

# Engagement of the African Community in the Northern Territory:

Their Settlement, Education, Workforce  
and Community Participation



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Front Cover: Julian Adeyemo, Michael Adeyemo and Richard Adeyemo are from Nigeria. Julian was recruited through the skilled migration program as a Theatre Nurse for Alice Springs Hospital. Richard found immediate employment on arrival. They did not participate in the survey.

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# Chapter One - The Project

The Northern Territory Government released the Territory's first Multicultural Policy *Building on the Territory's Diversity* in February 2005. The policy promotes four underlying principles: valuing diversity, fair access, encouraging participation, and mutual respect. Among other things, the policy recognises that there will be improved community engagement practices by agencies with individuals, organisations and stakeholders, representing migrant and ethnic Territorians.

Specifically, the policy states:

*The Office of Multicultural Affairs will continue to provide advice to agencies about engaging with migrant and ethnic Territorians. Of special interest are the needs of people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or who are not linked into existing support networks (such as refugees).*

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) identified the African refugee community, which is a relatively new and rapidly growing community in the Northern Territory as an appropriate community for engagement.

## Background to the Project

The African community makes up a significant part of the new arrivals in the Territory, although their numbers in the NT are small in comparison with other states. For example, there were 126 refugees in 2003-2004 compared to 3,235 in NSW and 3,199 in Victoria (Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMA), 2004). In January 2004 DIMA announced that it would be settling more refugees in regional Australia, including the Territory.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' (DIMA) offshore humanitarian settlement program for refugees in the Territory has consisted almost entirely of entrants from Africa since 2000. The majority of members of the African community in Darwin have arrived under the humanitarian program. On average 50 to 100 African refugee families have arrived annually in the Territory since 2001. This number of new arrivals will have a profound impact on the community as a whole, and specifically on the support systems and community services, including schools, training, housing, and health services.

This new African refugee community presents very specific and unique issues that service providers and government agencies attempt to address. Apart from their different cultural backgrounds, some also bring with them experiences of personal trauma and many years of hardship in refugee camps.

Extensive research has shown that no major studies dealing with any African refugee group has been undertaken in the Territory, and limited research on African refugee groups has been conducted in other states. A number of studies have been carried out by researchers from the Key Centre for Women's Health at University of Melbourne, the Refugee Health Research Centre at LaTrobe University, and the Centre for Refugee Research at University of New South Wales. The focus of most of these studies has been refugee health or refugee women's health in particular (P. Allotey, 2003; Avery, 2002; Bartolomei & Hugman, 2002; and Murray & Skull, 2004). Though these studies have dealt with health and settlement issues of some groups within the African community, they did not produce documentation about the experience and needs of this emerging community.

OMA launched the African community consultations in early 2005. The community consultations were designed to gather accurate and reliable information about the issues and challenges facing the recently arrived members of the African community in the Territory. The community consultations resulted in the formulation of this research project.

This research project, the first refugee settlement consultation conducted in the Territory, surveyed members of the African community using face-to-face interviews. The survey aimed at building an evidence base for the purpose of giving advice on possible interventions, systems and policy implications, and to assist government agencies, service providers and the African community in identifying needs and targeting resources and initiatives.

This report deals with the outcome of the consultative process and the survey research that followed.

## **Demographic Background**

The research surveyed newly arrived African community members' participation in Territory society including education, employment and community, with particular focus on any settlement issues and any pre-migration issues that might require special attention.

The records received from DIMA indicate that most members of the African community have entered the country on several categories of visas: Refugees, Global Special Humanitarian Program, and Women at Risk. The total number of arrivals during the period (July 2000 to June 2005) was 478 individuals from several African countries including Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan. Of these 22 individuals settled in Alice Springs and the remainders in Darwin.



The number of Africans living in the Territory has always been small, as revealed in the 1996 and 2001 census data. Table 1 shows the number of people who identified themselves as born in an African country in the 1996 and 2001 censuses; in 1996 487 identified as African born; this number almost doubled to 839 by the 2001 census.

Given the low numbers of new arrivals and long-term residents, it was decided to restrict the potential Africans to be approached for this research project to those who arrived July 2000 to June 2005.

**Table 1 Number of Persons Born in an African Country as Recorded by the 1996 and 2001 Census**

Place of Birth	1996 Census	2001 Census
Egypt	0	52
Ghana	0	19
Kenya	61	65
Mozambique	13	13
Nigeria	22	22
South Africa	195	350
Sudan	0	75
Tanzania	12	18
Tango	48	60
Uganda	0	13
Zambia	38	43
Zimbabwe	98	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>839</b>

Source: Population Census – ABS- 1996, 2001

Limiting the research to this group was due to several reasons: in both the 1996 and 2001 census, apart from the Sudanese, those indicating that they were born in an African country had nominated a country that was not represented among the source countries of new arrivals; the inverse relationship between “length of residency and settlement needs” has been well established in the literature; and, those who arrived prior to 2000 mainly migrated under non-refugee migration categories – primarily family or skilled migration, while recent arrivals have arrived predominantly under the humanitarian program. Given the focus of this research, it would be reasonable to say that the new arrivals have the highest settlement needs and do not yet have full engagement in Territory society.

## **Initial Consultation**

The aim of the research project was to investigate the engagement of the newly arrived African community in the social, economic and cultural life of the Territory, with particular emphasis on identifying issues related to settlement, employment, education, and community participation and engagement. The project also focused on identifying any other issues that may impact on the settlement and engagement of the newly arrived African community in Territory life.

The project research consultant was invited to design the research approach and to have input into the supervision of the implementation of the fieldwork, and was also responsible for all data analysis and report writing. The research is significant as the first in its scope and type in the Territory.

OMA undertook an initial consultation process that included the identification of key representatives of African organisations in Darwin.

The aim of the consultations was to find the most effective and efficient method of collecting information from the African community and to allow the community to have an input in setting the parameters of the research project. OMA also used the consultations to transmit information on the project to the wider African community and to gauge the general acceptance of the project by the community.

Initially, a meeting was held with key refugee service providers, including DIMA and Anglicare, in order to gain feedback on the project and data collection methodology. An individual meeting was also held with a representative of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT).

Following the service provider feedback, OMA held a community consultation session with leaders of the African communities on 4 May 2005. At this meeting information was provided on the project and the African community representatives were consulted on the project basis and data collection methodology. The representatives were asked to provide commitment to raise awareness of the project in their communities.

A further information session was held on 31 May 2005 to determine the main problems and issues faced by the African community members. The community raised several issues related to employment, health, housing, education, training, and other government and community services. These issues were summarised and presented to the researcher who incorporated them into the design of the interview schedule and data analysis.

# Research Design

The following sections describe; the actual research design for the survey and the fieldwork, the development of the interview schedule, the sampling frame, the sample, and the interviewers who conducted the fieldwork.

## Interview Schedule

Utilising the initial African community consultations, the researcher developed an interview schedule to determine the issues faced by the African community in more detail. The schedule was also designed to capture other issues identified during research into settlement issues in other communities.

The interview schedule also aimed to capture the African community's view on the principles promoted by the Territory Government's Multicultural Policy, namely, *valuing diversity, fair access, encouraging participation, and mutual respect*, and specifically in identifying a mechanism to improve the Territory's community engagement with individuals, organisations and stakeholders representing migrant and ethnic Territorians.

Apart from gathering general demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, country of birth, religion, main language and other languages spoken, the interview schedule addressed issues related to pre-migration and settlement experiences, English language training, employment and workforce skills, adult and childrens' education, and government and community involvement. Both closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data; open-ended questions allowed participants to voice their concerns or to provide additional comments on the issues under discussion.

The draft interview schedule was prepared and discussed with key people, including members of the African community and staff from relevant departments and service providers.

Consultations were also organised during July 2005 with representatives of MCNT, Melaleuca Refugee Centre and Anglicare to obtain their comments on the interview schedule. Other consultations on the interview schedule were held during two community information/consultation sessions held with the African community. Centrelink, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia (MCSCA) were also provided with a copy of the draft interview schedule for their comments.

Comments were compiled and integrated into the interview schedule prior to implementation in the field.

The African community was informed of the fieldwork through various avenues including letters to community associations, announcements on

ethnic radio, through service providers, and by distributing a pamphlet. Advertising through service providers and direct contacts with senior members of the community were the main means of ensuring that members of the African community were kept informed of the process.

The fieldwork took place from 5 September to 5 October 2005. Four fieldworkers were selected to conduct interviews in association OMA.

### **The Sampling Frame**

The ethnic composition of African arrivals in the Territory has changed in the last five years. Initial arrivals were from Ethiopia and Sudan, recent arrivals have originated primarily from Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia. Table 2, page 14 shows the total number of African humanitarian arrivals in the Territory during 2000-2005, derived from the data on new arrivals collected by DIMA.



**Table 2 Distribution of African New Arrivals to the Northern Territory by Source Country, Gender, & Age Group**

		Country																Total
		Burundi		Congo		Ethiopia		Liberia		Sierra Leone		Somalia		Sudan				
Age Group		Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Total
> 5		1	1	1	1	2		3	1			1		10	3	18		18
5 – 11		1		3	1	9	4	12	7			3	2	42	29	70	43	113
12 – 15		2		1		2	4	4	10	1	1	1		18	21	29	36	65
16 – 17				1	1	1	2	4	2			1	1	15	4	22	10	32
18 – 24		1			1	4	2	6	12	2	1	2	2	28	12	43	30	73
25 – 35		1	1	0	0	2	6	1	5	5		1	2	15	19	25	33	58
36 – 54		1	1	2	2	7	4	10	7		1	3	2	22	17	45	34	79
55 -64								1	1			1			1	2	2	4
65+																0	0	0
Subtotal		7	3	8	6	27	22	41	45	8	3	13	9	150	106	254	194	448
Potential Interviewees		3	2	2	3	13	12	17	24	7	2	6	6	65	48			210
Potential Interviewees from each country		5		5		25		41		9		12		113				210
No of families		3		2		12		14		6		4		56				97
No of Individuals in Darwin		10		14		49		86		1		22		244				426

Source: New Arrivals for the Period July 2000 to June 2005 - Data supplied by the Department of Immigration, Multicultural Affairs - Darwin.

The distribution shows all humanitarian African arrivals to the Territory by source country, gender and age group. To ensure coverage and avoid bias, which could be caused by sampling through organizations or friendship networks, a decision was made to use a multi-stage sampling technique.

For the purpose of this research, the first stage of the sampling frame was to exclude those in the age group 0-17 years and those over 55 years old. The first age group was eliminated as they were considered “outside” the informed group of “needs”, while the second was eliminated because the number was too small (only four individuals). This left 210 individuals as potential participants in the survey, distributed among all countries, ages and genders.

The sample frame then focused on those people between 18-55 years of age. DIMA’s data indicated that the majority of new arrivals from Sierra Leone went to Alice Springs – only one individual came to Darwin therefore this group was excluded from potential interviewees. Other groups were excluded such as those born in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo because the population sizes were too small to be sampled. Focus groups were established for these smaller African communities so all groups within the African community were able to attend and to participate.

Hence the sample identified to be interviewed were members of the Ethiopian, Liberian, Somali and Sudanese communities. The numbers to be interviewed from each group reflected the proportion of each ethnic group within the overall African community.

The total number of families within each African ethnic community was another criteria considered in the sampling framework; it was important to avoid interviewing two adults from the same family and it was recommended that the number of people to be interviewed should be equal or in proportion to the number of families from each country.

## **The Sample**

The fieldworkers reached 54 individuals living in Darwin. The individuals interviewed were randomly selected on the basis of a carefully designed sampling frame, as outlined above. The sampling framework was developed on the basis of feasibility, time, costs, management, and particularly comprehensive coverage of the target community, taking into consideration that coverage meant achieving confidentiality for those interviewed. This is so because the actual population, from which the sample was drawn, in itself was very small. Still, some individuals were interviewed out of necessity.

## **Interviewers**

As noted earlier, the fieldwork took place from 5 September to 5 October 2005. The four fieldworkers were identified from among those who were qualified interpreters and translators or who had been working with newly arrived refugees.

The four interviewers received training on a one to one basis and as a group with the researcher and an officer from OMA. After the training the interviewers went through a simulated interview to ensure that they fully understood all the items on the interview schedule.

The interviewers were given details about the exact number to be reached from each of the four ethnic groups identified. The interviewers were asked to try to reach equal number of males and females, and were also instructed to ensure that where possible the persons interviewed were from different families.

## **Demographic Composition of Respondents**

This section provides a statistical description of the main demographic characteristics of the respondents, as recorded through the survey, which reached a total of 54 individuals living in Darwin.

### **Composition by Place of Birth**

Of the four African community groups targeted for the survey the planned distribution was six from Ethiopia (two interviewed) constituting 3.7% of the total interviewed, ten from Liberia constituting 18.5% of the total surveyed, four from Somalia (eight interviewed) constituting 14.8% of the total surveyed, and 30 from Sudan (34 interviewed) constituting 63% of the total surveyed. The actual interview distribution meant that there was under sampling from Ethiopia and over sampling from Somalia and Sudan.

On the questions of the fathers' and mothers' place of birth, all of those interviewed indicated that their fathers were born in the same country, except for one person from Sudan whose father was born in Kenya.

However, there were clear differences between the respondents' place of birth and those of their mothers. The majority of those interviewed indicated that their mothers were born in countries other than their own place of birth. The mothers of 15 persons (27.8%) were born in Sudan, the mothers of 17 persons (31.5%) were born in Ethiopia, and the mothers of 20 persons (37%) were born in Kenya, one mother was born in Rwanda, and one in Guinea.

Given the small composition of respondents, it was decided to restrict the analysis to the respondents as one group rather than as groups from four countries. Hence, the analysis to follow will refer to the respondents as

respondents when talking about the sample, and as the *African community or members of the African community during the discussion*, with short comments provided about the four ethnic communities when appropriate.

### **Age Composition**

The age composition of those interviewed ranged from 18 years to over 55 years, with almost equal distribution of three major age groups (18-25 years; 26-35 years; and 36-45 years). Fifteen persons (27.8%) were in the age group 18-25 years, another 15 persons (27.8%) were in the age group 26-35 years, 14 persons (25.9%) were in the age group 36-45 years, and six persons (18.5%) were in the age group 46-55 years. These represent 20%, 26%, and 25% of the three major age groups.

### **Gender and Marital Status**

Although interviewers were instructed to reach the same number of males and females, the gender distribution of the respondents was uneven with 37 persons (68.5%) males and only 17 persons (31.5%) females. These represent 37% of males and 19% of females of all African arrivals in the period July 2000 to June 2005.

The marital status of those interviewed ranged from those who never married (15 persons or 27.8%) to those who were either married (30 persons or 55.6%), separated but not divorced (two persons or 3.7%), divorced (two persons or 3.7%), widowed (four persons or 7.4%), or single mother. The marital status proportions were representative of the marital status of the population identified for interview.

Although the numbers are too small for further investigations, more single men and women were recorded among the Sudanese than any other group, and the percentage of married respondents from Sudan at 60% was higher than any other group interviewed.

Of those interviewed 37 persons or 68.5% had children living with them at home, and 53% of the families had more than three children living at home with them. This is a reflection of the number of children in African refugee families from these countries, and is a representation of the families with children, especially for the Sudanese.

The size of an average African family tends to be larger than the average Australian family, as reflected in the distribution of number of children who were living in one household at the time of the survey: nine (16.7%) had three children living at home, five (9.3%) had four children living at home, five (9.3%) had five children living at home, seven (13%) had six children living at home, and four (7.4%) had seven children living at home.

Australian research on African refugees, especially the Sudanese, indicates that some families do not bring all of their children with them and



some bring children of their siblings, so relevant questions were included in the Territory interview schedule. In response to the question “Are all of your children with you in Australia?” 12 (22.2%) gave a negative response. Five indicated that they had one child each outside Australia, three had two children each, two had three children each, and one had four children and another six children outside Australia.

In response to the question “Are all of the children who are living with you at the moment your own children?” nine indicated that they have children living with them who were not their own children.

In response to the question “How many children are not your own children but live with you at the moment?” ten (18.5%) indicated that they have children other than their own living with them at the time of the interview. In some cases up to five children were living with respondents who were not the respondents’ own children. Three respondents indicated they had three children each living with them who were not their own children, four respondents had one child each, and two had two children each who were not their own children. Interestingly, further investigations revealed that three respondents who said that they have some of their own children outside Australia, also indicated that they have children who were not their own living with them.

### **Religious Composition**

The majority of those interviewed (60%) were of Christian background with almost 31.5% of the respondents stating that their religion was Christian-Catholic or Protestant. Another 38.9% stated that they were Muslims. All of the Somalis, 21.2% of the Sudanese, and 50% of the Liberians indicated that they are of the Islamic faith.

### **Languages Spoken**

The responses to the question “What is your main language?” indicated the linguistic diversity of the group. The respondents nominated as many as 15 different main languages spoken by those surveyed. Of these, 11 (20.4%) nominated Somali, seven (13%) nominated Madi, six (11.1%) nominated Dinka, five (9.3%) nominated Acholi, and four (7.4%) nominated Arabic as their main languages. Other languages included: Oromo, Kpelle, Bari, English, Krahn, Lorma, Mandigo, Kakwa, Kuku, and Mura.

The Sudanese nominated all of the above languages as being their main language, except for Oromo, Lorma and Mandigo. Two languages were nominated by the Liberians (Lorma and Mandigo) and one by the Ethiopians (Oroma).

Though this linguistic diversity is reflected in the main languages spoken at home, the distribution of the actual languages spoken differs. For example, ten (18.5%) indicated that they spoke Arabic at home, ten spoke Somali,

six (11.1%) spoke Madi, five (9.3%) spoke Dinka, and five spoke Acholi at home. This pattern of languages spoken was repeated for other languages such as the Oromo, Kpelle, Bari, Krahn, Mandigo and Kuku. No-one spoke Kawa, Mura or Lorma at home. Eight persons (14.8%) indicated that they spoke English as the main language at home.

Madi, Dinak, Bari and Acholi were the highest nominated languages among the Sudanese whereas 30% of this group said they spoke Arabic at home, followed by 17.6% who spoke Madi, 14.7% who spoke Dinka, and 14.7% who spoke Acholi. Investigation of the survey data indicated that frequency of English usage increased with length of residency in Australia; however, the number of responses is too small for further investigation.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of competency in speaking, writing, and reading in English. The majority of respondents rated themselves as having high level of English competency in comparison to what would be expected. Table 3 shows the levels of English competencies in speaking, reading, and writing among the respondents as rated by the individuals themselves. The table indicates that 72% of the respondents rated their spoken English as “very well and well”, 70.4% rated their reading of English at these two levels, and 66.7% rated their written English at these levels. These high ratings were true for all groups irrespective of their country of birth.

**Table 3 Self-Rating Levels of English Language Competencies**  
(%, n)

Competency	Rating Level			
	Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at all Well
Speaking	44.4 (24)	27.8 (15)	24.1 (13)	3.7 (2)
Reading	38.9 (21)	31.5 (17)	25.9 (14)	3.7 (2)
Writing	31.5 (17)	35.2 (19)	27.8 (15)	5.6 (3)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

The high proportions of respondents who indicated that they have reasonable levels of English competencies may be attributed to two reasons; respondents may have arrived with reasonable English, or respondents have received English tuition upon arrival in the Territory. Thirty respondents (55.6%) received English tuition when they first arrived in Australia.

Each respondent indicated that they spoke at least one language other than English. Forty four respondents (81.5%) indicated that they spoke two languages other than English, and ten respondents (18.5%) indicated that they spoke three languages other than English. Those languages included all of the main languages of the group in addition to French, Swahili,

Amharic, Bassa, Gio, Yoruba, Russian and Italian. Both Arabic (18 persons or 33.3%) and Swahili (15 persons or 27.8%) were spoken by respondents as their second or third language other than English.

Respondents were asked to rate their speaking, reading and writing competencies in those languages. Of those who rated their competencies levels of speaking, reading and writing in their first language other than English; 94.3% rated their speaking competence at the very well or well levels; 55.8% rated their reading competence at the very well or well levels; and 48.4% rated their writing competence at the very well or well levels, as shown in Table 4. Given these figures, it is clear that the majority of the group has a high level of competency in speaking their first language, but lower level of reading and of writing literacy in their first language.

**Table 4 Self-Rating Levels of First Language Other Than English Competencies (% , n)**

Competency	Rating Level			
	Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at all Well
Speaking	81.1 (43)	13.2 (7)	5.7 (3)	
Reading	42.3 (22)	13.5 (47)	21.2 (11)	23.1 (12)
Writing	40.7 (21)	7.7 (4)	26.9 (14)	25.0 (13)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Table 5 shows the respondents' ratings of their competencies in speaking, reading and writing a second language other than English. Of those who rated their competencies levels in their second language other than English; 81.8% rated their speaking competence at the very well or well levels; 52.3% rated their reading competence at the very well or well levels; and only 43.2% rated their writing competence at the very well or well levels. Again, the majority of the group had a high level of competency in speaking a second language other than English, but lower levels of reading and writing competencies in these languages.

Obviously, members of the African community may speak several languages other than English but this does not translate to writing and reading competencies in these languages. Only a minority of the group may have high levels of writing and reading literacy.

**Table 5 Self-Rating Levels of Second Language Other than English Competencies (% , n)**

Competency	Rating Level			
	Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at all Well
Speaking	50.0 (22)	31.8 (14)	18.2 (8)	
Reading	34.1 (15)	18.2 (8)	27.3 (12)	20.5 (9)
Writing	25.0 (11)	18.2 (8)	34.1 (15)	22.7 (10)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Although all groups believed that their spoken skills in their first language other than English were very high, more than 50% of the Sudanese, and 25% of the Somalis perceived their writing and reading skills in their first language to be very low. These trends were again observed when the analysis was repeated on the respondents' ratings of their competence in their second language other than English.

### **Length of Residency**

By design, the length of residency for those interviewed was specified to be less than five years. Of the respondents, two persons indicated that they had been in Australia over seven years, and one person had been in Australia six years.

At the time of the interview, 21 persons (41%) indicated that they had been in Australia less than one year ranging from one month to 11 months, and of these 62% had been in Australia less than five months and the other 38% had been in Australia over six months but less than a year.

Of the remaining respondents, 12 persons or 22.2% had been in Australia for one year, three or 5.6% for two years, seven or 13% for three years, and six or 11.1% for four years.

Though the numbers are too small for further investigations, the respondents were evenly distributed in terms of their length of residency irrespective of age, gender, and/or place of birth.

### **The Pre-Arrival Journey**

Apart from one female who arrived under the Family Migration Scheme, all respondents had arrived under the humanitarian program.

In response to the question "Is Australia the first country you immigrated to?" only twelve respondents (22.2%) gave a positive response. All other respondents had settled in a previous country other than their own before arriving in Australia. Eight persons (14.8%) had settled in Egypt, another

eight in Kenya, 12 persons (22.2%) in Guinea, and nine (16.7%) in Uganda. Other places of settlement included Ethiopia, Congo, and Nigeria.

The period of settlement in these countries extended from one year to ten years for most respondents, with 12 persons indicating that they had spent as many as twelve years or more in these countries of first refuge before coming to Australia.

This was reflected in the number of persons who had spent time in refugee camps before arriving in Australia. Forty persons (74.1%) indicated that they had spent some time in a refugee camp before arriving in Australia. These represent 90% of the Liberians, 94% of the Sudanese, and 75% of the Somalis. Interestingly, these were the groups with their own children outside Australia or who had children living with them who were not their own children.

The question on the reasons for coming to Australia gave the respondents several options to choose from including family reunion, resettlement, escape persecution, marriage, visitor/resident conversion, economic reasons, social reasons, and an option to state their own reason<sup>1</sup>. Though none of the respondents had come for marriage or visitor conversion reasons, all other reasons were selected, and some respondents selected more than one reason.

The majority of the respondents (40 persons or 74.1%) indicated that they came to Australia for resettlement reasons and another 23 persons or 42.6% came to escape persecution. Four respondents (7.4%) came for family reunion reasons, six (11.1%) came for economic reasons, and 11 (20.4%) came for social reasons; all of these 21 respondents were from Sudan.

## Discussion

OMA launched the African Consultation project to gather accurate and reliable information, to the extent possible, about the issues and challenges facing newly arrived African community members in the Territory.

A comprehensive consultative process with both the African community and the service providers – government and non-government – was conducted to explain the project research approach and process. The consultations provided an understanding of the mechanism designed to engage the African community in the research, and in identifying the main

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<sup>1</sup> Refugees migrating under Australia's humanitarian program have all been assessed as refugees under the United Nations Convention on Refugee Status; people who are outside their home country and are unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

issues faced by the community in areas of employment, health, housing, education, training, and any other areas raised by the respondents.

A detailed interview schedule was designed, and shared with key stakeholders for comments. The revised schedule was then implemented in the field with 54 respondents representing the African community. This chapter deals with the research process and design, the sampling framework and the sample, and the fieldwork. The chapter also gives a detailed demographic description of those interviewed. It identifies the ethnic and linguistic diversities of the African community, some features of its social and family structures, and some of the issues faced by these families. The chapter notes the hardships faced by members of the community prior to arriving in Australia.

According to demographic measures the sample was representative of the African community. Most of those interviewed were families with up to seven children living at home. Some families did not have all their children with them in Australia, while others had children who were not their own (presumably children of their siblings). In some cases up to five children living with respondents were not the respondents' own children. In some cases, respondents had some of their own children outside Australia while at the same time they had children who were not their own living with them in Australia.

The majority of those interviewed (60%) were of Christian background, while 39% stated that they were Muslims. Diversity in languages spoken by the respondents was evident in the 15 languages spoken by the respondents. Those languages included Somali, Madi, Dinka, Acholi, Arabic, Oromo, Kpelle, Bari, English, Krahn, Lorma, Mandigo, Kakwa, Kuku, and Mura.

Frequency of English usage increased with length of residency in Australia; however, the number of responses was too small for further investigation. The majority of respondents rated themselves as having higher level of English skills in comparison to what would be expected from new arrivals. The high rating proportions were true for all groups irrespective of their country of birth.

Access to English tuition may be the reason for the high proportions of respondents who indicated that they have reasonable levels of English competencies; 55.6% received English tuition when they first arrived in Australia.

All respondents came as refugees and had settled in countries other than their own homelands prior to coming to Australia. The majority also had come to Australia for resettlement reasons or to escape persecution; though some had come for social, economic and family reasons.

The following chapters will concentrate on the settlement issues faced by the newly emerging African community in the Territory, and links these issues to the four principles of the Territory's Multicultural Policy; *valuing diversity, fair access, encouraging participation, and mutual respect.*



## Chapter Two - Settlement in the NT

The purpose of this research project was to build an evidence base on the engagement of the newly emerging African community in the Territory in order to provide advice on possible interventions and system or policy implications, and to assist Government agencies, service providers and the African refugee community itself to identify needs and target resources and initiatives.

This Chapter deals with settlement patterns and raises issues related to the African community's settlement in the Territory.

### Arriving in the Territory

Analysis of data from the survey indicated that the majority of respondents (49 persons – 90.7%) first settled in Darwin, while two respondents initially settled in Alice Springs and one respondent initially settled in another state.

*Access to information to facilitate settlement* was one of the issues examined in the survey. After arriving in Australia, only 30 respondents (55.6%) were provided information about the Territory. When asked “what information was provided to you after arrival?” respondents indicated that they received information about housing, health, education, Centrelink, English classes, and interpreting and translating in the Territory.

However, the number of those who indicated receiving information about one or more of these services was small. For example, 21 respondents (38.9%) indicated that they received information about employment, 13 respondents (24.1%) received information about legal services, 16 respondents (29.6%) about the welfare system, and 12 respondents (22.2%) received information about government services in the Territory.

### Settling in the Territory

Given that the majority of the respondents arrived under the humanitarian program, the *availability of housing – affordable or public housing* – was a topic addressed in this research.

Analysis of the data indicated that the majority of respondents (50%) stayed in a private rental when they first arrived in the Territory, 24.1% stayed in public housing, 22.2% stayed with family, and 3.7% stayed at a hostel.

At the time of the interview, almost 52% of respondents were living in private rental, around 38% in public housing, or hostel (1.9%), and 9.3% were living with either family or friends.



Accommodation with family was the highest among the Sudanese. Around 23.5% of Sudanese respondents stayed with a family when they first arrived in the Territory, while another 20.6% stayed in public housing, and 50% stayed in private rental. Some had moved to public housing or private rental by the time of interview; 38.2% were in public housing and 55.9% were in private rental.

*Access to services* on arrival is also important for new arrivals in general and for refugees in particular. Analysis of the data showed that the respondents had received help from a variety of sources when they first arrived in the NT as shown in Table 6.

Although most respondents recorded multiple sources of assistance when they first arrived in Australia, the degree of help and the proportions of those receiving the help differed from one source to the next. In particular, the availability and the degree of assistance given by government and service providers were not consistent for all respondents.

Refugee support groups were the highest placed in terms of the help provided to these respondents, with almost 43.4% indicating that they received a lot of help and another 24.5% received some help from these groups. Though the refugee support groups were in the highest placed as sources of help for these respondents, there were 32.1% who did not receive any help at all from these groups.

**Table 6 Sources of Assistance to Newly Arrived African Community and Ratings as Perceived by Respondents (% , n)**

Source of Assistance	Not at All	Some Help	A lot of Help
Family	61.4 (27)	2.3 (1)	36.4 (16)
Friends	63.3 (31)	24.5 (12)	12.2 (6)
Refugee Support Group	32.1 (17)	24.5 (13)	43.4 (23)
Community Association (NGO)	34.7 (17)	40.8 (20)	24.5 (12)
Religious Group	77.6 (38)	10.2 (5)	12.2 (6)
Government Welfare Services	46.9 (23)	32.7 (16)	20.4 (10)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Community associations (non-government organisations - NGOs) were placed second in terms of help provided to 24.5% of respondents who indicated that they received a lot of help from these groups and another 40.8% indicated they received some help. Again, there were 34.7% of respondents who did not receive any support from NGOs.

Although government welfare services were placed third in terms of assistance, there were 46.9% who did not receive any help from these services; 20.4% reported having received a lot of help from these services and another 32.7% having received some help.

Friends, families and religious groups were other groups that provided assistance to the newly arrived African refugee community. However, the proportion who received help from these groups was smaller<sup>2</sup>. Friends were placed fourth with only 12.2% reported as having received a lot of help from friends and 24.5% received some help. Families provided a lot of help to 36.4% of the respondents, while religious groups ranked last in terms of the proportion of people who received either a lot of help (12.2%) and some help (10.2%) from religious groups.

### **Living in Darwin**

The research data shows that most respondents lived in the northern suburbs of Darwin, with almost 26% of respondents stating that they were living in Malak; 13% in Casuarina, 13% in Nakara, 9.3% in Nightcliff, and 7.4% in each of Karama, Anula, and Rapid Creek. Other respondents lived in Wagaman, Leanyer, Wanguri, Millner, Tiwi and Alawa.

When asked “Why do you live in this area?” several reasons were given including family related reasons, availability of welfare services, availability of commercial services, close to work, close to religious/spiritual facilities, close to public transport, close to other members of the community, availability of public housing, the only house available, cost of renting accommodation, and buying a house.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance they gave to the reasons for choosing a place of residence, and to place their ratings on a three-point rating scale from extremely important to unimportant reason. The proportion of respondents and their ratings of the reasons for choosing a place of residence are shown in Table 7.

The table shows that affordability of housing (86.4%), availability of commercial services (65.3%), public transport (65.3%), and cost of rented accommodation (61.8%) were rated “extremely important” or “important reasons” for living in the area. These were also concerns raised by the respondents in later parts of the interview schedule and will be further discussed in Chapters Three to Five.

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<sup>2</sup> The high percentage of respondents who received some or no help from family and friends possibly reflects the fact that; the majority of humanitarian arrivals in the Territory have no family links in Australia and, the majority of African community members in the Territory have only arrived over the past five years as humanitarian entrants and are still becoming established.

**Table 7 Reasons for Choosing a Place of Residence as Rated by Respondents (% , n)**

<b>Reasons for Choosing a Place of Residence</b>	<b>An extremely Important Reason</b>	<b>An Important Reason</b>	<b>Unimportant Reason</b>
Family	20.4 (10)	10.2 (5)	69.4 (34)
Welfare Services available	16.3 (8)	18.4 (9)	65.3 (32)
Commercial Services available	24.5 (12)	40.8 (20)	34.7 (17)
Work	10.4 (5)	16.7 (8)	72.9 (35)
Close to Religious/Spiritual facilities	12.5 (6)	25.0 (12)	62.5 (30)
Close to Public Transport	24.5 (12)	40.8 (20)	34.7 (17)
Close to other members of Community	20.4 (10)	22.4 (11)	57.1 (28)
Public Housing available	31.9 (15)	12.8 (6)	55.3 (26)
Only house available	43.2 (19)	43.2 (19)	13.6 (6)
Cost of rented accommodation	44.7 (21)	17.0 (8)	38.3 (18)
Buying a house	14.9 (7)	10.6 (5)	74.5 (35)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September- October 2005

### **Settlement Needs**

As indicated in Chapter One, only 30 respondents received English tuition when they first arrived. Mixed responses were received on “Why didn’t you attend English classes or receive home tuition when you first arrived? Several responded that “I did not need it”, “I came with very good English skills”, “I learnt English before from school”, and “I will attend English next year”. Others indicated lack of services, especially child-care (four respondents in total, all women) as reasons for not attending English classes when they first arrived.

On the question of what would they prefer to have first done on arrival - to attend English classes or to get a job - the majority of respondents stated that they would have preferred to have a job upon arriving in the Territory rather than attending English classes, or to have used the English tuition

to improve their skills. The views of respondents on these issues are again examined in Chapters Three and Four.<sup>3</sup>

Responses to the question “When you first arrived in the NT, did you have some needs that were not met within the first six months?” revealed that around 59.2% of the respondents had needs that were not met within the first six months of arriving in the Territory. Almost 80% of the Somalis and 65.6% of the Sudanese responded that they had needs that were not met in the first six months.

Respondents identified several areas of unmet needs during their first six months of arrival in the Territory. These unmet needs included employment, housing, training, health, transport and having a car, welfare and financial needs, and “saving money to send to relatives”. These were in line with the issues raised during the community consultation carried out prior to the fieldwork.

Finding a job was the most frequently mentioned among the unmet needs (22 respondents) with emphasis on the need “to obtain a job and have enough money”.

This was followed by the unmet need for housing (12 respondents), which was “a big problem”, as stated by one respondent, while others noted that “renting a low cost house so that I do not have to spend a lot of money in rent”.

A third area of unmet needs was training which was expressed in those terms: “to do some practical training to develop skills in order to obtain a better pay work”, “to develop working and useful skills in order to become employable”, “to learn language”, “to get further education”, and “to complete studies”.

Health was another area perceived to have posed a concern for the respondents because of several unmet needs. The main comments were “not able to find doctor”, “medical procedure was so long”, and “to get the right medical check up and treatment”. Eight respondents however responded by saying “health services” as general area of unmet needs.

In the area of welfare and financial needs, comments included “emotional needs” or household items, beds, chairs, clothing, furniture, fridge, and

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<sup>3</sup> English language tuition through the Adult Migrant English Program is optional for newly arrived humanitarian entrants; individuals may be advised to take up the English language tuition if their English is not sufficient to provide them with immediate employment options and community participation.

washing machines were some of the items mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Linked to these two areas of unmet needs is transport and having a car, which were mentioned by several respondents.

Finally an area of unmet needs mentioned by the respondents was “to have money to help my family” or “not enough money to meet basic needs”, with an emphasis on the need to “be able to get my children from overseas”, and “be able to bring my other children who are still in Africa. Even though I lodged an application, so they can join me here, it was rejected”.

### **Settlement Difficulties**

Respondents were asked what they have found difficult about settling in the Territory and were given several options to rate these difficulties. The list of difficulties was compiled from settlement and migration research literature as being the most expected difficulties by new arrivals such as learning English, finding work, understanding Australian culture and so on. The list also included issues raised by the African community during the consultation process carried out in early 2005 prior to the fieldwork. Table 8 shows the responses and the ratings of these areas as being very difficult, somehow difficult, or not at all difficult.

The table shows that finding work (92.5%), accessing affordable housing (86.5%), learning English (81%), understanding the law (75%), accessing housing (72.9%), and understanding health services (60.8%) were all found to be very difficult areas faced by respondents in their attempts to settle in the Territory.



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<sup>4</sup> Through the DIMA Integrated Humanitarian Support Scheme for humanitarian entrants all entrants are issued with a household formation package of furniture, white goods, electrical appliances, and all other essential household items.

**Table 8 Difficulties faced by Respondents and their Perceived Degree of Difficulty (% , n)**

<b>Areas of Difficulties</b>	<b>Very Difficult</b>	<b>Somehow Difficult</b>	<b>Not at all Difficult</b>
Learning English	81.1 (43)	17.0 (9)	1.9 (1)
Finding work	92.5 (49)	7.5 (4)	
Finding the kind of work you want	38.5 (20)	44.2 (23)	17.3 (9)
Understanding Australian culture	28.8 (15)	40.4 (21)	30.8 (16)
Maintaining family life	28.3 (15)	50.9 (27)	20.8 (11)
Maintaining traditional culture	57.4 (27)	27.7 (13)	14.9 (7)
Access to housing	72.9 (35)	18.8 (9)	8.3 (4)
Accessing affordable housing	86.5 (45)	9.6 (5)	2.8 (2)
Having enough money	9.8 (4)	2.4 (1)	87.8 (36)
Access to schools for children	16.7 (6)	36.1 (13)	47.2 (17)
Childcare	28.8 (15)	53.8 (28)	17.3 (9)
Homesickness	37.3 (19)	29.4 (15)	33.3 (17)
Accessing health services	38.5 (20)	32.7 (17)	28.8 (15)
Understanding health services	60.8 (31)	33.3 (17)	5.9 (3)
Understanding the law	75.0 (6)		25.0 (2)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Other areas were seen as constituting a source of difficulty, but for a lesser difficulty. For example, understanding Australian culture was reported to be very difficult for 28.8% of the respondents and somehow difficult for 40.4%. Similarly, maintaining traditional culture was reported to be very difficult for 57.4% of the respondents and somehow difficult for 27.7% of the respondents.

Table 9 reports on areas found to be good by the respondents. The areas assessed as being very good are economic opportunities (55.8%), environment (71.2%), climate (91.3%), Family and Children Services (69.4%), and government services in general (57.1%).

Other services were rated to be somehow good including educational opportunities (65.4%), private housing (60.9%), NT Interpreter Services (60.0%), and Australian lifestyle (51%); 38.5% and 26.9% perceived the economic opportunities and environment respectively as being somehow good.

**Table 9 List of Areas Perceived to be Good by Respondents and their Perceived Degree of Goodness (% , n)**

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Not at all Good</b>	<b>Somehow Good</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
Economic opportunities	5.8 (3)	38.5 (20)	55.8 (29)
Social and political stability	36.5 (19)	44.2 (23)	19.2 (10)
Climate	2.2 (1)	6.5 (3)	91.3 (42)
Educational opportunities for children	17.3 (9)	65.4 (34)	17.3 (9)
Australian lifestyle	37.3 (19)	51.0 (26)	11.8 (6)
Economic environment	1.9 (1)	26.9 (14)	71.2 (37)
Safety	17.3 (9)	46.2 (24)	36.5 (19)
Health services	61.7 (29)	27.7 (13)	10.6 (5)
Territory housing	47.9 (23)	41.7 (20)	10.4 (5)
Private housing	8.7 (2)	60.9 (14)	30.4 (7)
Family and Children Services	8.3 (3)	22.2 (8)	69.4 (25)
NT Interpreter Services	6.7 (3)	60.0 (27)	33.3 (15)
Government Services in general		42.9 (3)	57.1 (4)
Understanding health services	60.8 (31)	33.3 (17)	5.9 (3)
Understanding the law	75.0 (6)		25.0 (2)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Some of the respondents felt that their understanding of the law (75%, eight respondents) was not good at all, with almost 36.5% perceiving that the social and political stability in the Territory as being not good at all. This rating could be explained by the respondents' observations on some social phenomenon within the Australian society that does not agree with their social and cultural systems and values, as shown below.

A comparison of the data in Tables 8 and 9 showed that 75.4% of respondents found that maintaining traditional culture as being very difficult for them and another 28.3% found that maintaining family life was also very difficult for them. A further investigation of the responses to these two items, with the item on social and political stability revealed a correlation between the first two and the third. Hence, the respondents who rated social and political stability as being not at all good were also those who also rated maintaining traditional culture and family life in the Territory as being very difficult for them.

Again, the issues of understanding the law, of the political and social stability, and maintaining family life were highlighted during the community

consultation and in the comments compiled from the interviews. During the community consultation in May 2005, issues put forward included:

- Concerns that service providers are trying to break up families,
- Concerns that the Department of Family and Children Services will remove their children,
- Concerns that interactions between husband and wife are being misunderstood as violence (i.e., cultural norms in some African countries to speak very loudly to each other are treated as domestic violence).

Other issues about maintaining traditional culture were raised at the community consultation included:

- Concerns over young people going to school and learning new behaviours and values not consistent with home country behaviours and values (i.e., wanting fashionable items),
- Concerns about young people receiving their own youth allowance and parents losing control over the expenditure of this money (intended to be for education purposes).

These sentiments were also raised during the interviews in such terms as: “interventions of Family Services very disruptive to African families in Darwin”, and “I do not agree with the procedures to encourage children over 17 to live away from the family”<sup>5</sup>.

A large proportion of respondents rated at least two main areas of government services as being not at all good. These were health services rated by 61.7% as being not good at all, and Territory Housing rated by 61.7% as being not good at all. The first figure corresponds to another 60.8% of respondents who felt that their understanding of health services was not at all good.

The results reported in tables 8 and 9 were repeatedly highlighted in the comments made by the respondents at the end of the interview schedule, and during the community consultations.

On health services, the following were the feelings reported by the community during the community consultations:

- Private GPs refusing to see African refugees because they need interpreters, costly and time intensive,

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<sup>5</sup> All quotes reported in this report are the “verbatim” quotes as reported by the interviewers. No attempts have been made to change the text. If corrections were made, then they would be highlighted in italics.



- Access issues,
- Forms confusing,
- Gender sensitivity for interpreting, and
- Lack of doctors who bulk bill.

Similar feelings were recorded from the interviews: “accessing health services”, “special women’s needs not attended to”, “male doctors attending to women”, and “health treatment of refugees”. One comment reflects these feelings:

The health system is very hard to understand and to get a quick treatment at Royal Darwin Hospital is very difficult. Someone being seriously sick can continue to suffer and even die just because to attend to him efficiently by a doctor is hard. There is also a lack of understanding of the real health problems of people like us (Africans). . . If I could have been in Africa, I could have got good attention because doctors there could have understood me very well.

On housing, the community consultations revealed the following issues:

- Discrimination in private rental market (i.e., will not rent to anyone from the African community).
- Public housing locates every African refugee in Karama and Malak – a sense in some part of the community that Africans are being segregated.
- Some belief that education has improved the attitudes of housing.

Comments from the interviews included: “High rental”, “Housing Commission treatment of refugees”, “discrimination in finding rental house”, “discrimination by the real estate agents”, “access to private housing very limited – attitudes of rental agents very biased against Africans”, “The Public Housing Commission is not efficient and effective . . . since I have applied for a house I have never heard from them . . .”, and, just the comment “NT Housing”.

## Discussion

Members of the African community took up refuge in various countries prior to arriving in Australia. This research indicates that only 22.2% of respondents came to Australia as the first country after leaving their home country, while all others settled in a country other than their own before arriving in Australia. These countries include Egypt, Kenya, Guinea, Uganda, Ethiopia, Congo, and Nigeria. The period of settlement in these

countries extended from one year to ten years, and could reach as many as twelve years or more.

Members of the African community came to Australia for resettlement reasons (74.1% of respondents), to escape persecution (42.6%), while small numbers came for family reunion reasons, economic reasons, and/or social reasons.

Information related to all four principles of the Territory Multicultural Policy was gathered in this section of the interview schedule.

On the question of *access to information*, only 55.6% were provided information about the Territory. Most of this information was about housing, health, education, Centrelink, English classes, and interpreting and translating in the Territory. Other information provided to some of the respondents included information about employment (38.9%), legal services (24.1%), welfare system (29.6%) and government services in the Territory (22.2%).

*Access to public housing* on arrival was limited to 24.1% who stayed in public housing when they first arrived in the NT, while 50% of respondents stayed in a private rental, 22.2% stayed with family, and 3.7% stayed at a hostel. At the time of the interview, the proportion of those in public housing increased to 38%, and the proportion of those living in private rental also increased to 52%.

Given that all have arrived as refugees, *access to settlement services* was not evenly available to all respondents. There were differences in the availability and the degree of assistance given by government and service providers, by refugee support groups and by community associations and NGOs.

*Access to settlement services, and the availability and affordability of housing and transportation, all have an effect on participation and engagement in the community.* The selection of the place of residence is a factor in ensuring participation and engagement. The majority of African respondents live in the northern suburbs of Darwin. Affordability of housing, availability of commercial services, public transport, and cost of rented accommodation were highly rated reasons for living in the northern suburbs.

One way of achieving *fair access* is to ensure settlement needs are being met, as soon as possible, especially learning English. While some African respondents felt that they did not need English tuition on arrival, all women respondents reported that they could not attend English classes because

of lack of childcare.<sup>6</sup> The majority of respondents noted that they would have preferred to have a job upon arriving in the Territory rather than taking English classes.

*Unmet needs* within the first six months of arrival were reported by 59.2% of the respondents. These included finding a job, housing, training, health, transport and having a car, welfare and financial needs, and “saving money to send to relatives”. These unmet needs were reflected in the reported difficulties faced by these respondents, which included finding a job, accessing affordable housing, learning English, understanding the law, and accessing and understanding health services.

Issues related to *valuing diversity* were raised in the list of difficulties reported by the group such as understanding Australian culture (28.8% of the African respondents found it very difficult and 40.4% found it somehow difficult). Similarly, maintaining traditional culture was reported to be very difficult for 57.4% of the African respondents and somehow difficult for 27.7% of them.

In comparison with their previous experiences, the respondents rated highly economic opportunities, climate, Family and Children Services, and government services in general. Other services were rated to be somehow good including educational opportunities, private housing, NT Interpreter Services, and Australian lifestyle.

However, there was a sense of lack of understanding of the law and understanding the social and political stability in the Territory. The high negative rating given to the first is an indication of the need for strategies to improve the communication needs in this area (achieving *Mutual Respect*). The negative rating for the second (36%) could be explained by the respondents' observations on some social phenomenon within the Australian society that does not agree with their social and cultural systems and values. This is confirmed by the high proportion of those members of the African community who found maintaining traditional culture and family life very difficult. The analysis revealed that those who rated social and political stability as being not at all good are those who also saw that maintaining traditional culture and family life in the Territory as being very difficult.

The principle of *valuing diversity* was also tested through the respondents' views of particular government services rated by a large proportion of respondents as being not at all good or somehow. These services included finding a job, learning English, accessing and understanding health services, and Territory Housing. The last two areas were further investigated as reported in Chapter Five.

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<sup>6</sup> All humanitarian entrants with primary childcare responsibilities who elect to attend English language classes at the Adult Migrant English Program are provided with free childcare.

## Chapter Three - Education & Training

This chapter uses both the quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the survey to examine the issues related to the experience of members of the African community in their search for, and participation in, education at all levels. As with the other parts of the interview schedule, the items in this section were designed to ensure that information is gathered to correspond to the four principles of the Northern Territory Multicultural Policy, and to examine how these have been addressed in the lives of members the African community as they seek education and training for themselves and for their children.

### Education Background

Although there has been no attempt to compare the education composition of members of the African community to the general Australian population or other newly arrived migrant groups, the data from the survey indicated that the majority of respondents arrived with a reasonable educational endowment. Table 10 shows the highest level of education attained by the respondents in their country of origin (overseas).

**Table 10 Highest Level of Education Attained Overseas (% , n)**

Level of Education	(%,Level Attained n)
No schooling	3.7 (2)
Primary (1-6 years)	14.8 (8)
Lower secondary (7-9 years)	13.0 (7)
Upper secondary (10-12 years)	27.8 (15)
Trade qualifications	5.6 (3)
Tertiary (Certificate or Diploma)	20.4 (11)
Tertiary (Bachelor)	5.6 (3)
Tertiary Master's	1.9 (1)
Other qualifications not specified	7.4 (4)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

The table shows that 27.8% of respondents had received up to nine years of schooling in their countries of origin, another 27.8% attained up to 12 years of schooling, 26% attained either a trade qualification or a diploma, 7.5% attained a university degree at either the bachelor or the masters level, while 7.4% did not specify their level of educational attainment.

Members of the African community continued to seek education and training after arriving in Australia. Table 11 shows the highest level of education attained by these respondents while in Australia. The table shows that at the time of the interview there were 19 (38.8%) respondents

studying<sup>7</sup> and others have completed secondary schooling (8.2%), trade qualifications (6.1%), tertiary qualification (8.2%), or a tertiary course (certificate or diploma) (32.7%).

**Table 11 Highest Level of Education Attained in Australia (% , n)**

Level of Education	Level Attained (% ,n)
Not attended	6.1 (3)
Currently studying	38.8 (19)
Primary (1-6 years)	
Lower secondary (7-9 years)	
Upper secondary (10-12 years)	8.2 (4)
Trade qualifications	6.1 (3)
Tertiary (Certificate or Diploma)	32.7 (16)
Tertiary (Bachelor)	8.2 (4)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

There was no further investigation of the level of education attained in Australia, as the interview schedule did not include other questions to assist in this investigation, such as a question on the age-on-arrival. However, of those 19 individuals (35%) who were studying at the time of the interview, 21.1% (four persons) were working towards a trade qualification, 10.5% (two persons) were working towards a business certificate, 42.1% (eight persons) were working towards a technical certificate, 15.8% (three persons) for a diploma, and 10.5% (two persons) were working for a bachelor degree.

### **Number, Ages and Education of Children**

Only four individuals reported that some of their children have left school; while all others with children indicated that none of their children left school. A separate question was asked of the respondents for each child to indicate their age, their gender, their level of schooling, whether they were still at school, and whether they are/were receiving education in Australia or overseas.

The responses reconfirmed that African families are larger than the normal Australian family. As shown earlier, 37 persons had children living with them at home. The entire 37 respondents responded to the above question.

<sup>7</sup> It is not clear to the researcher if this figure was due to a bias in the selection of the interviewees by the interviewers. Since the majority of the interviewees were new arrivals, one would expect that a large number of them might be still attending English classes, some might be attending work-related training, and others might be attending a certificate level training. In the absence of any other data to the contrary, the figures in the table are interpreted as given here, and as collected through the interviews.

The respondents recorded information on 137 children. The ages of these children ranged from two weeks old to 23 years of age. Of these children, 32 (23.4%) were under the age of five, 55 (40%) were at primary school age (6-11 years old), 26 (19%) were at middle years of schooling (7-9 year level or 12-15 years of age), and 17 (12.4%) were at secondary school age (10-12 or 16-18 years of age). There were seven children who have completed school and were either working or studying at the tertiary level.

Part of the question of whether the children are studying in Australia or overseas was not completed, but when analyzed further it was found that the majority of the school age children were still at school. Only a small number were reported to have left school.

Table 12 shows the distribution of school-aged children by their position in the family. The table shows that the respondents had in total 116 school age children in schools at the time of the interviews. School attendance was irrespective of the number of other sibling attending school. In any one family, there could be up to six children in school as shown in the table.

**Table 12 Distribution of the Number of School Aged Children (% , n)**

List of Children	Children in Schools (% , n)
First child at school	55.6 (30)
Second child at school	51.9 (28)
Third child at school	50.0 (27)
Fourth child at school	25.9 (14)
Fifth child at school	16.7 (9)
Sixth child at school	14.8 (8)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

### **Aspirations for Children**

When asked, “How long would you like (or have liked) each of them (your children) to stay at school”, respondents showed they have high aspirations for their children to continue at least 12 years of schooling. This was true for each and every child, irrespective of the number of children the respondents had, and irrespective of the child’s gender.

Some respondents had even higher aspirations for their children, stating that they would like to have each one of their children complete a university degree.

Respondents were also asked to assess whether going to school in Australia is very different from going to school in their homeland. Forty-five persons responded to this question and almost 83% of them (37 persons) believed that going to school in Australia is very different or different than going to schools in Africa.

This was reflected in the proportion of those reporting that their children had difficulties at their school (47.2% or 17 persons). This question was not pursued further, however the open-ended comments made at the end of the interview indicated what type of problems these children were having.

One respondent thought sending his/her child to school was a problem, because “I live in Tiwi and there is no primary school for him nearby”. While others highlighted aspects of discrimination due to skin complexion, racist statements, and “police harassment of children at school”, as the main difficulties faced by their children at school.

Another issue raised by several respondents was about the Second Intensive English Language Unit (SIELU) at Darwin High School. Their comments included:

There is not enough African staff in Darwin High School in their Intensive English Language Unit.

The government should increase school facilities and employ Africans in the education system particularly in SIELU in Darwin High and in AMEP.

These comments raised an issue of whether respondents were satisfied with their children’s education in Australia. Though only 36 persons responded, almost all of them (97.3%) indicated that they were very satisfied with their children’s education in Australia. Table 13 shows the respondents’ self-rating of their satisfaction with their children’s education and reasons were given for the respondents’ satisfaction.

The majority of these factors were related to the education system itself. These included in order of importance: free education (94.4%), English language teaching (91.7%), learning program (80%), teaching methods (71.4%), good discipline (66.7%), and sports program (61%).

One respondent summed up their satisfaction with his/her children’s education as follows: “we are very impressed by the education system here”. Still, there were many concerns raised by the respondents regarding the training services in the NT as discussed below.

**Table 13 Self-Ratings of Satisfaction with Children’s Education (% , n)**

Reason	An important reason	Neither important or unimportant reason	Unimportant reason
Free education	94.4 (34)		5.6 (2)
Good discipline	66.7 (24)	19.4 (7)	13.9 (5)
Sex segregation	17.6 (6)	35.3 (12)	47.1 (16)
Socialise with other African students	44.4 (16)	38.9 (14)	16.7 (6)
Teaching methods	71.4 (25)	22.9 (8)	5.7 (2)
English language	91.7 (33)	2.8 (1)	5.6 (2)
Learning program	80.0 (28)	17.1 (6)	2.9 (1)
Sports program	61.1 (22)	30.6 (11)	8.3 (3)
Child is safe at school	66.7 (24)	16.7 (6)	16.7 (6)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Socialising with other Africans was also mentioned but with lesser degree of importance than the other factors. Table 13 shows also the size of importance given to the last reason; “Child is safe at school”, rated as being very important by 66.7% of respondents.

## Discussion

This Chapter highlighted the high level of education attainment among the respondents and their family members prior to arrival in Australia. Upon arrival, respondents continued to attend education institutions, and their studies extended from studying for a trade qualification, a business certificate, a technical certificate, a diploma, to a bachelor degree.

This was the case despite the fact that the majority of respondent families are larger than the normal Australian family, with an average of three children or more per family. Though the respondents reported as having a large number of children, all school aged children listed by any one respondent were engaged in either school education or tertiary studies.

Respondents have high aspirations for their children and were satisfied with their children’s education in the Territory. However, respondents raised some issues regarding their children’s school education. These included lack of African staff in schools and at the English language training centres as well as discrimination.



The first issue is related to the principles of *fair access and encouraging participation*, while the second is related to the principles of *valuing diversity and mutual respect*. Given the importance of these two issues to the promotion of the four principles espoused by the Northern Territory Multicultural Policy, respondents' open-ended comments were examined at length in order to identify the views of the African community on these principles.

On *fair access and encouraging participation*, respondents identified at least three concerns for considerations by government services, school education, English tuition and training needs. School education and the placement of African staff in schools where a large number of Africans were enrolled, was the first concern. As explained by these respondents, the employment of African staff in schools with large number of African students provides a better help for their children, and the children themselves feel safer.

Some respondents also highlighted the need for particular types of staff, such as African counselors to assist the children in resettlement and in overcoming trauma. This point was also raised during the community consultations. The community felt that there was a "*need for culturally appropriate counselling in the primary schools, young children dealing with trauma. Older children at high school are not likely to access counselling as counselling is not part of their culture*".

This concern by the African community was not limited to school education but extended to training programs provided by both the tertiary institutions (Charles Darwin University was named several times), and the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) (was named more than ten times).<sup>8</sup> This concern was expressed in those terms<sup>9</sup>: "We, Africans, would like to have some of us employed as teachers, teacher aids or other staff in AMEP". Another person stated:

I would like to see some Africans employed also like staff in AMEP same as some Asians and Caucasians. It is unfortunate that there is not even a single African employed in AMEP when about half of the students are from Africa.

While a third repeated:

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<sup>8</sup> ESL and AMEP programs cater to a broad range of ethnic groups, including the ethnic profiles of the humanitarian settlement program, which changes according to the annual refugee intake priorities. Therefore, ESL staff in education institutions are engaged on their qualifications and experience in the profession and not according to any periodic changes in student ethnicity.

<sup>9</sup> All quotes reported in this report are the "verbatim" quotes as reported by the interviewers. No attempts have been made to change the text. If corrections were made, then they would be highlighted in italics.

I think Charles Darwin University should employ some African staff in the teaching in order to help us better, same as what is happening in Anula Primary School for our children.

Again, on the two principles of *fair access and encouraging participation*, several respondents reported on the need to revisit some English training programs and English training needs. The first was again related to school education, as voiced by one respondent: “revisit the issues of SIEU programs for African children with strong English backgrounds and skills”.

The majority of respondents felt that the English tuition and training needs of Africans might be different from those of other new arrivals. The following quotes sum up the general comments of these respondents.

I would prefer the government help people arriving in Australia with a good level of English skills to go on training to develop their trade skills in order to be employable as quickly as possible. Some hours allocated for AMEP training at Casuarina may be utilized in that regard. This is so because not every African who arrives in Australia has a low level of English; some of us come here being good enough in English. They only need training in vocational and employment skills.

If someone has good English when arriving here under Humanitarian Visa, let the hours allocated for the free English training be converted into other training to help the African immigration gain working professional or trade skills so that they can get a job easily.

My English hours for English training should be referred for other skill related training.

One respondent went on to outline what could be put in place to assist members of the African community reach their employment potential as soon as possible after arriving in the NT.

The English language should not be . . . compulsory as it seems to be. I would like the government to find out formally with the new arrivals, particularly the humanitarian entrants the sort and level of skills they have brought here then to find out whether the level of their English skills is enough or not for practicing these employment skills here. . . English courses should be compulsory only when necessary . . . the Commonwealth Government will save money. Additionally to this if the 520 hours allocated to each humanitarian entrant for English are used for them to study for . . . a VET or TAFE course, so that they become employable as quickly as

possible. This will help lots of Africans not to just survive on the Centerlink entitlements. . .

At the same time, respondents raised concerns about the quality of the English language training that they receive, as summed up by the following quote:

The classes in AMEP are very congested; they should lower the number of students per class . . . The study of another language is not easy and should not happen in large numbers. Similarly, the English knowledge is crucial for survival here, the management of Charles Darwin University should put more seriousness in our English language training by recognising smaller classes.

*Valuing diversity and mutual respect* are first tested at the education and training services. In commenting on their education and training experiences, as individuals, respondents raised concerns regarding the “discrimination” and “racial harassments” that they receive while attending training and education institutions. It seems African children and adults are highly visible in the Territory in spite of the existing Indigenous population. Comments made by the respondents reflect this visibility, which according to them is related to the “skin complexion”. One respondent stated the feelings among some members of the community in the following quote: “Africans are unfortunately considered and assumed like some sub-human being and stupid people”. While another summarised these issues in the following terms:

It is obvious that Aboriginal people are disfavoured and sidelined; unfortunately Africans having about the same complexion like them are victim of prejudgments and negative assumption from the mainstream Caucasian members of the community. They think that we have the same weaknesses like Aborigines although every racial group in the world has its own weaknesses, therefore they denied to us malignly access to very essential and basic possessions like jobs, house rental and understanding in schools.

These concerns are further investigated in Chapter Four to follow.

## Chapter Four - Workforce Participation

This Chapter uses both the quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the interview schedule to examine the reported experience of African respondents in their search for employment and participation in the Australian labour market. It presents an assessment of the factors, which contribute to the full or otherwise participation of this group in the labour market within the Territory. Again, the analysis links issues raised by the respondents on their workforce participation to the four principles of the Northern Territory Multicultural Policy.

The Chapter considers the workforce activities of the sample. It is important to compare the occupational structure of the respondents with that in their countries of origin. If there is a loss in occupational status among the respondents compared to their occupational status in their countries of origin, then this may be due to barriers of access to the Territory labour market, which prevent these workers from moving back into occupations they held prior to arrival in the Territory.<sup>10</sup>

### Employment

The interview schedule included a series of questions, which aimed at establishing the previous and current occupational activities and status of the respondents. The analysis showed that the workforce participation among the respondents was very low. Six persons indicated that they were studying for a trade or a diploma at the time of the interview<sup>11</sup>. At the time of the interview only 16 respondents (30%) were in paid employment and one person was self-employed and half of these 16 respondents claimed to be working less than five days a week, mainly casual or part time.

The low employment rate was also reflected in the number of persons who were unemployed or looking for a full time or part time work. Around 45% of respondents indicated that they were unemployed and they were looking for a full time work. The responses to the question: "what is your present or last main job in the NT?" confirmed this figure, with 24 (44.5%) persons noted that they were unemployed, and have never worked in the Territory.

One group of respondents when asked about their current work status indicated that they were unemployed but not looking for a job; the majority of these were women who indicated that they were active in home duties.

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<sup>10</sup> There could be a substantial difference between the Australian workforce qualifications and experience requirements and those in the respondents' home country or country of refuge.

<sup>11</sup> Previously 19 respondents indicated that they were studying at the time of the interview - see footnote 1.

The low employment rate reported above was not reflected in the work status of individuals prior to their arrival in the Territory. When asked what your last job in your home country was, 43 persons (80% of respondents) reported on one or more economic activity. The others were unemployed, housewives, or attending schools. Of these, 25 respondents (45%) were in professional or paraprofessional occupations, three respondents were employed in their own business and five were teachers.

Those who were in professional or paraprofessional employment prior to arriving in the Territory came from diverse occupational backgrounds. These included financial officer, project manager, engineer, customs officer, car mechanic, administrative manager, correction officer, farmer, etc. The list reflects the diversity of skills of the respondents prior to their arrival in the Territory.

However, this diversity of skills was not utilized by the respondents in their employment in the Territory.

In response to the question, "What was your first job in the NT?" 24 persons stated that they have never worked since arriving in the Territory; eight persons indicated that they worked as cleaners, and another eight stated that they were housewives (and have not worked in the Territory).

Those who had a job indicated that they worked in unskilled or semiskilled occupations, such as a kitchen hand or working at a fast food shop, fruit picker, or trade assistant. No respondent indicated that they worked as professional or paraprofessional in their first job in the Territory.

Again the question "What is your present or last main job in the NT?" revealed that the majority who responded were still in unskilled or semiskilled occupations, with a small number who moved to work in paraprofessional positions, such as in child care, school assistant, carer, or bilingual worker.

### **Aspirations and Barriers to Employment**

The employment opportunities available to the respondents do not match their aspirations for better workforce participation and higher occupational status. At the time of the interview, all those in employment indicated that they would have preferred to have worked more hours and/or have another job. Five aspired to be religious leaders; ten aspired to be in trade, and two to work as security officers or police officers.

A list of labour market barriers was put to the respondents. The items on the list were identified from the literature on the experience of new arrivals. Respondents were asked to tick those barriers that they thought were preventing them from getting the kind of work they would prefer to have.

Table 14 shows those reasons and the percentage of respondents who thought the reasons were or were not applicable to them.

The table demonstrates that while some respondents felt that they need training for a job (40.7%), others felt that there were reasons outside their control that prevented them from getting the type of job they would like to have. The list included structural factors related to the operation of the labour market or the operation of education and training sector, and privately related reasons, such as domestic arrangements.

Structural factors were highlighted as causes that prevent the respondents from getting better work or the work they would like to have. The list included lack of an Australian qualification (42.6%), qualifications unrecognized (38.9%), lack of qualifications (29.6%), and lack of English (24.1%). Other factors included need training for a job (40.7%) and no job available (14.8%).

**Table 14**      **Frequencies of Likely Reasons Preventing Respondents from Getting Better Work (% , n)**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percentage and Frequency</b>
Lack of English	24.1 (13)
Qualifications unrecognized	38.9 (21)
No jobs available	14.8 (8)
Lack of qualifications	29.6 (16)
Domestic arrangements (child care)	3.7 (2)
Distance to travel	5.6 (35)
No capital to start business	5.6 (3)
Still at school	16.7 (9)
Lack of Australian qualifications	42.6 (23)
Too old	7.4 (4)
Need training for a job	40.7 (22)
Discrimination	35.2 (19)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Respondents reflected on each of these barriers. A sample of their reflections is provided here, though further explorations of these reflections are provided in the next section. One respondent articulated “need training for a job” in the following terms.

The government can provide follow up training for my previous job experience as customs service officer, I am sure my job prospects in that area would be better.

I am ready to do some on the job training if given some opportunity, in order to gain useful skills in case what I already have not relevant, so that I can get employment.

Others commented on the issue of recognition of qualifications by stating:

I am a qualified teacher but I cannot understand why it is so hard to get a permanent teaching job.

Would the government help me get my qualification as a car mechanic recognized so that I could get a job?

Lack of qualifications as a barrier to getting better work received several explanations and comments such as “the skills I have are not relevant”.

These barriers to finding a better job are reflected in the various means used by respondents in their endeavour to find their first job in the Territory. The majority of those who have gained employment found their first jobs through a friend (53% of the total respondents); only 23.1% had found their jobs through the newspapers and another 15.4% found their job through Job Network.

## **Workforce Skills**

The survey indicated that the respondents came to the Territory endowed with diverse skills that may not be recognized within the formal education and training context, for example arts and crafts skills learnt informally from family members. The respondents also possess a number of skills obtained through formal education and training; these skills again are not being utilized in the Territory labour market.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (76.5%) believed that they have skills not utilized by the labour market. These skills included art skills (7.4%), craft (11.1%), trade skills (9.3%), business skills (9.3%), and professional skills (14.8%). Of these, 19 persons (35.2%) have learnt their skills through a formal course, while ten persons (18.5%) have obtained their skills through a family trade.

On the question why aren't you using your skills, the majority of respondents reported “no opportunity given”, “skills are not recognized”, and “lack of English”. On the issue of no opportunity, some of the responses were:

I had no opportunity so far.

No opportunity to do it and very hard to use in Australia.

No opportunities and I don't know if my skills may be recognized and I need help to get a job.

No opportunity given, I am completing compulsory English course.

Again, on the issue of recognition of skills and lack of English skills, some of the respondents stated:

Because African building skills are not recognised.

Still need to improve English by attending English classes before actually finding a job.

I have to get my qualifications recognized and improve my English standards.

Because I am not given the chance, my past experiences are not recognized here.

As noted in Table 14, lack of capital to start a business was seen as a barrier to employment by three respondents. Those who were not using their skills in the workforce also raised it as an issue. One respondent summed up these issues in one sentence: “lack of capital to start business, economic opportunities are not suitable, no opportunity given, employers not accepting me”.

Finally, one issue raised by several respondents indicated the importance of having contacts in the job market who can then introduce the person to employers, as summed up by one respondent: “no contact to introduce and recognise the skills, don’t know how to get the job using the skills I have”.

### **Workforce Prospects**

More than 54% of respondents have accepted the first job offer, and most found it easy to get on with their work mates (43%) and with their managers and supervisors at work (40%). Those who thought it was not easy to get on with workmates or managers and supervisors, attributed this state of affair more to “discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin” or “cultural differences” than to any other reason.

Despite the above comments, almost half of the respondents felt optimistic about their future prospects of getting a job. Respondents were then asked to indicate what would affect their future job prospects and given a list that was compiled from previous research findings as well as from issues mentioned during the consultation process. The ratings of the reasons were recorded on a five-point scale, from “not likely to affect me at all” to “extremely likely to affect me”. Table 15 gives the respondents’ ratings of the reasons, which they saw as affecting their future job prospects.

Having Australian work experience and discrimination by employers received the highest mention in terms of their impact on future job prospects for the respondents. Almost 70% of respondents felt that having Australian work experience was “extremely likely” or “likely to affect” them



in their future job prospects; 66% gave “extremely likely” or “likely to affect” ratings to discrimination by employers.

Lack of qualifications was another reason perceived to impact on future job prospects of the respondents, with 44.2% believing that this was “extremely likely” or “likely” to affect them in the future. About one third also noted that knowledge of English Language were “extremely likely” or “likely” to affect their job prospects in the future.

**Table 15 Self-Rating of Reasons Which May Affect Future Job Prospects (% , n)**

Reasons	Ratings – Percentage and Frequency				
	Not likely to affect me at all	Probably will not affect me at all	Not sure about its affects	Likely to affect me	Extremely likely to affect me
Knowledge of English Language	45.1 (23)	15.7 (8)	7.8 (4)	11.8 (6)	19.6 (10)
High unemployment rate in the NT	10.0 (5)	14.0 (7)	52.0 (26)	18.0 (9)	6.0 (3)
Lack of qualifications	30.8 (16)	15.4 (8)	9.6 (5)	25.0 (13)	19.2 (10)
Having Australian work experience	17.0 (9)	11.3 (6)	1.9 (1)	37.7 (20)	32.1 (17)
Public transportation	49.0 (25)	17.6 (9)	5.9 (3)	11.8 (6)	15.7 (8)
Having an Australian Driver's License	40.4 (21)	19.2 (10)	9.6 (5)	11.5 (6)	19.2 (10)
Discrimination by employers	5.7 (3)	9.4 (5)	18.9 (10)	34.0 (18)	32.1 (17)
Other reasons - future job prospects	14.3 (2)		42.9 (6)	14.3 (2)	28.6 (4)

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Having an Australian Driver’s License (30.7%) and public transportation (27.5%) were other reasons seen as affecting the future job prospects for the respondents. These were further articulated in the comments made by the respondents. Several have claimed that because they did not “have a driving license”, they missed on job opportunities, as employers refused to give them a job on this basis. Others saw “public transport unreliable”

which caused them a lot of problems with work and employment opportunities.

## Discussion

This Chapter highlighted that 80% of the respondents were engaged in one economic activity prior to arriving in the Territory, while only 30% were in wage or salary employment at the time of the interview. Half of those employed at the time of the survey were employed five days a week while the other half were employed as casual or part timers.

Underemployment or unemployment of the respondents was attributed to the lack of recognition of skills and/or qualifications, lack of English, lack of Australian qualifications, and the need for training for a job. These are in line with the findings from the community consultations. At these consultations, the community felt that:

- There was no appropriate recognition of existing skills, can only get menial work – if that.
- In Darwin's labour market, Australian work experience was seen as a pre-requisite for getting a job.
- Attending lots of training and workshops on employment but not resulting in jobs; and
- Training received does not result in work.

Again, these results are in line with findings from research on the experience of other new arrivals in Australia. As with other new arrivals, the respondents recorded feelings of discrimination in the labour market. Both the consultation process and the survey highlighted aspects of this discrimination. During the consultations process, the community recorded the following comments regarding discriminations in the labour market:

- Cultural differences experienced – i.e., in Australia you need to sell yourself, in African countries it is a sign of respect to be humble and not make eye contact. General differences in the expectation of the workforce.
- Unwillingness by some members of the community to take on menial work.
- Lack of willingness to take on apprenticeships, income lower than Centrelink payments (viewed by some as exploitation, while others view as unnecessary as already skilled in a trade from their home country).
- Discrimination by Employers (accent, cultural bias in process, language/grammar)
- Exploitation by employers

- When re-qualify still do not get work – possible discrimination

These obstacles were highlighted in the comments given by the respondents during the interviews in such terms:

Since I have been in Australia I have not got any well-paid and permanent job. Even cleaning jobs are very difficult to find. Employers give Africans jobs only when they are desperate, once they find a Caucasian they push you away so that the Caucasian can take over the job.

The problem is not the lack of jobs because there are enough jobs in the Territory but the problem is that these opportunities are basically closed to African especially full time and permanent work.

Some of the respondents attributed this discrimination in the labor market to several reasons, but highlighted two in particular: lack of transport and a driver's license, and discrimination on the basis of skin color (as quoted earlier). On transportation and lack of driver's license several respondents felt that these were the reasons for them not getting a job or holding a job for long. Their explanations included:

Public transport unreliable, lack of understanding from the employers. Employers use the lack of personal transport as an excuse to not accept Africans for employment. Though someone can organize him/herself to be at the job on time, therefore without affecting his or her punctuality and reliability. . . Transport conditionality is a sort of migrant discrimination against Africans because they know that being newly emerging Africans in the Territory they are more timely to not possess cars, they take that opportunity to not employ them.

These concerns are indications that job network agencies, training programs and government agencies need to provide improved opportunities for newly arrived humanitarian migrants to meet their employment aspirations. As two respondents said:

I would like the government to look seriously at the issue of unemployment and work environment for Africans.

Information about apprenticeship should be well disseminated. Enough opportunities for apprenticeship should be provided to the youth. We need to see Africans occupying positions of employment with service providers, government agencies and the NT government so that we feel secure and accepted.

## Chapter Five - Government Services and Community Participation

This chapter uses both the quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the interview schedule to examine the reported experience of respondents in their use of government services and their perceptions about participating and engaging in the Territory community. The analysis draws heavily on the comments made by the respondents during both the interviews and the community consultation.

### Usage and Experience

The first question in this section of the interview schedule dealt with whether the respondents know of mainstream government services such as childcare, Royal Darwin Hospital and Motor Vehicle Registry. Although it was expected that at least the majority of the respondents would know of the services, the respondents were also asked to indicate whether they have used these services. Table 16 shows the list of essential services that were put to the respondents, the percentages of respondents who indicated that they know about these services, and the percentages of respondents who have actually used these services.

Clearly those services of immediate relevance to the respondents received the highest percentages. As expected, the number of respondents who knew about services such as schools was high (pre-school for your child received 61.2%, primary school for your child 77.6%, secondary school for your child 67.3%, and high school for your child 68%). There were high proportions of respondents who knew of the Royal Darwin Hospital (88.2%), the Territory Housing (77.4%), the Motor Vehicle Registry (70.4%), and the NT Interpreting Services (66.0%). The other services in the list were also known to almost one third of the respondents.

Though the proportions of those who use these services were reduced by almost 20 percent point for each service, these proportions were relatively reflected in those who may be expected to use these services.

**Table 16 Knowledge and Usage of Government and Community Services (%)**

Type of Service	Know about the Service	Have used the Service
Territory Housing	77.4	52.8
Family and Children's Services	33.3	19.8
Motor Vehicle Registry	70.4	50.9
Pre-School for your child	61.2	55.3
Primary School for your child	77.6	60.4
Secondary School for your child	67.3	40.8
High School for your child	68.0	40.8
Apprenticeship Programs	35.2	3.8
Overseas Qualification Unit	26.9	12.0
N.T Interpreter Services	66.0	49.1
Royal Darwin Hospital	88.2	86.3

Source: Survey of the African Community Engagement conducted September – October 2005

Respondents were asked to briefly describe their experience with those services that they have used. Most respondents in their comments about the government and community services gave positive responses to all services, and summed up their experience with these services in phrases such as “in general, they are good services”, “overall the provisions of these services are excellent”, “very good” and/or “not too bad”. As one respondent commented:

My family and I are very happy of all the services provided for us and we enjoy staying here for the rest of our live.

I am so happy with services provided by the government. I wish I could bring the rest of my family who are still in a refugee camp.

A number of respondents singled out some services and commented that they were good. Of these services that were noted through a positive response included Motor Vehicle Registry (9 respondents), schools (9 respondents), Territory Housing (4 respondents), and the NT Interpreters (4 respondents).

Positive comments from the respondents included

Easy to access and very good services given to me.

It is very good services and I am so pleased with the NT Interpreting Services because without assistance of an interpreter I would be having a lot of difficulties in communication and getting proper services.

The workers are lovely and very clear when explaining something to us. The services are good.

On the other hand, four respondents rated the services of the Territory Housing as negative. Other services, which received negative ratings, were the Royal Darwin Hospital. Eighteen respondents mentioned the Royal Darwin Hospital and almost all of them gave a negative assessment of their experience with the hospital's services. One respondent summarized these assessments in the following statement:

Territory housing takes too long to fix problems, Motor Vehicle Registry satisfactory, school for my children is excellent, NT Interpreters very positive experience, Royal Darwin Hospital very slow to give treatment but the treatment is good when they attend to someone's condition.

Other comments included

Positive with the NT Interpreter Services, but negative with the Royal Darwin Hospital.

My experience with the primary school has been good, but with the Royal Darwin Hospital was not encouraging.

Other respondents were also very clear about the assistance they received from particular sources, which made them reliant on these services: "honestly I don't know since Melaleuca has organized it for me" stated by one respondent.

Respondents were also asked whether they have heard of other government services. Though some respondents heard of all of these services, the NT Police scored the highest proportion of 79.2% of respondents indicating that they have heard of this service. Other proportions included: 14.8% for Health Complaints Commission, 37% for Anti Discrimination Commission, 40.7% for NT Legal Aid, 38.9% for the Domestic Violence Legal Service, 33.3% for the Consumer and Business Affairs, 41.5% for the Magistrate Court, 32.1% for the Supreme Court, 45.1% for the NT Electoral Commission, and 16.7% for the Ombudsman.

### **Community and Public Life**

The question, "Do you think you will stay in the NT"? showed that the respondents were generally happy living in the Territory . Only three persons (5.6%) reported that they would be leaving the Territory, while another 31.5% were not sure. While 62.3% were sure that they would stay in the Territory, six respondents identified reasons which will make them leave the Territory. These reasons included

I want to stay in the NT but if I cannot get a reasonable job I will be thinking about moving.

If I find a good job I will stay, if after a certain time I do not get a job I will choose to move.

If my social condition, like getting a job, does not change I may choose to move to another state in Australia.

If I cannot get a job I don't see why I will continue to be idle here and not contribute to society and not developing myself financially and economically with my family.

I would have preferred us not to move from the NT but since I have not met any serious problems so far I prefer to stay here. Also because I have not yet developed some skills in order to get a job or better-paid job, even if I move to another state my socio-economic situation will not change. I reckon it will become even worse. But once I gain some working skills through traineeship I will not move away.

There is a willingness on part of the respondents to participate in public life – 48.1% of the sample said that they would like to participate in election or in community organisations.

## **Discussion**

This chapter highlighted what areas of government services respondents know and what areas they have used. Some respondents reported a positive experience with almost all services while others reported negative responses with several services. The majority of respondents gave negative ratings to their dealings with the Royal Darwin Hospital, and some gave negative ratings to dealing with the Motor Vehicle Registry. It was not clear which services received more negative responses than others. However through a comparison of the issues raised in the interviews and those raised during the community consultations, it is possible to summarise the negative experiences of respondents with government and community services in the following points:

- Confusion over the role of existing services for ethnic communities. This point was clearly reflected in the comments given by the respondents and their perception of what these services should offer.
- Motor Vehicle Registry is giving some members of the African community their driving test as an oral not written test and using question/answer rather than multiple choices, due to the test not

being available in the languages known to the community. This difference is seen as unfair.

The majority of respondents reported that they would stay in the Territory provided they are given training to find a job.

