Integration and settlement: 
The experiences and expectations of 
African immigrants and refugees

Do Canadians understand the potential consequences of success or failure in integrating and settling African immigrants and refugees?

By Reuben Garang
On the cover

The cover of this report features photos of African immigrants and refugees who have been the subjects of recent stories in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Clockwise from top left:

- Reuben Garang, author of this report, originally from Southern Sudan, graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science in Environmental Studies and is now taking a Master’s of Development Practice at Global College, University of Winnipeg;

- Elizabeth Alija, who sponsored her nephews, Thomas, 13, and Dennis, 7, to come to Canada from Nairobi;

- Weyni Abraha, a student taking international development studies at the University of Winnipeg, is returning to Ethiopia for her practicum;

- Marilou McPhedran (front row, second from right), dean of the University of Winnipeg Global College, with some of the members of Manitoba Women 4 Women South Sudan, Elizabeth Aluk Andrea (from left), Mercy Yel, Sandy Deng, Rebecca Atet Deng, Arek Manyang, Veronica Abraham and Andria Kaka;

- Emmanuel Nizigiyimana, a refugee from Rwanda, recently graduated with a Grade 12 diploma.

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- Reuben Garang: Winnipeg Free Press
- Elizabeth Alija: Joe Bryksa/Winnipeg Free Press
- Weyni Abraha: Celine Bonneville/Winnipeg Free Press
- Manitoba Women 4 Women South Sudan: John Woods/Winnipeg Free Press
- Emmanuel Nizigiyimana: Simon Fuller
Introduction
The African Immigrant and Refugee Community Empowerment Project is a research initiative to address the cultural information gap between immigrants and the mainstream society. It is intended to bolster more complete understanding in the provision of social services to new Canadians in the inner city and beyond. The researchers gathered opinions and suggestions from grassroots community associations, professionals and individuals within the African immigrant settings on how social organizations and policy makers can amicably and efficiently assist with immigrants’ successful integration. Immigrants were asked to identify problems according to priorities of needs and concerns. They were also encouraged to suggest possible ways that integration and settlement in the day-to-day life of communities can be achieved.

In the first part of the project, a survey was conducted to identify the key concerns of the organizations, associations, community leaders and/or individuals in the communities in relation to their new lives in Canada. A list of common problems to most immigrants or low income persons was discussed with more than 60 participants.

The most common problems included:
- Lack of affordable housing and childcare;
- Lack of programs for single parents;
- Lack of employment opportunities;
- Youth dropping out of school;
- Barriers to learning English as an additional language;
- Family break-down;
- Lack of training programs;
- Poverty; and
- The fear of gangs recruiting African youth.

In addition to the questionnaires, focus groups were used to obtain a viewpoint exclusively from 60 African women. The women were organized into six groups of 10 to 13 participants. In order to lessen the patriarchal stigma which discourages African women from speaking freely, there were not any men facilitating, interpreting, or participating. The women in the six groups were from different nations in Africa: Congo, Francophone nations of West Africa, Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria and African immigrant and refugee residents in the vicinity of Central Park in Winnipeg.

In the second part of the survey, we wanted to investigate immigrants’ knowledge of social services available to them in the inner city. We asked the participants what they knew about particular organizations and the services they provide. The agencies selected at random for the test were:
- The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM);
- Welcome Place;
- New Journey Housing;
- Winnipeg Harvest;
- Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (NEEDS Centre);
- Winnipeg Transition Centre;
· Community Unemployed Help Centre; and
· Settle Manitoba.

Lastly, the research highlighted the nutrition requirements of the African immigrants in relation to the 2012 Acceptable Living Level (ALL) Report. That report, published earlier this year, contained lists of basic necessities and the amount of money needed to buy them in Winnipeg. The report demonstrated that neither welfare nor minimum wage provides nearly enough money for a nutritiously-adequate diet.

**The problem statement**

People who come to Canada from other parts of the world want to be proud members of the community who work to support themselves, contribute to society and help the people they left behind. Refugees and immigrants desperately want to successfully settle, as much as the society wants them to succeed, but it’s not always easy. Something is missing and that is what this paper seeks to identify.

According to research conducted by the University of Lethbridge in Alberta and the University of Manitoba, invisible and/or visible barriers to immigrants’ integration and successful settlement restrain immigrants’ potentials to contribute to the economy. These barriers then ultimately increase government expenditures on social welfare. Higher levels of poverty in immigrant areas lead to higher crime rates and youth involvement in street gangs. Family values are degraded as their own cultural ways are incompatible with mainstream standard norms (Halli and Kazemipur, 2000).

Winnipeg’s social organizations and governmental institutes that assist immigrants to integrate and settle ought to reduce and eventually eliminate immigrants’ chronic social barriers by building into their policies a framework that promotes the sharing of knowledge and information about diversity, developed in cooperation with the community.

**Purpose/rationale**

The two main objectives of this research are:

1. To achieve an understanding of the needs of the new immigrants from Africa in particular, so that the organizations working with them will be able to serve them properly;
2. To learn about immigrants’ level of knowledge about existing social services available for them and other people in the low-income category.

Furthermore, the research aims to create ways to involve African community organizations in service delivery. This research was designed to encourage and create a sense of belonging for the African immigrant communities by consulting with leaders of different associations, mobilizing young adults and youth to speak their minds, and allowing women to discuss issues in the absence of men.

Yvonne Lai and Michaela Hynie (2011) in Montreal found that engagement between mainstream society and new refugees and immigrants is one of the best resources for successful integration. The researchers found that the sharing of knowledge between immigrants and established Cana-
dians reduces social exclusion. Networking can help immigrants to find jobs and get good advice in order to make the right choices in their new lives in Canada.

Without community engagement, immigrants will likely find it very difficult to make friends. They may socialize with those within their own ethnic group, but many of these individuals face similar problems and time constraints. Therefore, they recommended sharing of knowledge between immigrants and the mainstream society as central in the integration of immigrants.

**Significance of the research**

Being an immigrant in the advanced world may appear to open a window of opportunity and bring peace of mind. But these positive images are almost always juxtaposed with a real sense of disillusionment.

One of the researchers was a child solider and refugee in Africa before settling in Canada in 2004. It is hoped this research will open up public discussion about opportunities and social constraints for immigrants in Canada, including the perspectives of immigrants who experienced wars as children. Consequently, the research paradigm is participatory and the methodology of gathering the data includes both qualitative and quantitative information. Such contributions will help build community-based policies that are culturally inclusive and reflect the needs of everyone in society.

**Methods / procedural steps of obtaining the data**

The methods used to obtain the data included both qualitative and quantitative instruments. A questionnaire, face-to-face oral interviews and focus group discussions, recommended in *Practice of Social Research* by Earl Babbie, (2007) were used to explore the research questions.

Forty persons from each region of Eastern, Southern and Western Africa were given questionnaires. Fifty others were orally interviewed, including leaders in various African community organizations.

The questions asked were open-ended questions, such as: What are the most pressing problems facing African immigrants and refugees? What are the possible solutions to address these priorities?

Also, immigrants’ knowledge of existing social services was tested by asking the participants to list social agencies if they knew them or if they knew someone who received their services. The participants were randomly selected. Our study tried to include participant representation that reflected diversity in terms of age, socio-economic status, education and region and country of origin in Africa.

African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI) which is the umbrella organization for all Africans in Manitoba, was consulted for advice on the best scenarios to reach out to all sectors of the community. Afterwards, the three students from the University of Winnipeg spent time in public places, such as Portage Place, parks and universities, handing out questionnaires to individual Africans. Women in focus groups were organized and provided with lunch while they discussed the questions in the absence of men. Each group session was three to four hours in length. Some
groups met for a second round to extend the discussion on the topic led by female facilitators. Students used the Internet to find the different African organizations in Winnipeg, establish connections and arrange for interviews or give out questionnaires.

**Ethics**

The research used a participatory paradigm. It encouraged respect for the participants and what they had to say. Participants were told the information was being gathered for the purpose of learning about the community and encouraging changes in public policy to be more inclusive.

Before proceeding with analysis, it is important to be clear about the old and common philosophy among African people: A person must feel respected when he/she is given a space to express or share her/his view in matters of the general life of a community. To solve social problems, it is essential that a mutually respectful environment is created that encourages strong listening skills for people to collectively devise solutions. Unfortunately, this philosophy is often degraded in African politics.

In this research initiative, all participants’ relevant viewpoints throughout the survey and interviews are valued and are to be incorporated in this final report. In the same manner, the recommendations made from these individuals’ and groups’ contributions are expected to produce results that will provide a culturally integrated framework for Winnipeg to achieve improved integration and settlement for its newcomer population. The stakeholders, especially the African immigrants who participated in the research, gave feedback and approval prior to the publication of this document.

**Visible and invisible challenges facing refugees and immigrants**

As alluded to in the introduction, the removal of visible and/or invisible barriers to immigrants’ successful integration into Canadian society requires a joint approach from policymakers, resettlement agencies, the education and business sectors, as well as immigrant communities.

In her work, *Building Bridges to Social Inclusion: Researching the experiences and challenges of the lost boys and girls of the Sudan community in Winnipeg*, Dr. Karen Magro (2007) found that recent newcomers are faced with several challenges, including financial difficulties, weak cultural integration, lack of employment, and stress and trauma resulting from experiences of war in their countries of origin. She therefore argued that the realization of full integration of new Canadians into the mainstream society requires settlement agencies and other stakeholders to reassess programs designed to settle immigrants. In her other work, Magro (2009) found extreme poverty, family breakdown, social exclusion and language deficiency as some of the factors hindering African immigrants’ integration.

Yatta Kanu (2008), a researcher from the University of Manitoba, identified three main challenges hindering African immigrant students from achieving better education, namely socioeconomic status of individuals or families, depression and stress, and academic challenges. Furthermore, Kanu (2009) asserted that inadequate resources make it difficult for agencies and other stakeholders to provide housing, employment, and essential family services. Limited resources can also make it difficult for refugee students to succeed academically. Among her recommendations, she emphasized the importance of dialogue and cooperation between the service providers
and immigrant community organizations to overcome social barriers (Kanu, 2009).

To emphasize the importance of information-sharing, Matt Austman and Darcy Penner (2001), in their intensive research on challenges facing Sudanese students in secondary school, found that from an immigrant’s perspective, having a friendship with a Canadian-born citizen is a good source of information-sharing, which is vital for immigrants’ integration and reduction of social barriers.

According to Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2005), “the social economic status of recent immigrants is in decline” (p.1). Galabuzi (2005) found that from 1981 to 2001 various statistical indicators show that the employment, education enrollment and completion among immigrants, especially newcomers, is in rapid decline compared to that of Canadian-born citizens.

Most African immigrants face similar social and economic problems as other groups living in poverty in Manitoba. The Manitoba government’s poverty reduction strategy document states that:

Poverty is complex and goes beyond having enough money to live each day. A poverty reduction strategy should create the conditions that allow people to participate fully in society as valued, respected and contributing members. Everyone benefits from a society that helps all individuals prosper. We believe that there are four pillars to reduce poverty and promote prosperity: safe, affordable housing in supportive communities; education, jobs and income support; strong, healthy families; and accessible, co-coordinated services. (http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/misc/pubs/all_aboard_report.pdf)

There is a huge gap for mainstream society to close when it comes to transforming the education system and recognizing immigrants’ educational qualifications in the job market. Karen Magro and Parvin Ghorayshi of the University of Winnipeg asserted that:

A number of participants who worked as medical doctors, engineers and teachers in different parts of the world were only able to secure work as a health care aide, teaching assistant and baker in Winnipeg. Some returned to university and college to retrain and pursue other degrees. By and large, newcomers in this study supported their education by working in low-paid, flexible, part-time jobs with unfavorable working conditions. (Magro and Ghorayshi, p. 9, 2011)

Hunger is a key indicator of poverty. According to Food Banks Canada’s Hunger Count 2011, food banks in Manitoba serve approximately 56,000 people each month, an increasing number of them newcomers (p. 26). The report calls for full involvement of government, as well as inclusiveness and fairness from the labour market, in the reduction of hunger and poverty.

Cultural considerations must also be taken into account in addressing hunger. The four Acceptable Living Level reports, published by Winnipeg Harvest and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg between 1997 and 2012, were designed to measure poverty by looking at what food-impoverished individuals can afford to buy.
The research in this report looked at the types of foods that African immigrants can afford to meet their nutrition needs. Because African immigrants like to cook traditional foods and also have difficulty reading ingredients on food containers, many have a tendency to buy mostly dry foods, most commonly rice, corn and/or wheat flour, beef and other dry cereals and beans. Respondents reported that they frequently shop at commercial centres with tropical foods that come, for example, from Caribbean countries and the Arab world. The Muslim African immigrants purchase religiously appropriate foods. The cultural and religious preferences sometimes make the overall cost for basic living higher for the immigrant families because the food they buy is often imported from their home country.

Summary of respondents’ answers to each of the questions posed:

**Finding Affordable Daycare**
Many African immigrants’ families struggle to find daycare for their children. Most of the women in focus groups concurred that finding a daycare in the downtown area takes a year, if not years, after putting in an application. If they do manage to secure a daycare space, their income from minimum wage jobs is stretched very thin as they try to cover daycare costs and other basic needs for their families. So, even if daycare is available for one or two of their children, the other/s may be without placements. In the women’s view, finding daycare is a challenge and affording it is difficult. If they cannot find a daycare, it is most often the woman rather than the man who stays home. The women want to work to support themselves and their families, but they have limited abilities to do so when there are obstacles to securing places for their children in daycares.

**Affordable and Appropriate Housing**
African immigrants and refugees disapprove of policies that place them in neighborhoods with chronic social problems. The practice makes their children most at risk for gang and crime involvement and, furthermore, alienates families from many opportunities to accustom themselves to new societal norms and social values. Immigrants urge the Manitoba government to construct more family housing units and, more importantly, to locate them all over the city, not solely in the poorest neighborhoods. Many immigrants arrive traumatized. Living in a confined and degraded apartment with little space and opportunity to meet and learn from others does not help assist them with beginning to deal with their situations. In some of the African cultures, life has a deep meaning when neighbors share common space and are able to give each other support; there is the sense that your neighbor is a relative.

**Safety**
Safety is a major concern within immigrant communities. Africans, especially the young adults who have to walk downtown after late work shifts, often experience street harassments.

One of the young men interviewed said that to walk on the streets at night as an African is dangerous because you will be approached under the pretext of dealing with illegal things. The police intimidate you even if they see you following the same route every night, directly to your apartment. This form of racial profiling creates a lack of trust between newcomers and the community. Many immigrants acknowledge that downtown is not always safe because it is home to many people struggling to keep individual integrity in the face of social problems. Most of the respondents in this study felt that crime in the downtown is a product of poverty, not of culture; it
should be eradicated with eradication of structural racism, evidenced by fairer job distribution and criteria for recognition of immigrants’ qualifications. Immigrants who do not succeed in finding employment often lose hope and resort to habits like excessive drinking, which threatens their own safety and the safety of their families, friends, and society at large.

Poverty and crime are interconnected and the factors that contribute to poverty must be examined in a more critical light. Opportunity, education, and a community that welcomes newcomers is a starting point but more must be done to reduce structural racism, discrimination, and a lack of credential recognition for foreign-trained newcomers.

**Lack of employment opportunities**
Many immigrants with Canadian education also have difficulty finding employment, convincing many of them that job opportunities are often more about who you know in the system rather than what you know. African immigrants with education are regularly shortlisted but rarely get the job after a face to face interview. This puts a huge financial burden on families because student loans have to be paid back, which is difficult while working minimum wage jobs, such as security. It has become an issue of debate within immigrant communities: Is going to school viable without the government and business communities enhancing equality in job selection?

**Programs for single parents**
Many immigrants attribute lack of employment to lack of skills because many of them spent years in the refugee camps where survival was the priority. It is worse for women because they suffer gender inequality in Africa. If there are any opportunities to learn skills, these are often given to boys because they are the family’s first choice under the patriarchal system.

A majority of women in this research did not know of many programs focused on skill training. They identified women’s centres where they go with problems, such as relationship struggles with their spouse. Many of the women believe that, in many cases, the mainstream social organizations specialize in dealing with funders, showing little flexibility in dealing with the complexities of the situations these organizations were intended to address.

The women agree that there are a lot of programs with good intentions but that the good intentions fade when social workers think they cannot help the individual, based on the level of the problems each has. The agencies will not necessarily close down programs; however, with too much focus on funders and overwhelmed staff, there is less motivation to improve services that truly upgrade people’s lives.

Sometimes, when immigrants realize they are not getting the assistance they require, they become frustrated, opt out of programs, and do not seek help at all. This can have negative effects on the entire family structure. Many women who attend the Accueil Francophone for services, an organization like Welcome Place for French speakers in St. Boniface, believe this organization is more reflective of their needs because it is run by African women. Increasing the percentage of recent Canadian staff in these organizations may be important for improved services.

The African single men claimed the situation is worse for them because of discrimination from African women and the police. In most of the minor arguments between couples, African women
will immediately call 911. Even if the police come and find no indication of violence, they will order that man to leave the apartment. As one man said, “The police will say: ‘Go out from here and do not come back again,’ even when it is minus 30 and colder.” If women give up their children, in some cases they will be forced to live with their father or will not have a place to live. Women said that they suffer the most because they care for the family the most.

**School drop-out & fear of gang recruitment among African youth**

Immigrants acknowledged that most of their youth cannot do well in school because they have little or no education when they arrive in Canada. Because the education system in Canada places children according to age, many African youth are placed in high grade levels, making learning almost impossible. Children’s pride and sense of hope erodes as they consistently fail classes and feel sidelined by classmates and teachers who wonder why they cannot perform better. This situation, plus pressure from parents who want the children to succeed, often make youth reject both school and home. They need to find a place of comfort, which often results in joining a street gang. This can lead to a life of violence and insecurity.

**Barriers to learning English as an additional language and lack of training programs**

Most of the non-governmental agencies that provide social services to immigrants spend a great deal of time designing resumes for refugees who have no basic English-language knowledge and skills. Immigrants are frequently visiting the office to speak with workers about finding jobs, rather than training to improve language and develop useful skills. In language classes, young African women, who think that they have potential to learn at quite a fast pace, claimed that they are often placed in classes with elderly women, who may learn at a very slow pace. The young women believe they can catch up with language quickly because they are young and have aspirations to work. They wish their classes to be designed to help them move quickly, instead of spending three to seven years studying basic language.

**Poverty and family break-down**

Many African immigrants struggle to make ends meet. Respondents explained that there are few cases where both a husband and a wife work. Furthermore, many of the recent immigrants and refugees have no secure jobs, often working with temporary work placement agencies, usually at minimum wage.

Immigrants also lack a clear understanding of banking systems. Many misunderstand the uses of a credit card. Upon arrival, immigrants without financial resources will start borrowing money to help the people they left behind and/or use it for their settlement with anticipation or hope they will get better jobs as time goes on. Unfortunately, many do not succeed in the way they had initially dreamed. Their dreams of a brighter future in Canada clash with the reality of financial hardship and navigating a very different social, community, legal, and educational system. Within only a few years, many families are burdened with loans. Although not many Africans interviewed in this research wanted to admit that they are living in poverty, the explanations they gave indicated high levels of poverty.

This situation is made worse because African immigrants have difficulties marrying the African ways of managing resources with Canadian ways of managing money. In most of the African cul-
tures, men are responsible for bringing in food to the family; then, the women distribute it to the family and relatives. Here it is a different issue. To share the little money sometimes proved difficult. The African women alleged that men send money to their families and not their in-laws. Most of the family’s members in Africa in the refugee and displacement camps live in desperate situations and depend on the people here. These financial struggles in families, coupled with the influence of an easy divorce in western culture, leads to the separation of many African couples.

This problem of family breakdown can be traced to the fact that the orientation given to immigrants is short and does not focus on important issues such as the borrowing of money and its implications. However, some of the men and women agreed that a couple’s relationship in many African cultures is an extended family business rather than an individual preference or choice. When one makes a decision to separate from his/her partner it can worsen immediate and extended family relationships in Africa. The fragmentation of the larger family can create even larger problems than a couple breaking apart.

Figure 1: What are the greatest concerns for African Immigrants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to learning English as an additional language</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of training programs</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School drop-out for youth</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs for Single Parents</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Child Care</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of employment opportunities</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of gangs recruiting African youth</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings and Analysis
As indicated in Figure 1, the fear of gangs recruiting African youth is the number one concern among the African immigrant community. Lack of employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing, family breakdown, programs for single parents, school dropout rates, poverty, lack of training programs, safety, barriers to learning English are the other major concerns, in that order.
There is clearly a close relationship among the issues identified in the graph. Poverty is rated by the respondents somewhere in the middle of concerns at 38 per cent. However, when we look at the issues graphed, they all essentially indicate the level of poverty within the African immigrant communities.

The reason poverty did not score higher in rating could be explained by how the community understands the term “poverty.” African immigrants commonly perceive poverty as not having a job; therefore, even if one works a low wage job and has many dependants, he or she thinks that the family is living above the poverty line. It seems that African immigrants’ perception of poverty is unclear. As explained by Chris Sarlo (2007), relative poverty is when an individual is poorer than the others in the community. In a relative sense, many immigrants are poor. Absolute poverty is when a person is too poor to afford basic needs like housing and food.

Many immigrants, while they struggle, do not fall under Sarlo’s definition of poverty. However, analytically, the fear of gangs, lack of employment opportunities, family breakdown, lack of affordable housing, and school dropout rates among the youths are all key indicators of poverty within the community of new immigrants and refugees from Africa.

The reason why many young African immigrants are vulnerable to gang recruitment is rooted in the level of poverty their families and communities are experiencing. Children from poor families in poor neighborhoods are easily trapped by experienced gang recruiters who specialize in illegal activities and know how to lure immigrant youth desperate for basic needs. This is exacerbated by the policies of social class segregation which places immigrants in poor areas, increasing levels of unemployment and other challenges.
Figure 2: Random selected agencies rated in terms of level of accessibility of their services to African immigrants

The purpose of this graph is not to compare the agencies but rather to test respondents’ knowledge about these agencies and the services each provides. Immigrants interviewed were asked whether they have used their services, know of someone who has used their services, heard of the existence of these agencies, or never heard of the agencies, in that order. The results show that not very many immigrants knew of or are benefiting from the services created and provided through these agencies.

It is surprising that even Welcome Place, as a core resettlement agency in Manitoba, scores relatively low in terms of the people who use its services. The same applies to New Journey housing, a program established to help newcomers find and maintain affordable housing; this agency was known by less than ten per cent of the immigrants interviewed in this research. One of the other core organizations for the integration of immigrants in Winnipeg is the Newcomers Education and Employment Development Services (NEEDS Centre), which is also rated poorly in the graph. It is very shocking and disconcerting that these agencies with good intentions and programs to help immigrants successfully integrate and settle are not well connected with the new-
Perhaps the problems lie in the failure of the agencies to effectively communicate to immigrants about the available services. When you go into these agency offices, all have of them have all kinds of brochures loaded with information about their programs. The problem here is that these agencies advertise their services within their offices, which are not known in the first place, as the graph has shown. Agencies should expand their communication strategy by going to grassroots community organizations to share information more widely.

In the above graph, many respondents have either used or have heard of the International Centre (currently known as the Immigrant Centre), perhaps because its website serves as a centre for information. This is likely the case for Winnipeg Harvest, a food bank warehouse which has networks with other food banks in other cities, two of which are run by African immigrants.

Magro (2007) emphasized the importance of information coordination between immigrant communities and agencies serving in integration into Canadian society: “Greater coordination and collaboration between schools, refugee agencies and other community service providers would also help individuals gain access to vital information regarding career and employment links, counseling programs, literacy need, housing and settlement and career options” (p.23). One of the ways to achieve information coordination between immigrant communities and agencies is for agencies to capitalize on the existing community associations as a means of disseminating their information to the immigrants about their programs and services. In The Community Engagement and Well-Being of Immigrants: The Role of Knowledge, Lai and Hynie (2010) argued, “community engagement has been recognized as playing a central role in the well-being of individuals and communities” (p.93).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

During the oral interviews and focus group discussions, immigrants identified such obstacles to successful settlement as:

- Short orientation programs;
- Lack of information in dealing with finances;
- Weak information-disseminating mechanisms between immigrants and social organizations;
- Low level of engagement by the well-off and educated Africans in their communities;
- Systemic racism and discrimination in the workplace; and
- Refusal to recognize immigrants’ educational qualifications.

According to the 2006 Canada census, most of the recent African immigrants from 2001 to 2006 came as refugees from countries with recent histories of war and political instability: Congo, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan, to name a few. Due to time spent in war and refugee camps, these immigrants have very limited basic education. Their orientation time is too short to acquire all the information they need to learn about the available services which can assist with their settlement and integration.

The orientation time should be extended and staffed with mostly immigrants who have insights into a new life in Canada and have full knowledge of the cultures and expectations of newcomers.
Intensive orientation should focus on issues like finance management and budgeting within the families and building networks with social organizations whose services can be useful to new Canadians. Although the African immigrants suggested more active involvement by the well-off African immigrants in their integration process, many newcomers felt that the educated Africans possess elitist mentalities and wish to live separate lives from their communities.

The other main concerns that the immigrants raised in this research were insufficient income, lack of training programs, and lack of programs for trauma and depression. Most newcomers are supported by the government for a year following their arrival. After the year, they are responsible for finding a job to support themselves and their families. The newcomers find themselves in a difficult position as they have not learned enough English or acquired all the necessary employment skills. They face a dilemma of whether to acquire language and skills or immediately search for a minimum wage job to support their families.

Often, finding a job without sufficient language and job skills is very difficult. According to Magro (2007), “barriers such as financial hardships, stress, and the difficulties of balancing home, work and educational responsibilities as interfering with their ability to realize their education, social, and careers aspirations in Canada” (p. 19).

Almost all of the 100 people interviewed in this research commented that established Winnipeggers embrace diversity, noticeable in their welcoming facial gestures, extroverted natures, and caring qualities. After many years spent in horrific conflict and/or destitute camps, the respondents believe that Winnipeg is a place for peace of mind.

However, despite the strong social value of acceptance found among individual Canadians, they continue to tolerate economic and systemic barriers that penalize African immigrants. For example, the refusal to recognize foreign educational credentials stems from the widespread assumption that those credentials are not as valid or valued as Canadian credentials in the same field. (Li, 2001, p 23)

Many studies have demonstrated the social exclusion of immigrants and other low-income groups. Manitoba’s social organizations and policy-makers have to encourage the full participation of immigrants in designing programs intended to meet the needs of people living in poverty.

There should be a follow-up to this report to increase knowledge among African immigrants about available services.

As one of the war-affected children, the researcher recommends more studies in trauma-triggered depression and social disorders among immigrants. There is a need for the establishment of a multi-purpose facility which can serve social needs, integrate measures to address the identified accessibility problem in social services, and study and treat trauma and depression. In this way, victims of trauma and depression will acquire skills while getting medical attention. This is essential for successful integration into Winnipeg society.

In regard to the long-term economic success of young African immigrants who have been educated in Winnipeg, there is a need to study outcomes. We propose a longitudinal, five-year study
of African immigrant post-secondary graduates and their record in achieving employment in their chosen fields.

It is clear in this research that Canadians have good intentions to help immigrants succeed in their new life, but there are too few programs that truly embrace diversity.

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Bibliography


Appendix A

Pie charts showing the level of knowledge about randomly-selected agencies among African immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg.

**International Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Known</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have used their services</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know of someone who has used their services</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard of</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Heard of</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Settle Manitoba**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services Known</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have used their services</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know of someone who has used their services</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard of</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Heard of</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Unemployed Help Centre

- 6% Have used their services
- 2% Know of someone who has used their services
- 13% Heard of
- 79% Never Heard of

Winnipeg Harvest

- 19% Have used their services
- 15% Know of someone who has used their services
- 19% Heard of
- 47% Never Heard of
Appendix B

Brief background information on selected agencies:
Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (NEEDS): Provides accessible services and support to immigrants’ and refugees’ children and youth and their families.  
http://needs.imd.miupdate.com/

Immigrants and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM): Offers affordable housing to newcomers for the first three years after their arrival in Winnipeg.  
http://www.ircom.ca

New Journey Housing: Assists and supports newcomers to Canada and those who support them through the processes of attaining and retaining decent affordable housing.  
http://newjourneyhousing.com

Winnipeg Harvest: Committed to sharing food with individuals and families who struggle to feed themselves while working with the community to make Manitoba hunger-free.  
http://www.winnipegharvest.org/

Community Unemployed Help Centre: Provides information, advice and representation to unemployed Manitobans.  
http://www.cuhc.mb.ca

International Centre (currently known as the Immigrant Centre): Empowers immigrants to successfully settle and integrate.  
http://www.icmanitoba.com

Winnipeg Transition Centre: Provides job searches, organizes workshops for careers, counselors and professional training.  
http://www.winnipegtransitioncentre.com/

Welcome Place: Offers a range of services that welcomes and assists refugee and newcomers in their settlement and integration into Canadian society.  
http://www.miic.ca/

Settle Manitoba YouTube channel: A source of information about immigrating, settling, learning and working in the Canadian province of Manitoba.  
https://www.youtube.com/user/SettleManitoba