For my public presentation I met with an influential Pakistani pastor, Mark, whom I had previously interviewed for my thesis. Pastor Mark came from Pakistan and has been living in Thailand for the last 10 years. He is not an asylum seeker, but he pastors a church that many asylum seekers attend. The meeting was in his home and the setting allowed the presentation of my findings to turn more into a discussion. Conversations of this caliber are generally best to take place in the privacy of one’s home. Though he can speak Urdu, he is also fluent in English.

Given his position, the pastor Mark is very well aware of the situation for Pakistani asylum seekers in Bangkok. I didn’t have to explain much of the background as to the laws and policies in Thailand. I began by reiterating my methodology of using interviews, focus groups, and surveys to gather my data. Then I presented him with the research question of examining the well-being of Pakistani asylum seekers.

I described the five social determinants of health that I examined. When presenting the areas of social, physical, spiritual, mental, and environment I described both the research findings and the data analysis together. In this way the explanation of the data was immediately followed up with its potential causes.

Lastly, I presented my short term and long term strategies for the future. Currently, the strategies are just theoretical ideas that the community or leaders think would be good things to strive for. Only a few of them are being put into practice at the moment. As you can hear in pastor Mark’s recording, he is slowly trying to change the mindset of his congregation to be Kingdom thinkers. A mindset change is something that usually happens gradually over time and we must be patient, but have faith that it will happen.

My findings through this research shouldn’t necessarily go back to the Pakistani asylum seeker community, but instead I believe that these are important things to know for the organizations and churches that lead asylum seekers. This is why my results went back to pastor Mark and I also gave them to the organization I partnered with, Life Raft. Attached with this document is the email I sent Life Raft.

Unfortunately, Life Raft wasn’t as available as I had hoped. As a result, not many of their families completed the surveys so my report back is not a comprehensive analysis of their families as we all would have liked. Though I got the thesis done, it wasn’t as deep as I would have liked. With only a month to complete everything I was quite rushed and I wish I could have taken more time on this project. It is what it is. Through it I made some great relationships and have learned a lot about how to love people who are difficult to love. The Pakistani asylum seekers have taught me so much.

Letter to the founder of Life Raft

Dear Chris,

I’m writing you in regards to my thesis project. I think a lot of the stuff that I have learned in doing this project are things you probably already know in working with asylum seekers for many years. Given that not as many surveys were completed as hoped for, I thought I would just verbally share what the people responded with. Below are some of the themes that we have previously talked about that Life Raft is interested in knowing about.

Variety of churches:

every person knew about at least 1 church

every person receives help from at least 1 church

one person said they haven’t visited a church

What they were told before they came:

2 people said they had known about the situation in Thailand before they came.

everyone else said they thought there would be freedom, protection, etc. they were very disappointed at the reality.

Kids education:

2 families at community learning centers

2 families at international schools

1 home school

2 not attending school

2 don’t have school age children

Skills

the majority of families have skills in teaching - they want to be able to apply their talents and hone their skills in that area.

some are accountants

a few have computer skills, but many would like to learn more computer skills.

a few people want to learn more about the Bible and how to better evangelize

many people want to work from home - this would include learning how to make things that they could do from home and then sell

many people want to learn Thai and/or English

Diet

The Pakistani diet is heavy in oil, bread, vegetables, and sugar (all are eaten daily), while lacking in fruit and protein (once a month-once a week). Fruit and protein are crucial to having a healthy and balanced diet. The reasons people gave for not eating fruit and protein is that these commodities are expensive.

Clothes when going out:

1 person wears traditional Pakistani wear

1 person wears lounge clothes

4 people wear suits

6 people wear casual clothes

Learning Thai

5 people could speak Thai at least a little bit

only 2 people said they do not want to learn Thai

2 people said they could devote 1 hr./wk and 3 people said anytime works

After completing my thesis, I heard from Pat more in depth about Life Raft’s new Learn, Work, Teach model that you’ve been implementing. And I remember you sharing with me how Life Raft operates, but somehow the way Pat explained it really clicked for me (maybe its one of those things where you had to experience it to see the effect). Though its a too late to examine the model more deeply, I wanted to share my thoughts in retrospect.

Pat shared with me that this model is really about helping the asylum seekers kind of find a purpose in life by doing something productive/helpful. This helps them in multiple ways by doing something with their time, being a productive member of society, and helps them get out of the recipient mindset to see that they did something to “earn” the money from LR.

One significant difference between my data sets (LR and non-LR) was the topic of work. 11 people out of 34 total had found work, 7 of those came from LR. Whether they get paid or its volunteer, having a productive way to spend their time seemed to make a difference in the way they answered the questions. I feel that non-LR families just kept telling me how stuck they were in this bad situation. Whereas the people in LR tended to answer with a glimmer of hope. That despite the situation, they are trusting in God. So I just want to affirm your new model (from what I know of it) because it seems to be making an impact in their mindset.

If you have any questions that I haven’t addressed, please let me know.