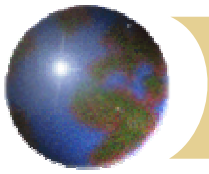
UNHCR/B. PRESS/CS•KEN•2002



Lessons Learned...

Intensive involvement with families:

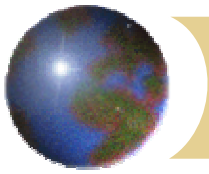
- Use volunteers (“Adopt a Family”)
- Link with previously arrived Somali Bantu
- Somali community eager to help in many sites, monitor relations with Somali Bantu
- Local Mosques, churches, other community and civic organizations
- School systems for after-school and summer programs, volunteers, tutors, parenting
- Formal & informal parenting classes
- Coordinate, use existing programs



Lessons Learned...

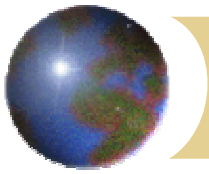
Parenting classes should be:

- Intensive and repetitive
- Empowering: Maximize parents' role in defining problems, developing solutions, trying out new behaviors
- Educational: Parents need to know and understand U.S. child protection laws
- Providing effective and appropriate alternatives to physical punishment
- Use visual, concrete examples
- Strengths-based and integrated with cultural values and concepts



BRYCS Offers...

- ✦ **Parenting Services Training:** technical capacity-building for parenting programs
- ✦ **Cross-Service Trainings:** brings together public child welfare, resettlement, MAA's, the schools, other agencies to develop ways to better integrate services
- ✦ **Information & Referral Service:** 2004 pilot site in Washington State



BRYCS Resources....

www.brycs.org

- ✦ **Website and Clearinghouse:**
 - Monthly Spotlight, Featured Search
 - Email Alert
 - Featured Program Descriptions

- ✦ **BRYCS Publications List**