



NSW
Settlement
Partnership

SSI
settlementservices
international



UNSW
AUSTRALIA

“UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS OF MIGRANTS FROM THE GREAT LAKES REGION OF AFRICA IN AUSTRALIA”

REPORT

Authors:

Dr Nadine UMUTONI WA SHEMA (GLAPD)
Emmanuel MUSONI (GLAPD)
Dr Jean Pierre ABEGA (GLAPD)
Dr Husna RAZEE (UNSW)

January 2020

Thanks and Acknowledgements

The project is a partnership between the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development (GLAPD), Settlement Services International (SSI) and The University of New South Wales (UNSW). The research was commissioned by GLAPD. We would like to thank all those who participated in the interviews and focus groups, and generously gave us their time and knowledge.

We hope that this report is useful to understand the challenges and issues related to the settlement process of migrants from the Great Lakes region of Africa in Australia and also shade a light on how to improve service delivery for migrants from CALD background by providing culturally appropriate and safe services, and by providing employment pathways and opportunities for them to strive.

Suggested Citation

Umutoni Wa Shema, N., Musoni, E., Abega, J.P., Razee, H., (2020) Understandings the challenges and issues relatd to the settlement process of migrants from the Great Lakes Region of Africa in Australia.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Aims of the Study | 3 |
| 3. Methods | 3 |
| 4. Findings | 6 |
| <i>Community consultations</i> | 6 |
| Using multiple ways of recruiting participants | 6 |
| Informing participants of the purpose of consultations | 7 |
| Venue for consultations needed to be easily accessible | 8 |
| Integrating consultations with community events | 10 |
| Structuring consultations to stimulate discussion and debate | 11 |
| Providing feedback to the community | 12 |
| <i>Unmet and Emerging Issues</i> | 13 |
| Language barriers | 13 |
| Poor service delivery by Humanitarian Settlement Service case workers | 16 |
| Being discriminated against, losing hope and giving up | 17 |
| Housing/Accommodation | 21 |
| Job opportunities | 23 |
| 5. Discussion and Recommendations | 26 |
| Community Consultation Process. | 26 |
| Unmet Needs | 27 |
| 6. Conclusion | 29 |
| 7. References | 30 |

1. Introduction

According to STARTTS (2009), the majority of people from the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Rwanda, Congo, Uganda and Burundi) suffer from PTSD stemming from their experience of war, loss of family members and displacement. Upon their arrival in Australia, they continue to face problems including poor English language skills, unemployment, family issues such as intergenerational conflict, racism and discrimination, lack of regular income and citizenship (Peisker & Tilbury, 2003), but also inaccessibility to services, education and affordable housing (RCA, 2009). Furthermore they also have to cope with the constant stress of adapting to a new country with different political, cultural and socio-economic structure (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

A participatory research in Brisbane, Australia following the Sudanese accusations of neo-colonial approach of 'service delivery', emphasised the importance of getting an insider perspective to understand the resettlement issues and challenges of African refugees. One way of getting such insider perspectives would be through community consultations (Westoby, 2008). Thus, an action shift toward co-production as a new way of policy making and public service delivery, where the service beneficiaries actively express their ideas and needs, and are engaged and heard by policy makers (Bovaird, 2007), is key to address settlement issues. However, research shows that refugees and humanitarian settlers from Africa are not actively engaged to voice their needs (RCA, 2009; Westoby, 2008). In the case

of the Great Lakes migrant community (GLMC), there is a scarcity of information regarding their settlement needs as people with common African cultural, social and political background. Moreover, there is no documented approach to how best this community can be actively engaged to voice their concerns and needs. This report aims to address these gaps.

The Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development International (GLAPD Int.) is an Australian community organisation that works for the migrants from the African Great Lakes communities in Australia namely Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Kenya. The goal of GLAPD Int. is to serve communities from the Great Lakes of Africa living in Australia providing informed advocacy and support, both directly and in partnership with key agencies and academic institutions.

Since 2013, GLAPD Int. started conducting community consultations with community members to identify settlement issues and needs. Between 2013 and 2015, GLAPD Int. conducted 13 community consultations with African Great Lakes community members. These consultations were organised mostly by GLAPD Int. case workers, volunteers and board members. The aim of these consultations was to get an understanding of the issues GLMC living in Australia continue to face so that these issues and their concerns can be addressed by developing projects and programs.

One such program resulting from these

consultations was the rural and regional resettlement of Africans in Mingoola NSW, which resulted in a program aired on ABC's Australian Story (November 7, 2016). The establishment and success of this resettlement program and highlights the value of community consultations conducted by GLAPD Int.

Understanding the challenges and issues related to the settlement process of migrants from the African Great Lakes Region in Australia has been an ongoing process for years now. However, the process through which GLAPD Int. have been organizing and conducting those consultations has not been documented. Thus, consultations lacked evidence, continuity and progress, but most of all this model of understanding community issues

was not shared across other communities to learn from our experience.

Therefore, research has been undertaken to systematically document how these consultations were carried out so that the process can be documented and the lessons learned can be shared with other communities. At the same time the opportunity was taken to also identify the current concerns and issues faced by the GLMC since the initial community consultations were organized. This study is funded by SSI's Settlement Innovation Funding (SIF) and conducted by GLAPD Int. in collaboration with academics from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales (UNSW).

2. Aims of the Study

The aim of this study was as follows:

1. To document the consultation process used by GLAPD Int. in the community consultations.
2. To explore the experiences of the Great Lakes migrant community in

engaging with and contributing to their settlement process.

3. To identify the unmet settlement needs and the best practices of settlement service and delivery from the perspective of the service beneficiaries.

3. Methods

Qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to get an understanding of how the initial community consultations were organized and carried out by GLAPD Int. as well as the current unmet settlement needs. The

research was guided from the beginning by a project reference group that included representatives from the New South Wales Settlement Partnership (NSP), members in the area of coverage (Core Multicultural Communities, Illawarra Multicultural

Services (IMS) and Northern Settlement Service (NSS).

The study focused on the geographical areas of Fairfield/Cabramatta, Illawarra/Wollongong and Newcastle mainly because most of the Great Lakes Community members are settled in those areas.

This study included two components: Component one documented the community consultation process undertaken by GLAPD Int. and explored how access to the Great Lakes migrant

community was gained, as well as the experiences of the Great Lakes migrant community in engaging with and contributing to their settlement process.

The second component explored the emerging and unmet settlement needs from the perspective of the service beneficiaries.

Figure 1 provides the details of each component in terms of the corresponding aims, and data collection methods.

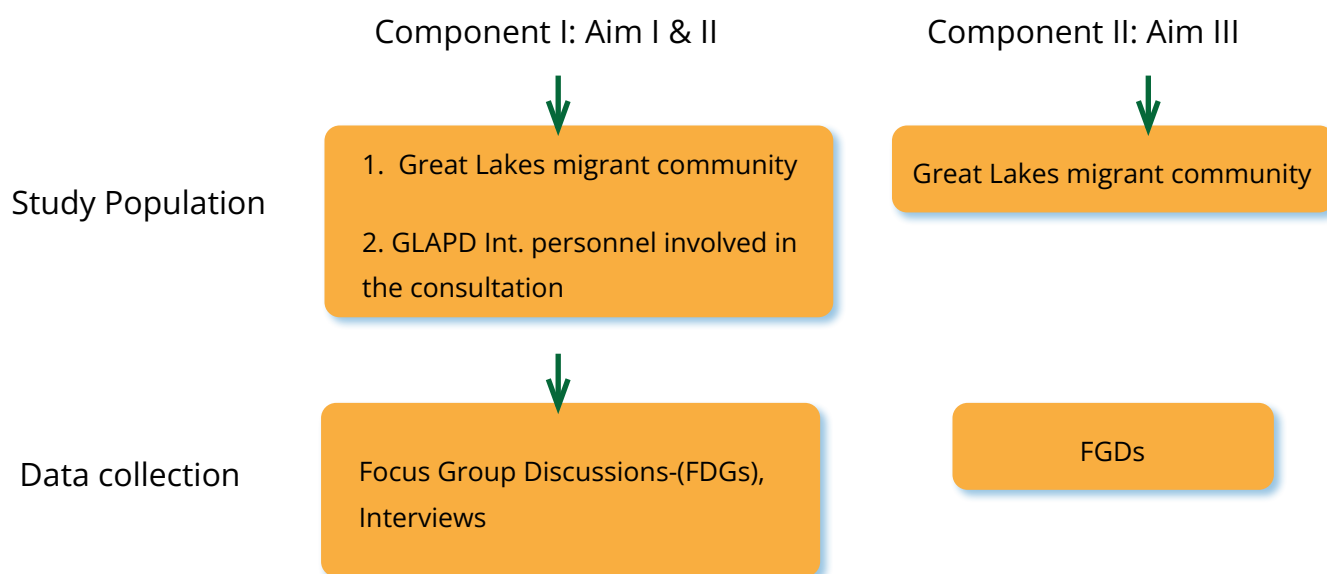


Figure 1: Project components and corresponding aims and data collection methods

Data Collection

Focus group discussions (FDGs) were carried out between 2017 and 2018 with groups of 8 to 12 participants who were migrants from GLMC and who had participated in previous community consultations. GLAPD Int. provided a list of those who had previously participated in

the community consultations. Community leaders sent invitations to them to participate in the study, and provided them with the contact numbers of the researchers so that they could directly communicate with the researchers if they were interested in participating.

Three FGDs were conducted, one in the Fairfield area, one in Wollongong and one in Newcastle. All focus groups comprised of both male and female adults and youth attending High School. Prior to conducting the FGD, written consent from the participants was obtained. The FGD was moderated by one of the researchers with another taking notes.

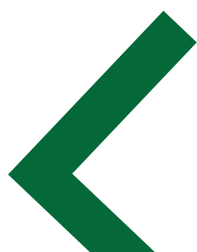
The first part of the FGDs focussed on exploring the process of the community consultations carried out by GLADP Int. in 2013/2014 and to obtain participants' perspectives on what aspects of the process worked for them at that time. The second part of the FGD focussed on exploring participants' perspectives on their experiences in the migration process and their current and emerging concerns with the purpose of understanding whether or not the issues identified during previous consultations had been addressed or remained unresolved even today. The FGDs lasted 45 minutes to an hour.

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with caseworkers and volunteers of GLADP Int., who organised and conducted community consultations mentioned in the introduction of this report. The focus of these interviews was to explore the process of how the community consultations were organized in the past, what participants considered as strengths of the process and what worked and did not work, and their thoughts on how they would do things differently if they were to hold similar consultations again.

Case workers were invited to participate in the study through an email invitation sent out by the Chair of GLADP Int. In the email the participants were asked to contact one of the researchers directly if they agreed to participate so that an arms-length process was maintained. Written consent was obtained prior to the interview process.

Each interview lasted 30 – 40 minutes. A total of three interviews was carried out, one with the Chair of the GLADP Int. who took a lead role in the initial consultations of 2013-2015 and the other two with case workers.

The interviews and FGDs were conducted in the respective languages commonly spoken by the participants; all interviews were conducted in English, 2 FGDs in Kinyarwanda and 1 in English. The interviews and FGDs were audio recorded with the consent of participants. Three of the co-investigators in this study who are originally from the Great Lakes region of Africa and speak these languages as well as English fluently conducted the interviews and FGDs. They were trained for this by the lead researcher Dr Husna Razee (HR). An interview and FGD guide were developed and used in the data collection process. The interviews and FGDs conducted in a language other than English were transcribed first and then translated into English; to ensure all the wording and meaning of interview responses were accurately recorded.



Data Analysis

The interviews and FGDs were transcribed and translated into English by three of the co-investigators. The 2 FGDs conducted in other languages were translated by one of them into English language and then back translated into the original language by another member of the research team fluent in both languages. One of the researchers, Nadine Shema (NS), did an initial coding of transcripts inductively keeping in mind the research questions. The coding was then discussed with the lead researcher HR and a consensus

reached. An open and holistic process was followed, highlighting what was interesting in the participants' responses in relation to the research process. Once the interesting chunks of data were identified, they were assigned a label or code which was then defined in a consultation process with all the researchers allowing for development of themes. This process was followed for all the transcripts and throughout the process the coder had discussions with HR to arrive at a consensus for the coding process.

4. Findings

Participant Characteristics

A total of 35 participated in the three focus groups. This included 16 males and 19 females who had previously participated in the GLAPD Int., community consultations.

In addition to this, 6 participants of ages 16 to 19 who were currently in high school participated in this process.

Community consultations

The participants in the FGDs and the three interviewees identified a number of key areas of focus when conducting community

consultations. These are detailed below with quotations to support the findings.

Using multiple ways of recruiting participants

The main strategy for recruiting participants for the 2013-2015 community consultations was through community leaders. Community leaders were approached by GLAPD Int. using emails, phone calls and SMS. Community leaders in turn invited participants using a mix of approaches such as emails, phone, SMS, and social media such as Facebook.

While in the 2013 – 2015 consultations the communication method of Whatsapp was not used, some of the FGD noted that this would be a medium for future invitations. However, the limitations of using such apps was noted with calendar invitations identified as a more effective means of following up on invitations.

Somebody yesterday mentioned about, you know the social media communication, I think that is also critical, because not everyone reads their Whatsapp messages,.... if we can start to use calendar invites, on our phones, just send everyone a calendar invite and they can add that to their calendar. //

(FGD Sydney)

As noted earlier, it is important to note that when the initial community consultations took place, Whatsapp was not in use yet. With the increase in different modes of communication, it is important for future work to consider what is at that point most popular.

Key informants saw an advantage in recruiting participants to community

consultations through community leaders. One key informant noted that he knew the community leaders well and the community leaders knew the migrants well. Thus, going through community leaders was seen as an appropriate and successful way for recruiting participants that would enable a broader reach to the community.

I went through the community leaders because I knew most of them, I did not know most of community members and they do. //

(KI)

To encourage more participation, one of the FGDs suggested providing incentives to participate in the research such as “giving them certificates” of participation.

Informing participants of the purpose of consultations

All participants in this research noted the importance of letting potential community consultation participants (CCPs) know the purpose of the gathering. Hence it was important that this information be provided in the invitation letter/email/announcement etc.

Key informants noted the reasons for organizing community consultation were

to bring the new migrants out of isolation, and to integrate and socialize with others. In many instances, community members don't feel that it's necessary to attend community consultations, they were happy to stay in isolation and stay unintegrated as they have peace now compare to having lived with wars. So, it was important to outline the purpose of the community consultation meetings, when sending out invitations.

People don't wanna be educated, they don't feel really comfortable to put themselves out there, they want to remain in isolation. And still this gonna be the biggest challenge. People have been going through a lot of trauma; it is not that easy to come out of their shell in that big country where you do not know what other people think about you. I think that they think that they carry much of a burden and

none can actually ease that pain which is really understandable when you come from a country of war and you have seen so much. What you want is peace and quiet and they are in their house and they have peace and quiet, they don't want to go out there. //

(KI)

FGD participants pointed out the need for invitations to consultation meetings to be clearer and more specific as to the purpose, who should participate and the benefit of

participation. Sending the agenda prior to the meeting was perceived as being more useful as then participants would “come with a focus of the meeting”.

// The way the message was conveyed, wasn't specific enough. I think next time the message has to be, kind of enforcing, for example, you are saying ok look guys the meeting is about people that have studied here and are willing to come, but please you are invited to come and participate in sharing ideas that can change the policy in parliament, may be helping kids that are disadvantaged. //

(FGD Sydney)

Venue for consultations needed to be easily accessible

The Key Informants (KI) noted that it was important to organize community consultations in a place which was within easy reach for the participants, close to where they lived. The venue preference for the community consultations depended on who you asked. While some of the FGD participants indicated a preference to meeting at the GLAPD Int. office in Fairfield

for convenience and proximity, others preferred community consultations held closer to their place of residence; for some of the participants the GLAPD Int. office was far and difficult to reach. In some instances, consultations were organized in participants' homes. But KIs noted this had the disadvantage of involving a smaller number of participants.

// Members would come most of the time at GLAPD Int. office and we do the community consultations there. But some of them will go to people's house, they would say that they will be five to ten people there, without actually inviting them to the office because it is hard for them to get to the office. //

(KI)

KIs felt it was important to choose a location that participants felt comfortable with especially in terms of distance to their place of residence. Having to travel to

GLAPD Int. office involved transport costs for some and therefore was considered as a burden for those living further from the office.

“ They liked a place where they feel comfortable rather than me asking them to come to the office because people would say “ Oh no, I come from far, if I come to your office, are you going to pay for my fare, my train ticket?” so something within their budget and their means. I did not have money to pay for them so it was more me being flexible to let the consultation happen anywhere. ”

(KI)

In choosing the venue, it was important for consultation organizers to understand the participant concerns about travel both in terms of cost and time. This may then involve organizers having to be flexible

enough to travel out to different suburbs and having small community consultations with about 10 people attending the consultations.

“ Yes, basically I did tell them from the start that I am flexible if we have enough people to conduct the community consultation; which is basically 10, 15 to 20 people. If they are not willing to come to the office, I would meet them wherever they want to! It was more of me wanting them to get involved and if somebody comes and say I don't have any train ticket, I don't have money to pay for it, it is too far from me so then if I want to offer the service and I need to know the issues within the community then it is better for me to travel rather than asking 10 or 20 people to travel to see me, I was up for it. ”

(KI)

Community Halls were noted as appropriate venues for community consultations whereas churches were not.

“ f the chairman is present, you can organize a community hall, and we all meet there and discuss, after talking to the community chairman.....Next time organize it at the community halls...Because here at the church, community discussions are not allowed. Even those with meetings are required to organize them at their homes or in community. ”

(FGD Wollongong)

Integrating consultations with community events

Case workers who were interviewed noted the benefits of organizing community consultations to coincide with community events. This approach to organizing community consultations helped minimise

costs. Some of the consultations were thus organized during community events such as Harmony Day and Sports Galas, which brought together many participants.

Community members were invited to Harmony Day in April and the GLAPD Int Sports Gala. It was good opportunity to organize community consultations to know issues.

(KI)

While this helped in getting community members to come to the community consultations, this approach was not seen to be as effective as recruiting participants “through community leaders” especially when the invitation is extended for the first time. While community consultations could be integrated into existing

community events, FGD participants noted the importance of not placing community leaders such as pastors in a situations where they could be blamed for not having provided the community with prior knowledge of a community consultation, as portrayed in the quote below.

And you GLAPD you should....don't invite us through the Pastor, by compromising him, when he didn't know of such a program of the meeting before. The pastor has just learnt that you are coming and then he starts telling us to attend your meeting. At this moment some of the people here are blaming him yet it's not his (Pastor) mistake, yet the pastor cannot return you back. So always go through the chairman to invite us rather than the pastor.

(FGD Wollongong)

The above quote clearly shows the respect that is given to the pastor and this is something that should always be kept at the forefront when involving community leaders such as the pastor.

One of the disadvantages of integrating community consultations with community events was the time available. In some cases, community consultations may take a long time depending on the nature of issues raised. The common practice was where one issue led to other issues and the discussions would drag on. Because

of the time limits available for community consultations during a community event, the consultation questions had to be designed to limit the time required. Sometimes this involved just answering a short questionnaire that had a list of check box type of responses.

“

If the consultation was done during events, questions were short, most likely multiple choices questions which were ok to complete in a corner next to the entrance door. The location was convenient to sit and complete the few questions.

”

(KI)

When consultations were undertaken during community events, participants were not provided information prior to the consultation about the purpose of the consultation etc, in contrast to when consultations were organized with invitations extended through community leaders. This meant the organizers had to take time at the beginning of the consultation to brief participants of the purpose of the meeting etc and then “ask them if they wanted to be part of the community consultation interview”.

While most agreed to participate there were a few who declined. Those who attended community events are a random selection of individuals from Great Lakes communities. “As they entered the event hall or while they were already in the event hall”, the community members were approached by the consultation organizers and asked if they would agree to be interviewed as part of a community consultation activity.

Structuring consultations to stimulate discussion and debate

The interviewees highlighted the importance of structuring the consultation sessions in a way that made the participants feel that their input was being considered. This involved the use of open-ended questions which gave adequate opportunities for participants to provide

their viewpoints. However, two of the three KIs interviewed used a checklist of issues that they presented to the participants. But once the discussions started the checklist did not matter anymore and the discussion was steered in a way that the participants wanted it.

“ We had series of open-ended questions, like a checklist, like it was more getting the community involved for them to discuss and let us know the issues they are having in the community. One question will lead you to hundred others, you have a set of questions with you but again when you ask one question within a discussion which is like a debate. ”

(KI)

While some of our research participants were used to open ended guides, which gave community members room to discuss and develop more questions, one caseworker who organized community consultation during events had a short questionnaire that participants completed. This approach limited any chance of community members providing more in-depth contributions as they were limited

by the multiple-choice options provided for the questions.

Both KIs and FGD participants felt that there was no need for males and females to be consulted separately as they considered irrespective of being a man or a woman everyone was given a chance to contribute to the consultations.

“ Everyone was given a chance to talk in-group of 10 to 20, passing on the microphone in a small room, everyone got a chance to talk....all you do is to encourage them and let them know it is for their own benefit and for the benefit of the community nowadays women talk, they were much involved and they could speak their minds, I did not see any woman that was not talking or expressing themselves because men were sitting in the same room. ”

(KI)

Providing feedback to the community

FGD participants from both Sydney and Wollongong expressed dissatisfaction at not having been informed of what had happened following their suggestions in the previous community consultations. Keeping the community informed and providing them feedback was critical for the success of future community consultations. When a follow up consultation, such as the current one was held, participants wanted to first be informed of the results of their

previous one so that they would know what they “have to add on again”.

“ On the issue of what happened before, there was no feedback we got, asking what happened in the previous consultations, will take us back the discussions we completed already. ”

(FGD Wollongong)

Unmet and Emerging Issues

In this section, we have presented the themes that were generated from the FGDs.

Language barriers

Language barrier was identified as one of the key challenges for most participants. English was not their first language and they either did not speak English at all or were not adequately proficient. Employment was very important to these

participants but was impossible because of the language barrier even though the participants wanted to be employed and were capable of working as clearly portrayed in the quote below.

“Here we have our mothers who want jobs even though they are not fluent in English, but they have energy/capacity to work”. // (FGD Wollongong)

Some participants believed that the lack of adequate language skills or inability to speak like a native Australian resulted in being discriminated when they tried to get employment.

“.. when someone has the capacity to work and the only challenge is the language or can be able to express himself but not as perfectly as a native however, because of discrimination ..., they really consider that.” // (FGD Newcastle)

For newly arrived families, being fluent in English was not only critical for getting employment, it was essential for their children to be able to do their homework

and assessment tasks. Extra coaching was considered as important to help their children to perform at a similar level with their mates.

“... those who have children with English as a second language, there is a need of people who can train children in English to make them feel more comfortable with assessments and homework.” // (FGD Newcastle)

Many of the participants focused on the current strategies that were in place for newly arrived migrants to learn English Language, with many questioning the

quality and effectiveness of these strategies, especially the quality of the programs provided by TAFE. Despite completing the compulsory 520 hours of English learning

(some even more), some participants who completed the program were still not confident to express themselves in English.

“...when I arrived I was allowed the 520 hours of learning English, even though I didn't finish them but I noticed that the English taught in TAFE is not enough, of course there are levels, there are some who start from zero but there are also others who have a little bit of notion. It helps us, we can't say that it doesn't help at all but it doesn't really give you the confidence to say that you have learned English even though you finish those hours.”

(FGD Newcastle)

While the above quote is from someone who has not completed the 520 hours, the following words from another participant clearly reflect that the lack of proficiency in English is not because of the desire to

learn or the lack of effort. It clearly brings the question of how appropriate or useful the current English language teaching strategies are.

“I have spent 10 years here, I have been going to TAFE since I arrived however you can't even ask me to speak in English and really understand what I am saying.”

(FGD Newcastle)

According to FGD participants, special classes were organized for those migrants who did not speak English well enough.

However, as portrayed in the below quote, this was not perceived to be an efficient way to learn English.

“...especially for us who came with no English proficiency, they would take us in another class to teach us English before joining the mainstream class. However, I would say that it was not useful at all. I can't even say that I learned the English I speak today in that program; not at all... I would not say that they were teaching English to the level where I would say that I benefited from it. I would say that the best place to learn English is the classroom with other students.”

(FGD Newcastle-youth)

Questioning the existing English language programs for migrants, some participants noted the need to connect them with native speakers as part of the language programs. They suggested in addition to being formally taught English within a classroom setting, that having activities

and volunteer opportunities would also be useful. With such opportunities not only would they be forced to speak in English but will also make them feel welcomed and perhaps create in them a sense of belonging and integration.

“ My suggestion then is they should organise some opportunities to connect with others during the English course as volunteering ... so that the person can feel welcomed, where people will show you that they are happy to have you among them, alleviate the issue of perception of discrimination that people already come with but if they feel welcomed, it will change everything. I think they can create something like, instead of just taking you to TAFE for I don't know how many years, they can create other activities that will allow them to share with others and it will also facilitate the practice of English and they can also feel integrated in the society. I think they have so many places for volunteering where they can send us either in a workplace or training for a full day or even just few hours but where you will be obliged to speak. It can be in a certain course or a shop, they just send you there for the main purpose to improve your English speaking, it will be a kind of practice of English....Those who will be supporting/supervising the students through volunteer work will be required by TAFE to give feedback on students' improvement instead of only relying on the teachers evaluations because someone can easily write English without being confident to speak. This will help in the assessment of the English proficiency of the student.

”

(FGD Newcastle)

Interestingly, while many participants spoke of needing opportunities where they were forced to speak to Australians who did not speak the migrant's language, a few suggested that for the compulsory English learning program for new arrivals, the teachers should be from the same cultural / language background as the learners. This would help the teacher, to explain to them in their language when they did not understand what was said in English. Some participants gave the example of Arabic speaking migrants benefiting when the English classes were taught by a bilingual teacher who spoke Arabic. In that class, the Arabic speaking benefited more from the program and learned better than all the other students because the teacher could easily facilitate the learning. But the rest of the students were disadvantaged in that class.

Similarly, organisations that teach English can recruit people who speak the same language as the students to facilitate the primary stages of learning English. Alternatively, they suggested that assistant teachers can be introduced along with the English teachers, such that, when lessons are not well understood, assistant teachers can tutor or coach the students.

Poor service delivery by Humanitarian Settlement Service case workers

Concern about poor service delivery by case workers was a key theme in the focus group discussions. Participants felt that some case workers were unprofessional and lacked compassion and understanding of the situation of newly arrived migrants. One participant vividly described her experience with a case worker. Her

words clearly demonstrate the lack of professionalism in the way the case worker handled the situation. This example clearly demonstrates the need for improving the cultural competency and sensitivity of case workers providing service to newly arrived migrants.

“ When I arrived, I was put in a hotel; my case worker kind of locked me in the hotel; even when people would come to visit me they will find the gate closed. My children were about to die because of hunger, I didn’t speak any English... I was living near some students, they are the ones who helped me ... I took the phone then asked [name of case worker] , “why do you lock me in? You know that there is no one else who can assist me and my children are about to die in the house. Are you waiting to come to bury my child? Weren’t you assigned to come help me go for shopping; now my children are nearly dying with hunger while the government gives the money? [case worker’s name] came and what he did was to come and ask: “where is the dead child? Show me the dead child so that we can go and bury him. ” ” (FGD Newcastle)

Participants expressed dissatisfaction at how some case workers responded to newly arrived migrants’ needs. A major concern for them was the delay in case workers trying to help the newly arrived migrant to find “an immediate solution

when it is in their capacity to help [the migrant]”. Sometimes participants had to wait a long time for help “until [they] even give up” hope for their concerns to be addressed.

“Regarding the service provider, they really need to change their way of working. For example, there is a time when you tell them about your issue, instead of assisting you to get an immediate solution while it is also in their capacity to help you, it will take long time until you even give up. ” (FGD Newcastle)

A major challenge for the participants was that the case worker was not there for them long enough for the participants to be able to handle things on their own. Coming to a totally new country where they did not

speak the language, they felt that the case worker needed to be with them, until they had got used to the area.

The issue is that, when you go somewhere for the first time your case worker has to accompany you but if you have a second appointment, the case worker don't accompany you. Frankly speaking you are still like a blind person because you are not yet used to the area. That is a big challenge as well.

(FGD Newcastle)

For improving services provided by case workers, some suggested having case workers who are culturally sensitive, who speak the same language as the clients, are able to communicate efficiently, are compassionate and can relate to the challenges that newly arrived migrants

face. Most suggested having continuity with case workers; the same case worker for an extended period of time until the clients become confident and independent enough to navigate the system with less stress.

....If you have a case worker, they should make sure you are supported until you feel comfortable and confident enough to do everything by yourself. Otherwise you have to call Navitas and beg them to help you get the case worker to take you and show you where to go again. That is really another problem.

(FGD Newcastle)

Being discriminated against, losing hope and giving up

Discrimination came up frequently in the focus group discussions. The stories they told across the board, be it school going children or adults reflected the significance of discrimination they faced. Discrimination seemed to be quite common, be it in the area of employment, getting housing, or in the sports field and for some even in the classroom. The various and repeated incidents of discrimination this group

faced impacted their mental wellbeing so much so that many spoke of losing hope and ultimately giving up the hope of having a meaningful job or to get opportunities in their life.

Participants noted that discrimination was worse in some parts of Australia than others.

.....It is very hard, white people discriminate, there is discrimination/racism but they don't talk about it. For example, you can go to look for a job somewhere, you see how they receive you and immediately you will realise: "I won't get this job". Especially here in Newcastle it is worse. I don't know elsewhere but here, it is worse. It is not like something hidden, it is obvious everyone can notice that. You can go to a white person and ask him: "what about the job", then he will tell you there are no jobs here, they have their own system that they use. They use connections. If you don't have any connection, you can't get the job.

(FGD Newcastle)

Even where they had the same qualifications as white Australians, their qualification was not recognized by some employers,

and participants felt discriminated against because of who they are.

//

..... As my colleagues mentioned earlier about the issue of discrimination, what I say that from the fact that all the people who studied at University and passed with good marks at the same level as their Australian colleagues but when they apply for jobs, only white people are given the jobs and the Africans mainly are placed in jobs which don't require any qualification. I suggest that they should strongly consider that if we also study, we are also able to perform the jobs that native Australians do, so that everyone can work in his/her area of expertise.

//

(FGD Newcastle)

Young people had dreams of what they wanted to be when they grew up and they wanted to pursue these dreams by being a

volunteer. But even then they experienced discrimination which made them frustrated and lose hope.

//

When I finished high school, I had the plan to join the Police force, when I completed my studies, I started the process and my uncle was helping me, they gave me all the information, then I ask if I could do volunteer work in the meantime, I went to different stations. There were so many opportunities for volunteering, I applied then I was told that they will let me know the outcome in 2 weeks. It has been nearly a year now, I was never been called.

//

(FGD Newcastle)

Participants spoke frustratingly of the vicious cycle of employers requiring Australian work experience to get a job. Because of discrimination they were unable to get opportunities for work experience thereby preventing them from getting a job. They noted that this requirement for

Australian work experience was mainly requested by Anglo Saxon Australians.

Even at school, these participants felt discriminated against and repeated experiences led to young people losing hope and not wanting to participate.

//

.....in school after getting used and speaking English, there were times where they would look for a number of students who will present about a topic to represent the school..... We will all go including blacks, after all the practice then they will only choose whites without even a single black, therefore, next time when they call upon students again to compete to represent the school, you don't feel like going".

//

(FGD Newcastle)

...It didn't happen to me personally but at my school, especially for sports, they would tell students to come for those who want to do sports so that they could represent the school but before that, they would have to do different training then they would only select whites. That is what I saw in my school and you would realise that there is no any black people in the selection and for next time you won't really feel like being part of that.....No. it is not because they were not competent, actually they were very competent. Even for me I would say that I was doing even better than those selected.

(FGD Newcastle)

Discrimination faced in the field of sports by young people made them lose hope of ever becoming a professional player. These young people had dreams to “get far” playing soccer, but repeated incidents of rejection meant they did not want to try anymore. The quotes below clearly

portrays the sense of hopelessness and dejection they feel at being repeatedly rejected. They were quite clear that these rejections were because of their ethnic background. Their words also suggest that these young people have no aspirations for their future.

There is a place we went to try out with [name of organization], you know how they do the selections, they told us that they need a defender and an attacker and after selecting those players I said: “that's fair because I play midfield those are not my positions anyway”. That's okay. However, that very night they called us and told us to never come again....

(FGD Newcastle)

“Then you realised, it is real and obvious, then children will get discouraged and won't come back again”

(FGD Newcastle)

This makes me feel like I will never go searching for a soccer opportunity anymore anywhere because I will not get it anyway. Of course, I can play it just for fun, but I will never say: “I am going to apply to play soccer in this team and by any chance I will get far one day”.

(FGD Newcastle)

Discrimination was both overtly and covertly experienced and was a barrier for refugees and migrants from the Great Lakes region of Africa to smoothly settle and integrate in the wider Australian community. Getting adequate

accommodation was one of the first things needed for these participants to call Australia their home. But accommodation was a major challenge with discrimination contributing to the difficulties they were experiencing. One participant exemplified

the challenges by telling the story of how the caseworkers contributed to perpetuating discrimination.

//

They (caseworkers) will go behind your back and intoxicate the real estate agents by telling them negative things....I have now spent 5 years with [this particular person] as my agent. He really liked me, I would just tell him : "I want that house and he will give it to me straight away", he became like a friend. When he was about to retire, he told me: "those people (caseworkers) are not good people.... the way I was told about you is completely different to what I saw".

//

(FGD Newcastle)

Participants believed that government policies perpetuated discrimination of refugees and migrants.

//

"Me what I can say is that I think it is a disease in this country and its people. The government plays a very big role in this and it is obvious to everyone. Imagine you were resettled here, and the parliament declares that if this person commits a crime he will be taken to where he came from. They have discrimination in them, what they say about discrimination, it's just on their mouths but they are the ones who influence even their people to do that. Imagine you say that in parliament, how do you expect a simple national to react to that? Does that really mean that they are resettling people here or it's just to show the international community that they are resettling refugees while they undermine them and don't like them. They lie to us."

//

(FGD Newcastle)

What was strongly evident in the various stories about discrimination was that especially young people most of these participants have lost hope and they feel no sense of belonging. Such feelings and experiences are likely to lead these young people to have high levels of stress and mental health problems.

It is possible that the discrimination they have experienced may not necessarily be a deliberate form of discrimination. However, from the following quote it is quite clear that discrimination is indeed a major problem for these participants.

//

.....the issue of discrimination, we also face that challenge, we went somewhere to try out soccer, ehhe we were many black people, actually we were half.. half blacks compared to whites,.... We all tried out ... when it was time to call out the team, the coach only called white people, all the black people and Iranians we were sitting there. Frankly speaking they were not better than us, we played very well. then the coach said; "these are the players that we have chosen" then added we

don't want anyone to get angry and start fighting" because they know that Africans fight a lot. He also said: "if you are sad, go back home lock yourself in your room then cry, we don't want to see anyone abusing each other or fighting". We looked at each other then we decided to go. //

(FGD Newcastle)

The impact of discrimination is clearly portrayed in the following quote.

//

...We feel very bad here, we feel that we are not settled here and we feel that we will have to go back home! How can you stay in NEGATIVE every time? It's not possible.....That negative is in them (White people), it is in the country, that what I said, they need to give priority to everyone. //

(FGD Newcastle)

These participants have left war torn countries and come to Australia after experiencing so much trauma only to face

a different form of struggle leaving them hopeless as poignantly portrayed in the following quote.

//

.....Yeah, there is no hope here, there is another impossible struggle/war, the war with gunshots is better because you can see it but this one is invisible. //

(FGD Newcastle)

Housing/Accommodation

A major challenge and continuing need for newly arrived refugees and migrants is securing proper, long-term accommodation/housing. Contributing to this problem is poor service delivery provided by their caseworkers, misinformation, high expectations from the refugee families, difficulties securing big houses to accommodate large families or difficulties in securing a loan to buy a

house as well as the high cost of rent.

Many FDG participants stated that they were not satisfied by the service provided by their case workers in terms of assisting them in getting a proper long-term accommodation quickly. The quote below clearly portrays the dissatisfaction experienced with the services they have received.

“.....When I arrived, I was put in a hotel, my case worker kind of locked me in the hotel even when people would come to visit me, and they will find the gate closed. My children were about to die because of hunger, I didn't know any English.I took the phone then asked john: “John, why do you lock me in? You know that there is no one else who can assist me and my children are about to die in the house”.

(FGD Newcastle)

When migrants arrived they were initially provided with temporary accommodation. They were there for maybe a month and then they had to move to another place.

For these migrants who have so many new things to get used to, this was not a good experience as noted in the quote below.

“As a proposal, I think there is no need of putting people in temporary accommodation.... I would suggest that people should be put in houses for a longer period of time at least not permanently but for a considerable period of time instead of being put in a house for one month and then you are told to move to another house.

(FGD Newcastle)

These participants had never had to search for accommodation on their own prior to coming to Australia. Hence having to “looking for [accommodation] was a very big challenge” for them. Others has challenges such as being “put in a house with no hot water and so many other maintenance problems”.

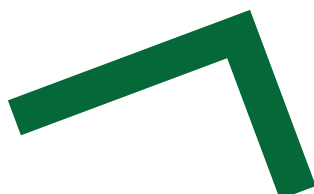
these migrants had also to deal with the challenges of not “having a job and a rental history” which made finding more permanent accommodation a major challenge.

Not only was searching for a house for the first time in their life a challenge,

The other challenge for newly arrived refugees and migrants for securing long-term accommodation was finding a place big enough to fit in large families. Most houses had no more than four bedrooms.

“When you have a family, as you know Africans, we have many children. The biggest house has 4 bedrooms. For example if you go to apply for a house, let's say you are 8 people; a white person here will apply the same house but there are only 2 or 3 people. Tell me, if you apply the house with that family, will you ever get it?”

(FGD Newcastle)



A number of participants revealed that they had misinformation about owning houses just after their arrival in Australia, which

led them to enormous disappointment when they were asked to pay for expensive rent. This is what some of them said:

When I was still in the refugee camp, those who were already resettled in different countries abroad, were saying that they gave them houses. ..., we were expecting that we will be given a house as soon as we arrive so that life can go on very well. When we all came, we all thought that we will arrive in our own houses, we were not expecting to arrive and start paying rent.

(FGD Newcastle)

After putting me in my house, they told me: "you will have to pay rent every two weeks". Then I wondered, "Is this the house they told me that I will be given when I arrive?", then I said, life here is very difficult. I knew that I will arrive straight in my house, I will not pay rent, I will live in it as my own.

(FGD Newcastle)

The dream of owning a house in Australia continues to be a major unmet need. For most of the participants, owning a house is impossible as reflected in the quote below.

I have got a job; I start thinking about buying a house, the mortgage... I once went to the bank to request for a loan of \$20,000, but I was denied the loan, I have a full-time job and I am a permanent resident. Now I think, when will I be able to have my own house while I can't even have a loan? I feel that life is not good and very difficult.

(FGD Newcastle)

Job opportunities

Securing meaningful employment was a major issue for newly arrived migrants and continues to be an unmet need. This is mainly due to the following: non recognition of prior education/qualifications/experience, lack of Australian experience, underemployment and discrimination.

A significant problem highlighted by the FGDs was the issue of recognition of their qualifications.

When you arrive here, they undermine your degree/certificate/qualification, then you are told to go to TAFE and do small courses then you will be able to get a job for the course you have completed here but your overseas qualification will not be

considered or won't have any value while you have brought your paper, your skills and your experience to be able to work.

”

(FGD Newcastle)

Some of the participants were highly qualified in their own country but “due to wars and conflict” these participants did not get the chance to “have a career”. Then when they came to Australia, their qualifications were not recognized and this added to their already existing poor mental health status. They felt “useless and not proud of being in [Australia]”. They felt strongly that employers needed to recognize that “they had a life before

they fled their countries”. One high school student who participated in the discussions poignantly described how the non-recognition of their prior learning negatively impacts their mental health. Reflected in this quote is the notion of low self-esteem and a lack of confidence that will potentially impact their school performance.

”

The main issues that we have faced related to our previous studies/education. ... but when you arrive here, they don't consider them and you are forced to go for few years back... That really discourages you and makes you feel that you are not capable, you feel discouraged and depressed for all the years remaining to finish High School.

”

(FGD Newcastle)

Participants felt they were constantly being accused of not seeking employment, but yet the challenges faced by these migrants to get jobs were not being recognized.

”

..when you come and you are still new, why they don't look for you a job so that you can have an experience? Because when you go to apply for a job, they ask about your experience, if you don't have the experience, they don't give you the job!

”

(FGD Newcastle)

Unemployment, underemployment and segregation in workplaces were significant challenges they continued to face. Many

experienced discrimination even though they had qualifications as good as their white Australian counterparts.

”

..I say that from the fact that all the people who studied at University and passed with good marks at the same level as their Australian colleagues but when they apply for jobs, only white people are given the jobs and the Africans mainly are placed in jobs which don't require any qualification.

”

(FGD Newcastle)

Non recognition of their qualifications together with discrimination resulted in these participants being forced to take menial jobs or taking up jobs that were not

aligned with their qualification or being underemployed just so that they could financially support their families.

“ ..people have degrees but the only jobs they get is cleaning, so that is really frustrating, let’s say you have an accounting degree and you work in a nursing home as a carer! ”

(FGD Newcastle)

The extent to which participants were discriminated against in terms of employment depended on where they lived and what connections you had.

“ It is very hard, white people do discriminate, there is discrimination/racism but they don’t talk about it. For example, you can go to look for a job somewhere, you see how they receive you and immediately you will realise I won’t get this job. Especially here in Newcastle it is worse. I don’t know elsewhere but here, it is worse. It is not like something hidden, it is obvious everyone can notice that. You can go to a white person and ask him: “what about the job”, then he will tell you there are no jobs here, they have they own system that they use. They use connections. If you don’t have any connection, you can’t get the job. ”

(FGD Newcastle)

For those who managed to get a professional job, it was because they had connections through networks of fellow Africans.

“ I would say that even for those who have jobs it is because a fellow Africans have connected him/her. The connection between Africans is okay but not with others. For example, the job I have today, I was connected by the husband of this lady here, his name is [mentions name], he took me where he works, I took my CV and I got the job. Meaning that is because of that connection with him. If we would have our fellow Africans in all the sectors, it would be easy for us to get the jobs but the connections with white people, it is very hard. Yeah! ”

(FGD Newcastle)



5. Discussion and Recommendations

This study had two aims. The first was to document the process that GLADP International undertook in conducting community consultations during the 2013-2015 period with the purpose of documenting the process. The second aim was to identify current unmet needs of the African Great Lakes community.

GLADP International undertook a number of successful community consultations during the period 2013 – 2015. Their

experience in organizing and conducting these consultations showed that the initial planning, the approaches to recruiting participants, timing and venue for participants and the way the actual consultations session was conducted had to be carefully thought out and planned together with existing community leaders. Best practice recommendations for conducting community consultations from their point of view are noted below.

Community Consultation Process.

1. Working with community leaders right from the start

Planning of community consultations with the active participation and engagement of existing community leaders is an essential part of conducting a successful community consultation. This involves being open with community leaders about the purpose of the consultations and drawing on their knowledge of the community to plan the logistics of the consultations such as the best way to invite participants, as well as venue and timing of discussions.

2. Recruiting participants using popular social media and through community leaders

Invitations to community consultations are best sent out by community leaders, using mobile phone text messages, and social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp. It is important to include in the invitation

a clear indication of the purpose of the consultation as well as the benefit of participating in the consultation.

3. Holding consultations at a time and place easily accessible to participants

To encourage maximum community engagement and participation, the ease of access to the venue in terms of time and cost needs to be considered. If needed, rather than having one big consultation, it may be necessary to hold smaller consultations so that the venue is closer to where people live.

4. Providing opportunities for each and every one of the participants to speak openly and freely

It was important to use structure the consultation and to use approaches that would foster an environment of safety where participants would feel that they can

speak openly and freely. This may mean that more creative ideas such as story boarding and storytelling may be useful to allow for everyone, even the quieter ones, to provide input.

5. Providing participants with outcomes from previous consultations

To encourage greater engagement, it is absolutely essential to start off the consultation by a brief overview of what had happened since the previous consultations. This will include clearly informing the participants of which of their suggestions had been taken on board and what was the outcome of their previous input.

Unmet Needs

While there are a number of limitations to this study, the findings from the focus group discussion clearly highlighted a number of challenges the migrants from the Great Lakes region of Africa continue to face and hence these can be considered as unmet needs. These unmet needs have been previously documented in the literature as recurring concerns for migrants and refugee population groups (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012).

The most salient concerns and unmet needs were related to English language proficiency, job opportunities and discrimination. Other unmet needs identified included quality of service provision by HSS case workers and housing accommodation. These concerns and unmet needs are interrelated. For example discrimination contributed greatly to getting employment opportunities; similarly English language proficiency was

6. Providing Incentives to participants

Recognizing the contribution of participants to community consultations, it is necessary to provide some form of incentive. These participants, some of whom have travelled long distances, is giving up their time. Such incentives can be certificates of participation and where financial remuneration can be provided it is suggested that they be provided with a grocery voucher or similar incentive as remuneration for their time and transport costs. It is important when providing such incentives that it is only a token and not meant to be reimbursement of time invested.

essential for getting a meaningful job. The continuing unmet needs have major implications for the mental wellbeing of these participants with many losing hope and giving up. Young people especially were experiencing low self-esteem, lack of confidence and had no aspirations to have a better life. In general many were losing hope and giving up. These unmet needs have been previously documented in the literature for other migrant communities. For instance a systematic review of 50 Australian and international studies (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012) showed that newly emerging African communities in Australia faced numerous challenges to employment. Contributing to unemployment as identified in this study was poor English proficiency, discrimination, and recognition of previous qualifications. These were all echoed in the findings of this current study.

In general the major unmet need relates to employment which is also similar to findings from other studies (African Think Tank, 2007). The newly migrated people from the Great Lakes Region of Africa were at a major disadvantage for gainful employment with many facing chronic unemployment and underemployment. To improve opportunities for meaningful and gainful employment the following are recommended:

1. Having bilingual teachers teaching English who use culturally and pedagogically appropriate learning and teaching approaches

Even though free English language classes are currently offered this does not seem to be having much of an impact. Having bilingual teachers who are trained in teaching English as a foreign language in a culturally appropriate and student centred manner is essential for the English language teaching to have results.

2. Providing opportunities for practicing spoken English

Providing opportunities, whether it is through home visits to people who only speak English or volunteering in situations where only English is spoken, will help improve the English language proficiency.

3. Simplifying the process of recognition of previous qualifications and prior learning

At present despite many of the Great Lakes Region of Africa community have got professional qualifications, the process of getting these qualifications recognized is complex, demanding and costly. Most of this community cannot afford the process.

Hence it is necessary to set up systems which make it easier for their qualifications to be recognized.

4. Taking an overall approach to minimizing and eliminating discrimination

Discrimination was a major barrier for both young and old to get ahead in Australia. The process for minimising such discrimination has to start with policy makers and the media. There is a need for a concerted effort to first of all acknowledge that discrimination exists both covertly and overtly in Australia and strategies need to be developed to address these.

Creating opportunities for the migrants to get to know Australians and for Australians to get to know migrants will also help eliminate discrimination. Such opportunities can include home visits, organizing events and festivals etc where migrants are made to feel welcome and where Australians get to actually speak to and learn from migrants.

5. Provide opportunities for getting work experience through volunteering

Lack of work experience in Australia has been brought up in this study and echoed in the literature. Thus introducing incentives to employers to provide opportunities for volunteer work and internships for people from migrant communities is needed.

6. Strengthening the capacity of case workers to provide culturally appropriate and compassionate care and service

Caseworkers who speak the same language as their clients and who have been trained in the delivery of culturally appropriate and safe migrant services is necessary to

improve the quality of the current services provided. In addition to this, having regular supervision of case workers, with regular satisfaction surveys or feedback is sought to improve the service.

7. Strengthening the mental health services offered to migrants

Many of the migrants face significant mental health issues. Hence it is necessary to have case workers themselves trained in the provision of safe and culturally appropriate mental health first aid. In addition to this having bilingual social workers visiting migrants to assess their mental health

status and provide services and referrals can also help in preventing deterioration of the already poor mental health status.

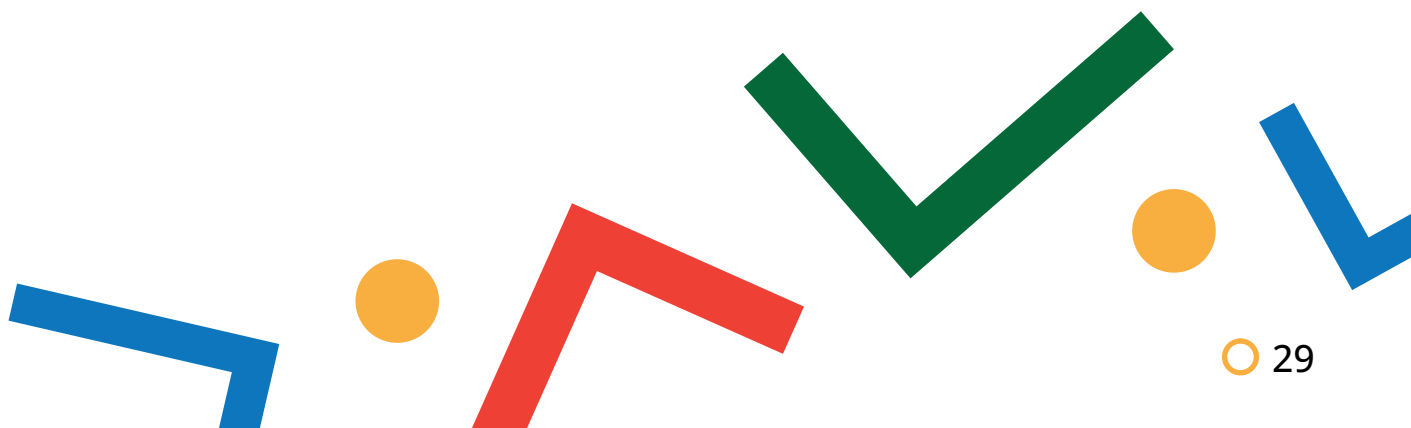
8. Improving accommodation and housing

Currently migrants are initially provided with short term housing (sometimes for a month) and then they have to move to another house. Measures to look into ways of providing more immediate, permanent accommodation is needed. This is an area that needs further research and investigation to study existing models that can be adopted.

6. Conclusion

There are a number of unmet needs experienced by the migrants from the Great Lakes Region of Africa who have settled in Australia. Unemployment seems to be the most pressing need. However, as this study has shown, there are numerous challenges to obtaining meaningful and gainful employment which include discrimination, poor English language proficiency and the complex and costly processes of getting prior qualifications recognised.

These barriers need to be addressed in order for these communities to have job prospects. In the meantime, faced with the challenges these communities seem to be experiencing high levels of hopelessness and despair. Hence there is also a need to ensure that these communities have access to culturally safe and relevant mental health services.



7. References

African Think Tank. (2007). African resettlement in Australia: The way forward. Presentation, Friday April 13, 2007, University of Melbourne.

Abdelkerim A. Abdelkerim & Marty Grace (2012) Challenges to Employment in Newly Emerging African Communities in Australia: A Review of the Literature, *Australian Social Work*, 65:1, 104-119, DOI: 10.1080/0312407X.2011.616958

Baker, S. E., Edwards, R., & Doidge, M. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough?: Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research.

Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International migration review*, 491-511.

Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond engagement and participation: User and community coproduction of public services. *Public administration review*, 67(5), 846-860.

Hassal, G. (2016, 17 Nov 2016). African refugees reinvigorating rural Mingoola in social experiment to boost ageing community. *Australian Story*. Retrieved 20 Jan 2017, 2017

Peisker, V. C., & Tilbury, F. (2003). "Active" and "passive" resettlement: The influence of support services and refugees' own resources on resettlement style. *International Migration*, 41(5), 61-91.

RCA. (2009). *Amplifying the Voices of Young Refugees, Abridged Report*: Refugee Council of Australia, Adelaide.

STARTTS. (2009). *Joint Submission on the Australian Human Rights Commission Discussion Paper: African Australians: A report on human rights and social inclusion issues*. Sydney: NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC).

Westoby, P. (2008). Developing a community-development approach through engaging resettling Southern Sudanese refugees within Australia. *Community Development Journal*, 43(4), 483-495. doi: 10.1093/cdj/bsm017