

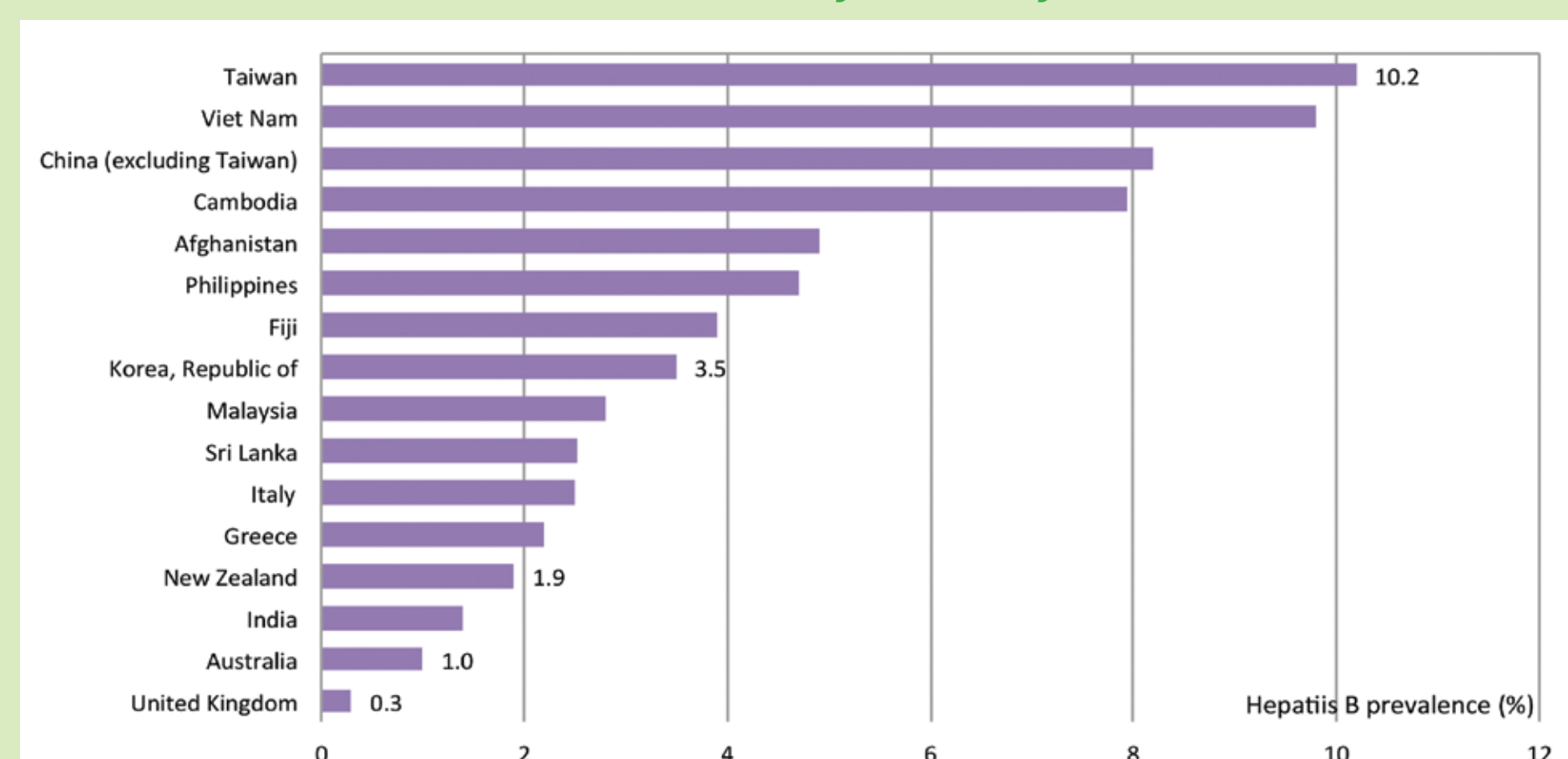
Health Promotion with Australian Afghan communities; how building relationships with community groups assists with health promotion activities

Higher prevalence of CHB among Afghan-Australians:

In Australia, the prevalence of CHB is significantly higher among people born in certain countries including Afghanistan. The Afghan community is one of the most vulnerable communities in Victoria with limited resources about hepatitis B in their own languages. Most members of the community are unaware that they are living with the disease.

In Australia the prevalence of chronic viral hepatitis B in the Afghan-born population is the highest after those born in Taiwan, Vietnam, China and Cambodia.

Figure 1: Estimated prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection in Australia by country of birth.



Source: Kirby Institute Surveillance Report, 2015

Establishing and maintaining partnerships:

Hepatitis Victoria engages with the Afghan community, community leaders and local organisations regarding viral hepatitis.

We have established and maintained partnerships with a range of partners including Local Government, community organisations and community leaders.



Jawid Sayed, Hepatitis Victoria staff member, provides information about the prevalence of viral hepatitis B for Afghan community leaders and organisations during a 'Dialogue with the Afghan Communities' meeting at the Greater City of Dandenong, December 2015.

Hepatitis Victoria project for Afghan community:

The project aimed to raise hepatitis B awareness among the Afghan community of Victoria with a focus on those most vulnerable. The project engages with the Afghani community and their leaders.

Information is provided in a culturally-appropriate manner and in local language(s) and dialects.

Our strategies:

- Select project staff and volunteers from Afghan community
- Establish and maintain partnerships with the stakeholders
- Develop education resources in a culturally-appropriate manner
- Develop resources in the community's own languages
- Conduct Education Sessions
- Use local media in order to address hepatitis B messages
- Attend community events in order to disseminate information about viral hepatitis.

Key challenges of the Afghan-born population in Australia:

- Prevalence of viral hepatitis B among Afghans-born Australians is significantly higher than that of general population.
- Low level of community knowledge regarding HBV.
- Misconceptions and myths about the disease.
- Poor history of healthcare in their country of birth (Afghanistan) and in refugee camps.
- Poor history and recording of vaccination
- Low health literacy
- Language barriers and cultural differences
- Lack of access to and difficulty using qualified interpreters.
- Gender inequality, family violence and patriarchal family.
- Scarcity or even lack of health education material in their own national languages.
- Lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of available health services in Australia.
- Stigma and fear of 'community gossip'
- Incomplete notification data in Victoria regarding country of birth.



Hepatitis Victoria Health Promotion Team with Dr. Marama Kufi from Monash Health during Harmony Day Festival at the Greater City of Dandenong, March 2016.



Hepatitis Victoria staff together with Afghan community leaders and organisations at the Greater City of Dandenong, October 2015

Afghan-born population in Australia:

Afghans have a long history of living in Australia (since 1860)

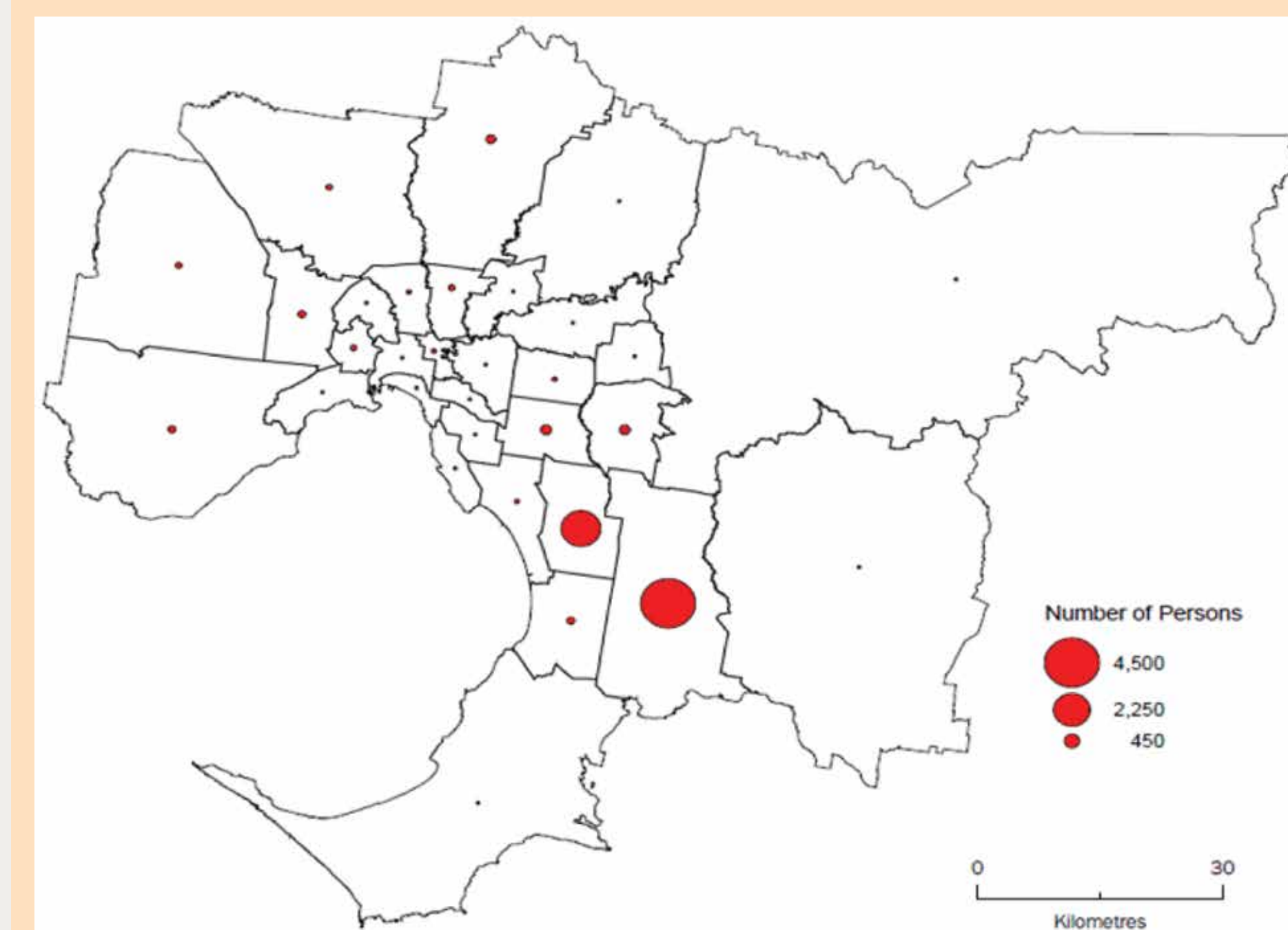
More than 30 years of war in Afghanistan resulted in millions of refugees in different countries.

Total Afghan population in Australia: around 29,000

Total Afghan Population in Victoria: around 10,000

Most Afghan Victorians are living in south east Melbourne in the City of Casey and Greater Dandenong

Figure 2: Geographic distribution of Afghan-born people in metropolitan Local Government Areas, Victoria: 2011



Project Staff:

Jawid Sayed (left) is a member of the Afghan community who is recruited by Hepatitis Victoria as a Health Promotion Project Officer in order to work on a number of issues including establishing partnerships and collaboration to facilitate engagement with the Afghan community.



Hepatitis Victoria staff provide a health promotion session for a group of Afghan women at CatholicCare, in Dandenong, December 2015

Some lessons learnt:

- Project activities must be in line with community's culture, norms, and values.
- Project workers must have a better understanding of, and empathy for the community.
- There is scarcity of education material in community languages
- Stigma and 'community gossip' make it hard to speak openly about health issues.
- Key education materials need to be available in their own languages
- When the Afghan community is engaged, they have a great interest in learning more and collaborating with Hepatitis Victoria