



IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICE Annual Report

2007/2008 General Objectives

To provide ongoing services, support and education for CALD immigrant and refugee women. The program incorporates a holistic approach that is characterized by the promotion of health, both mental and physical, to women participating in the various programs. IWHS is funded by NSW Health via Sydney South West Area Health Service.

Main Objectives:

- Provide a service that caters for the developmental needs of CALD immigrant and refugee women
- Continue to develop and maintain health education programs that will foster healthy attitudes, habits and behaviours
- Organise health campaigns and provide information on a broad range of topics in culturally appropriate forms
- Continue to document the health and developmental needs of women in the local area
- Involve women in consultations and self-identification of their developmental needs.
- Foster community development with a view to enable local women to develop informal support mechanisms

Strategies to achieve the year's objectives:

- Understand the felt needs of the *CALD* immigrant and refugee women and work with them to develop programmes, incorporating their major issues, so that the women can be empowered towards responding to such needs.
- Promote safety and reduce violence against women
- Improve and maintain women's health, especially promote women's reproductive health placing emphasis on preventative health measures and encouraging women to have regular health checks
- Encourage women to utilise the life skills they have learnt so far to enable them in their future education.

Programs and Health Information sessions

At IWHS, programs and activities are delivered aimed at empowering women in all the major determinants of health- physical, mental, socio-economic and cultural. These determinants often overlap each other to shape our health information session and activities. Over 250 sessions for more than 12 groups were organized for the women attending the weekly group sessions covering the following topics:

<p><i>Physical Well-being</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality Use of Medicines (5 sessions) ▪ Healthy Bones- Falls Prevention, Osteoporosis, Back Care (7 sessions) ▪ Dental Care (2 sessions) ▪ Healthy Eating – Nutrition, Importance of exercise, food safety (5sessions) ▪ Gentle exercise sessions & Tai Chi (6 sessions) ▪ Women’s sexual health - visit to the health nurse, Pap tests, menopause information (5 sessions) ▪ Chronic diseases’ information- Diabetes, Heart Disease, Breast Cancer, Stroke, Incontinence (8 sessions) ▪ Deafness ▪ Sleep disorders (2 sessions)
<p><i>Mental/Psychological Well-being</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Memory and Dementia (5 sessions) ▪ Depression (4 sessions) ▪ Self Esteem (7 sessions) ▪ Stress and Anxiety (3 sessions) ▪ Isolation and Adjusting to a new culture ▪ Issues of Identity, ways of relating to others
<p><i>Socio-Economic Well-being</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable living ▪ Quarantine information for travellers (5 sessions) ▪ Money management session (6 sessions) ▪ How to make Natural cleaning products ▪ Accessing different community services (3 sessions) ▪ Personal safety on the street (3 sessions) ▪ Prolonged effects of DV (4 sessions)
<p><i>Recreational/Craft</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outings/excursion (12 trips) ▪ Cooking (4 sessions) ▪ Craft sessions- Greeting card making, decorative tissue box covers, crocheting, knitting, jewellery making, sewing ▪ Aqua Aerobics (4 sessions) ▪ Basket weaving (4 sessions)
<p><i>Family well being</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicating with children (4 sessions) ▪ Parenting (6 sessions) ▪ Contraception ▪ Dealing with Gambling (3 sessions) ▪ Dealing with Drugs

<i>Other vital topics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenancy Advice (2 sessions) ▪ Legal Information -Family Law, Wills (3 sessions) ▪ Census Information ▪ Centrelink Information (3 sessions)
<i>Other Programs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ethnic Communities Sustainable Living Project (8 weeks) ▪ Female Genital Mutilation Program in partnership with the Cumberland Hospital ▪ In Partnership with Miller TAFE Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction course in Childcare (2 courses) - Introduction course in First Aid ▪ In partnership with SSWAHS for the BCE programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -‘Women Growing Older’ (4 programs) (8 weeks each) -‘Women & Children Growing together in a New Country’ (6weeks) -‘Living with Choices’ (6 weeks) -‘New Healthy Women’ (8 weeks) -‘Living Well in the Middle Years’(2 weeks)

Support Groups:

IWHS initiated a range of activities aimed at facilitating community development and support mechanisms for women accessing the service. The women regularly attend the group meetings and have come to forge strong bonds of friendship and rapport that developed as a result of the informal support structure within the groups. The following women’s groups meet at the centre regularly:

1. Arabic Speaking Women’s Group

This support group meets every Tuesdays from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and has been one where the group members come to learn and grow together by attending health discussions, participating in-group activities and sharing each other’s experience and having fun together. The women have strong solidarity within the group and enjoy learning new things. This year the group had sessions ranging from health talks to money management to the use of natural cleaning products.

2. Assyrian Women’s Group

This group is run in partnership with Cabramatta Community Health Centre and is facilitated by Marlin Babakhan, every Monday from 12.00 pm till 2.00 pm. The women love to hear and discuss topics in health and take part in physical activities, including outings. The year has seen the group growing in strength with more than 30 women attending. On the request of the group members, the emphasis is on sessions that focus on Healthier Bones. Hence the group has had sessions in Aqua aerobics, gentle exercises, falls prevention and osteoporosis, among other health topics that have been discussed.

3. *Mandanian Women's Group*

This unique group, the followers of the Mandanian religion that originated in the Middle East, are happy spending time on craft and participating in-group sessions at IWHS. They have completed two certificate programs – one in First Aid and the other in Childcare from Miller TAFE Outreach Programs. Among the women, strong bonds of friendship have blossomed that often extend outside the group sessions.

4. *Middle Eastern Senior Women's Group*

All the women participating in this group are over the age of 65 years. In Partnership with the Multicultural Respite Network, this group meets every Friday at the centre from 11.00 am to 2.00 pm. The women love to get involved in craft activities and also gain more information from the guest speakers that come to discuss various health topics with them every week. Lunch and transportation are also provided for the group members. They also enjoy going for an outing once a month.

5. *NESH Women's group*

This group is run in partnership with IWHS and Non English Speaking Housing for Women (NESH).

6. *Spanish Speaking Women's group*

The Spanish women's group is facilitated by Ilma Valenzuela, a Spanish Bilingual Community Educator (BCE). The women covered the New Healthy Woman program in partnership with the SSWAHS in Term1, 2008. Various other health topics have also been discussed and the group members also love to go for outings. Two trips have been organised for them so far, one to the Mount Anon Botanical gardens, Campbelltown and the other to Leura in the Blue Mountains. Each woman is excited to be part of this group and grow together with the help of each other.

7. *Serbian Women's group*

This group run in partnership with the Serbian Orthodox Welfare Association is facilitated by Tihomer. The group members come together and enjoy each other's company. Different works of craft are often undertaken and guest speakers are organised around the health topics the women would like to learn more about.

8. *Sudanese Women's group*

The women in this group, coming from Sudanese backgrounds, have shown a keen interest in learning and understanding different health topics. In Term1, 2007, the Female Genital Mutilation program was conducted in partnership with the Cumberland Hospital. In term 2, 2007, the 'Women and Children growing together in a New Country' program was undertaken in partnership

with SSWAHS. The group is growing stronger in numbers and the women feel comfortable discussing health topics in their group meetings.

9. Swahili Women's group

The Swahili group meets every Thursday from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and has growing numbers of newly arrived and recently migrant women from Africa learning and growing together and settling down in Australia. The women are very eager to learn more about health and related topics. The group has 25 members and has done the Childcare course from Miller TAFE. The women in this group are very determined and are steadily working towards their goal of full time employment.

10. Swahili Mothers and Children Playgroup

This very special women's group, in association with Play Group Australia and The Smith Family, was started in 2007 so that mothers and their children could enjoy and learn together through fun and play. The mothers are motivated to teach their children through activities, which the children are attracted to like games, painting, stories, etc. The children in turn enjoy all the activities promoting a stronger bond between mothers and their children.

11. Turkish Women's Group

In Association with the Turkish Welfare Association and is facilitated by Riza Yaman. The group members have had talks on various health topics like legal information, dental care, nutrition, better sleep, epilepsy and so on. They also like to do knitting and jewellery making while enjoying each other's company at the group meetings every Wednesday from 12pm to 2pm.

12. Turkish Women's Carers Support Group

IWHS and NSW Transcultural mental health Centre have organized this carer's group for women from Turkish background. This new group, started in Term1, 2008 provides emotional support for women who take care of a family member with a mental health issue. The group meets on the third Friday of every month from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm.

Other classes/programs:

▪ The English classes

The English classes have always aimed at helping CALD women overcome the barrier of lack of knowledge of the English language. The classes provide access to learning English in a safe and relaxed environment with the help of the friendly teaching staff, who in turn are dedicated volunteers. Currently, eight classes, spanning over three days per week, are currently held at IWHS Fairfield. The classes range from beginner level to advance. In partnership with the House of Welcome, IWHS also offers English classes to women on a temporary protection visa, who are unable to access other free services due to their visa status.

- **STARRTS Iraqi Women’s Group**

Women from an Iraqi background met at the IWHS centre for six weeks in Term 2, 2008. This group was co-ordinated and conducted by STARTTS.

- **Vocational / Recreational classes**

IWHS has continued in its tradition of arranging vocational and skills training program in the areas of sewing, art and craft, child minding skills. We also offer Yoga sessions for women through our ‘*Better Health through Yoga*’ program held every Wednesday and ‘*Computer Literacy for Beginners*’, a project that is part of the Unlimited Potential initiative by Smith Family on Tuesdays.

Women Participation

The women’s health education program has evoked the participation of over 360 women in its various group activities. With over 20 groups, and women from 19 different backgrounds attending them, IWHS is growing from strength to strength. The following is tabular and graphical depiction of the women’s participation levels in all the different groups:

Groups	Term 3,2007	Term 4,2007	Term 1,2008	Term 2,2008
Arabic Women’s Support Group	90	90	89	100
Assyrian Women’s Group	27	31	30	33
Mandanian Women’s Support group	20	18	27	32
Middle Eastern Senior Women’s group	20	20	20	20
Spanish Women’s Group	21	21	22	24
Serbian Women’s support group	15	15	16	17
Sudanese Women’s Group			14	18
Swahili Women’s group	22	24	26	28
Swahili Mother’s and Children Playgroup	17	16	14	15

Turkish Women's group	20	20	19	19
English classes	36	36	40	44
English for Temporary Protection Visa holders	19	20	20	20

Notes:

1. The figures correspond to all women enrolled in weekly sessions of the group per term. Usually, there are 10 sessions in a term.
2. () denotes the number of children enrolled group in the Swahili Mother and Children's Playgroup.

Networking and Partnership

Having a productive networks and partnerships helps IWHS to achieve its objective of empowering *CALD* women. We have had the privilege of working with several dedicated workers and organizations during the past year.

IWHS has worked together with the following organizations to which it would like to extend its sincere appreciation:

- The Smith Family
- Serbian Orthodox Welfare Association
- Play Group Australia
- House of Welcome
- Miller TAFE Outreach
- Granville TAFE
- House of Welcome
- Non English Speaking Housing
- Multicultural Respite Network
- Fairfield City Council
- Fairfield Division of General Practise
- Wetherhill Park Police
- Women's Health New South Wales
- Seniors Peer Education Centre
- Benevolent Society
- Australia Quarantine Inspection Service
- Fairfield City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Fairfield Hospital
- Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
- Multicultural Family Planning Association

- Liverpool Hospital
- NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- Women’s Legal Service NSW
- Medicine Information and Peer Support

CABRAMATTA PROJECT

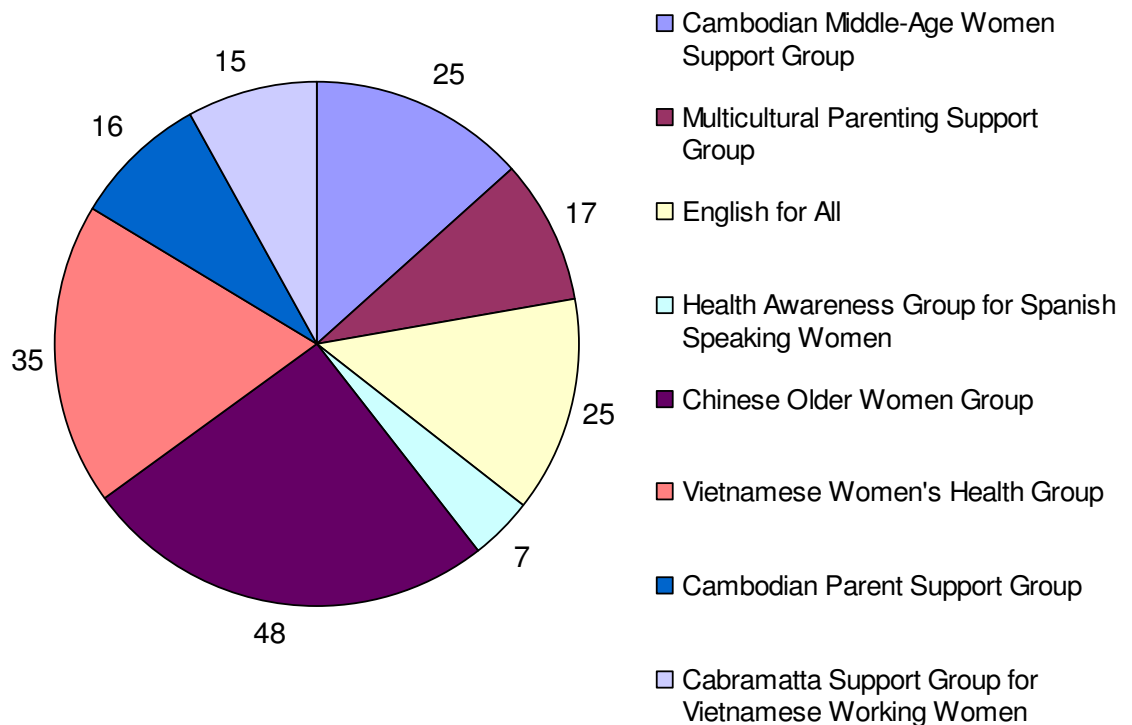
2007-2008 was a busy and challenging year for Partners for Healthy Women In Cabramatta Project. It was very successful in providing health information, education and skill sharing for NESB women living in Cabramatta and surrounding suburbs. It initiated 2 new on-going projects in partnership with Cambodian Australian Welfare Council and Asian Women at Work providing services for young women with children and women working in low-paid employment. It aimed to empower NESB women to gain confidence in looking after their own health and well being through a participation in workshops and training related to women’s health issues, human rights and rights at work, community issues, and learning about mainstream service providers as well as improving their English language so they could make some contribution to the wider Australian community.

2. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

2.1 Women Groups

The project catered 7 support groups including 2 newly established ones.

Number of Women in each group



Cambodian Middle-Age Women Group

The group met every Monday to learn conversational English from 9:00am to 11:00am and to discuss and share knowledge, health information, and experience from 11:00am to 12:30pm. The English class was still delivered by volunteer tutors, aiming to provide women with basic English for everyday use. After English class, the group had activities such as cooking, outings, and participated in health talks such as stroke, bowel cancer, depression, anxiety, menopause, mental health, and dementia. The sessions have helped women to better understand their body mechanism, emotions, and psychological well-beings as they are aging. Other information sessions such as age care service and community safety were also included.

Multicultural Parent Support Group

This group was conducted in partnership with Uniting Care Burnside, It catered mothers and children age zero to five from Vietnamese, Chinese and Cambodian background. It had a range of activities such as free play, craft and group time. Children enjoyed outdoor activities at the end of each month. Within the group, children had fun with toys, craft work, painting, colouring, music, songs, and stories, while mothers could talk and share each other concerns. Unfortunately, this group finished at the end of term 4, 2007. It has been a good experience and successful project working with Burnside.

Cambodian Parent Support Group

This new group was established in January 2008 in partnership with Cambodian Australian Welfare Council following an end of the Multicultural Parent Support Group. The group catered mothers and children age zero to five from Cambodian background. It included a range of activities according to children age. Children activities included toys, craft work, painting, colouring, music, songs, and stories. Outdoor activities were organised once a month giving children an opportunity to free play in the park with their mothers. This year, we had successfully provided oral health care sessions to mothers and children leaning how to better look after their mouth and teeth.

English for All

On-going English class delivered by a volunteer tutor, every Wednesday from 9:00am to 10:30am. There were 25 women enrolled in the class and new women were recruited every term. The class helped enhance women's English language ability slowly and steadily. Some women improved significantly while others struggled slowly and patiently, but learning happened every day. The lessons covered a variety of useful topics such transports, health and shopping and were based on group consultation.

Health Awareness Group for Spanish Speaking Women

The group was pretty small in size but the most independent group where members decided on and delivered their own activities. Group members are well established Spanish Speaking women in the community. Unlike other groups, they have had good understanding of main stream service providers and knew how to access them when needed. Therefore, information sessions were not the group's primary aim. The group was happy with free time talking and meeting with friends in whom it helped break down their isolation and manage their stress or depression.

Chinese Older Women's Group

Chinese women aged ranging from 60 to 90 from different suburbs in South West Sydney area. It met regularly on Thursdays with an average of 32 participants in each meeting day. Women in this group were active and enthusiastic about being part of the team and involving in the team activities. This year, in addition to health talks, they have had training on "*Women Growing Older*" and "*Change your life, keep your balance*" which raised their understanding of their aging concerns and how to manage it. For some women, this training was a stepping stone to change their habits, others it was an understanding of changes as they grew older.

This group loved to have talks every week on different topics that concern them even though it sometimes only meant to refresh their memory. Also, they enjoyed excursion and social time together. Some of them had established a bond of friendship.

Vietnamese Women's Health Group

The group met every Friday from 9:30am to 12:00pm. It catered older Vietnamese women living in Cabramatta and Fairfield local government area. During the year, the group had various information sessions on health issues and main stream service providers, and two workshops on "*Women Growing Older*" and "*Change your life, keep your balance*". This group was very active in discussion of health issues and pretty keen in excursion and cooking. They shared ideas and information, and supported each other beyond the group level. For most members, the group was a place to overcome isolation, stress, and boredom, and to focus on themselves, to be free from home duty commitment, and to learn about the health and services available in the community.

Cabramatta Support Group for Vietnamese Working Women

This group was established in term 2 of 2008 in partnership with Asian Women at Work. The main aim is to empower Vietnamese working women in low paid job or employment with knowledge of rights at work and confidence to remain or move further in their career path. It also aims to provide them with opportunity to learn, share and establish a reliable supporting network. There are currently 15 members in the group meeting on Wednesday from 12:30pm to 2:30pm. Initially, the group was very keen on dancing and cooking. Lessons in ballroom dancing were provided to promote physical exercises and encourage women's participation. As the group settled, it will try to empower Vietnamese women worker to stand up for their rights through seminars and information sessions such as health, rights in the workplace, family law, centre link policy, and other related topics.

2.2 Programs and Health information sessions

Programs for 2007-2008 were carefully developed according to outcomes of the group consultation and evaluation at the end of each term. Activities were planned to meet specific needs of participants and the nature of the group as well as to meet the goal of the project which is to provide health information, to promote physical and emotional support, and to link them to related health and welfare services. The following were some details of group sessions/activities provided.

Terms	Information Sessions	Other activities
Term 3 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Learning language is fun” • Oral Health for young kids • Tai Chi • Age care services • Safety seminar • Arthritis self-management Program • Rheumatoid arthritis • Dementia: sign, assessment, and how to seek help • Osteoporosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Outings/excursions • Weekly English classes • Painting, crocheting and card making and other craft • Training “Women Growing Older” (7sessions) • Weekly children activities
Term 4 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypertension and stroke related issues • Mental illness: sign, symptoms and services • Bowel cancer awareness • Diabetes for elderly and basic management • Maintain a good relationship and family violence awareness • Age care service for Cambodian community • Understanding mental illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly English classes • Weekly children program and activities • Craft and art work: making Christmas cards, painting, and crocheting • Cooking demonstrations • Safety forum • Gentle exercises (yoga) and breathing exercises • Christmas celebration
Term 1 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Stress and anxiety • Parenting matters • Oral Health Workshop • Tenant legal rights • Transcultural Mental Health: Recovery project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Outings/excursions • Weekly English classes • Weekly children program and activities • Vietnamese and Chinese New Year celebration • International Women’s Day celebration • Craft and art work: making cards, painting, and crocheting • Senior week celebration • Training: “Change your life, keep your balance”
Term 2 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of Dementia • Menopause: Awareness and how to deal with it? • Grief and loss • Age care information and service • Counselling Services • About Asian Women at Work and Immigrant Women’s Health Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly English classes • Weekly children program and activities • Outings/excursions: Visit to Art NSW Gallery, Marryland Park, Aurbun Botanic Garden • Dancing • Workshop: “Change your life, Keep your balance” • Mother Day Celebration • Craft • Cooking demonstration • Crocheting and painting

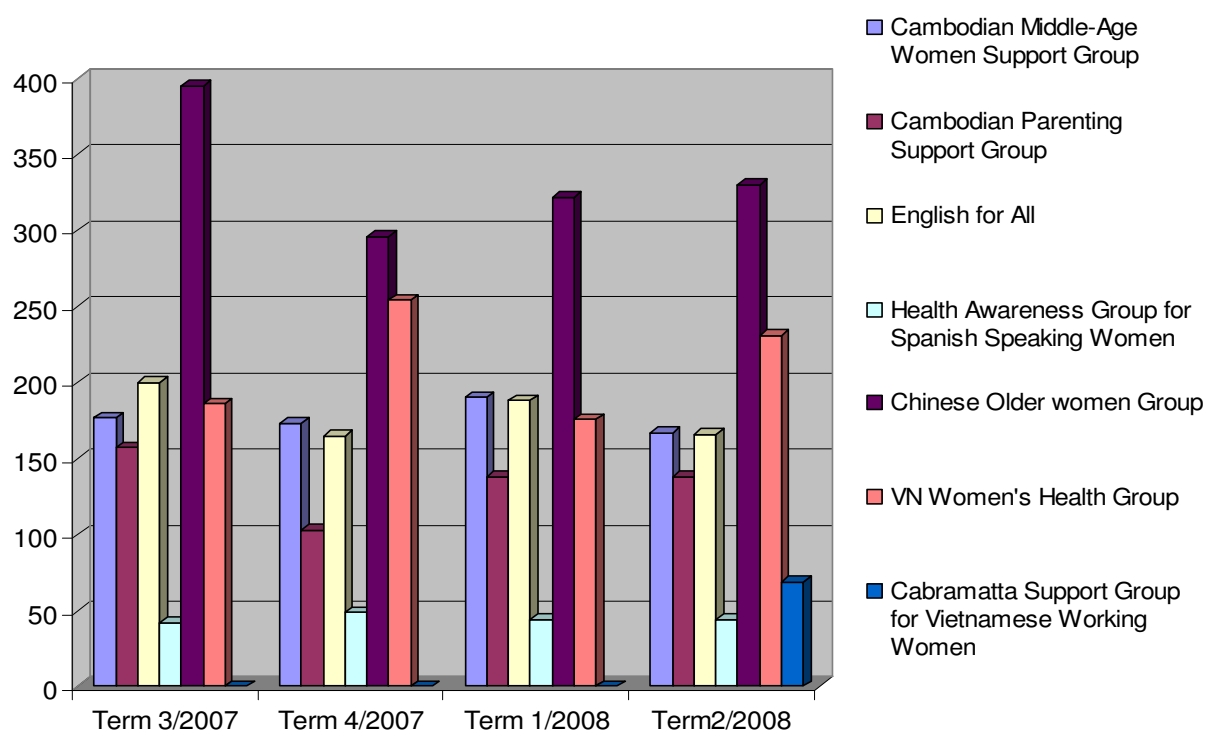
2.3. Women participation

In 2007-2008, the project engaged a large number of women in various group activities. The figure below outlined the number of women participation throughout the four terms.

GROUPS	TERM 3 2007	TERM 4 2007	TERM 1 2008	TERM 2 2008
Cambodian Middle-Age Women Group	177	173	190	167
Cambodian Parenting Support Group	157(197)	103(132)	138 (197)	138 (190)
English For All	200	165	188	166
Health Awareness Group for Spanish Speaking Women	42	49	44	44
Chinese Older Women's Group	395	296	322	330
Vietnamese Women's Health Group	186	254	176	231
Cabramatta Support Group for Vietnamese Working Women	NA	NA	NA	69

Note: () No. of children's participation

Women's Participation



2.4 Clinical Activities

In partnership with Bankstown Health Service, Women Health Clinic had consulted 34 women in 10 consultations during the year. The number of consultations was very much affected by the change of women health nurses. The consultation was made upon appointment and had been provided on breast check, pap tests, continence

assessments, advice on pregnancy and pregnancy tests, a check after the baby is born, menopause, contraception, and other related women health issues.

2.5 Counselling Activities

In partnership with Transcultural Mental Health Service through the Transcultural Child, Adolescent and Family Clinic Outreach Program, the project had assisted a provision of counselling service to 19 clients from Vietnamese community.

2.6 Special events

The Project, under IWHS's umbrella, joined Fairfield Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network (FIRWN) celebrating International Women's Day on 5th March, and Refugee week on 18th June 2008. It also participated in an annual picnic on 14th December 2007, and celebrated Senior Week for Chinese Older Women Group on 10th April 2008, and involved in a discussion on community safety with local police through City Watch forum.

2.7 Partnerships and Networking

During the year the project had been working closely with the following organisations.

Cambodian-Australian Welfare Council
UnitingCare Burnside, Cabramatta (till the end of 2007)
Cabramatta Community Health Centre
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
BCE program, South West Sydney Area Health Service
Liverpool Multicultural Health Service
Vietnamese Women Association
Cabramatta Police and City Watch Project
Immigrant Women Speakout Association
Asian Women at Work
Arthritis foundation
Transcultural Mental Health
South West Legal centre
Fairfield City Council (for Outings)