

# **Very Recent African Immigrants and Unemployment in British Columbia**

by

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## **Abstract**

Despite the provincial and federal governments focus on improving employment services through the Canada-British Columbia Immigration agreement, the unemployment rate among very recent African immigrants continues to remain the highest among other ethnic groups in Canada (StatCan, 2010). As such, this study looks into the various barriers faced by very recent African immigrants in finding employment in B.C., and addresses the problem through interviews with settlement agencies and a government department. Accordingly, this study recommends a bundle of policies to both governments. Policy recommendations include: collaborating among African-specific and multiservice agencies, creating a network “hub” through African-specific agencies, implementing a training program for entry-level positions and incorporating Canadian work experience opportunities into existing programs.

**Keywords:** African; unemployment; very recent immigrants; settlement agencies

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## List of Acronyms and Terms

Very Recent African Immigrants	Those who have been in Canada for five years or less.
Recent African Immigrants	Those who have been in Canada for five to ten years.
Established African Immigrants	Those who have been in Canada for more than ten years.
ESL	English as a Second Language
African-Specific or Ethno-Specific Agency	A settlement agency that has gained expertise on settlement issues specific to African immigrants. Their clientele consists of at least 20% Africans.
Multi-service Agencies	A settlement agency that has not necessarily gained expertise working with a specific ethnic group. The agency is much larger than an ethno-specific agency, and offers a variety of settlement services.
MCCEE	Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination
RFP	Request for Proposal
GAR	Government Assisted Refugee
ELSA	English Language Services for Adults

## Executive Summary

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, significant waves of immigration came from the People's Republic of China, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines (Tettey, 2005). The African source or group of people also benefited from the changes. Statistics show that African immigrants to Canada have increased substantially over the last two decades. During the 1980s, 64,265 Africans immigrated to Canada, whereas the number of African immigrants between 1991 and 1996 was 76,260 (Tettey, 2005). The total number of African immigrants in Canada increased to 282,600 in 2001 (Tettey, 2005).

More recently in 2006, the Census reported that 411,840 African immigrants were living in Canada, accounting for 10.6% of all recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2006). Moreover, the African population in Canada is growing considerably faster than the overall population. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of people reporting they had African origins rose by 32%, whereas the overall population grew by only 4%. More specifically, the United Nations reported that 8.2% of all Africans living in Canada in 2010 were classified as refugees (UNHCR, 2012).

Presently, the African population in Canada is concentrated primarily in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta. In 2001, 59% of all Canadians of African origin lived in Ontario, 17% in Quebec, and 8% in both British Columbia and Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2001). The 2001 Census shows 25,000 African immigrants and 6,080 very recent African immigrants were living in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2001).

The unemployment rate among very recent African immigrants continues to remain the highest among ethnic groups in Canada, standing at 21.2% in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2010). This number is very high given that the average unemployment rate for very recent Latin American, European and Asian immigrants was 16.1%, 9.4% and 15.1%, respectively in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2010). As a result of such a high unemployment rate, this research addresses the following policy problem:

**Too many very recent African immigrants are unemployed in British Columbia.**

It is important to note that African immigrants are a heterogeneous group with differences in culture, skills, and experiences. Specifically, the top ten countries that Africans in Canada immigrate from include: Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mauritius, South Africa, Tunisia, Cameroon and Somalia. As such, this research will focus on answering the following questions:

1. Is the unemployment rate dependent on refugee status or country of origin? If so, does this imply that different groups among the African population need to be addressed differently?

2. Are there similar challenges among all very recent Africans in finding employment in British Columbia? If so, what are they? What are the steps that can be taken to help address the unemployment challenge faced by Africans as a group?

Literature reviews show several barriers to the problem, including: racism, language, difficulty accessing language services, accreditation, Canadian experience, networks and the functioning of settlement agencies. To further investigate the policy problem, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with settlement agencies based in B.C.; additionally, one interview was conducted with a government department for informational purposes. Interviews were very helpful in further understanding barriers that were mentioned in literature reviews, and learning about new ones not mentioned in literature. Overall, the main barriers described by interviewees included language, networks, social and cultural differences, Canadian experience, training and skills along with lack of resources among settlement agencies.

Due to inconsistencies among literature reviews and interviews, as well as the complex nature of some barriers, not all barriers mentioned will be addressed in this research. In analyzing research done through literature reviews as well as interviews with settlement agencies and a government department, three policy objectives stood out. Although several barriers to employment among very recent African immigrants were brought up, four barriers, which policy objectives are based on, will be analyzed. Specifically, the barriers that will be directly addressed include access to settlement services, networks, Canadian experience and training. Stemming from these barriers, policy objectives include:

Allow settlement agencies to make the most effective use of resources in order to help very recent African immigrants find work in B.C.

Improve or create network opportunities for very recent African immigrants

Improve opportunities among very recent African immigrants for Canadian work experience

**Objective 1: Allow settlement agencies to make the most effective use of resources in order to help very recent African immigrants find work in B.C.**

In conducting interviews, it became very clear that funding and lack of resources was a on-going issue faced by all settlement agencies. Furthermore, in a few interviews, the importance of collaboration and partnerships with various groups and organizations was also mentioned. One interviewee in particular mentioned the importance of collaboration with other organizations, including other settlement agencies, to provide for the needs of their clients. Given the challenge with limited funding and resources, policies and guidelines can play a role in ensuring resources are used in the most effective way possible. Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo: The status quo refers to the current situation, where many of the very recent African immigrants continue to turn to smaller, African specific-agencies for employment services. These smaller agencies have limited resources, and frequently cannot provide the needed services.

2. Defining roles and Collaboration: This would include defining specific roles for multi-service agencies and African-specific agencies in a way that will alleviate the resource problem, when it comes to meeting the needs of very recent African immigrants. For example, African-specific agencies provide an initial place for information and basic training skills; while larger, multi-service agencies are a second-stop, for more advanced language and employment training.

3. Marketing campaign for multi-service agencies aimed at very recent African immigrants.

4. Increase government funding, particularly for smaller, African-specific agencies, to meet the needs of their African clientele.

**Objective 2: Improve or create network opportunities for very recent African immigrants**

A lack of networks for African immigrants is a barrier emphasized in both the literature reviews and all interviews. Given the focus is on Africans who have been in Canada for five years or less, networks play a key role in helping newcomers settle into their communities. Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo
2. Focus on community events and a website planned for Africans living in BC
3. Use existing ethnic-specific agencies for network opportunities

**Objective 3: Improve opportunities among very recent African immigrants for Canadian work experience and training**

Canadian work experience and training was listed among the main barriers in both literature reviews and interviews. All interviewees mentioned the challenge with getting Canadian work experience, including volunteer positions. Training, especially for entry-level positions, were scarce.

Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo
2. Training for entry-level positions
3. ELSA to incorporate volunteering/Canadian experience

In order to assess all the alternatives, five criteria were weighted equally on a high/medium/low scale. Criteria include: cost, effectiveness, equity, administrative complexity and political feasibility.

Analysis of the alternatives yielded three recommendations:

- to have African-specific and multi-service agencies collaborate and set more defined roles to ensure better resource efficiency
- to use African-specific agencies as a “hub” where very recent African immigrants can network

- to create a program that focuses on training immigrants for entry-level positions
- to incorporate a Canadian work experience aspect into existing settlement programs, such as ELSA

Overall, the recommendations stem from efforts to answer the research questions; interview questions were formulated with the research questions in mind. Although interviews did not present a clear answer to the questions, it became clear that some differential, as well as similar needs exist among the African population. For example, many refugees are lacking work skills and would benefit from a training program aimed at lower-skilled positions; on the other hand, all very recent African immigrants can benefit from more networking opportunities and improved employment services. As a result of the complexity of the issue, only a few barriers that were consistent in both the literature reviews and interviews were addressed. At a minimum, such a complex problem requires further focus and research on the areas suggested previously, including racism, accreditation, language and access to ESL classes.

# 1. Introduction

Globalization has opened up opportunities for many around the world, including Africans. More specifically, Africans have responded as active participants of transmigration. In several instances, Africans' motivations to take part in transmigration have unfortunately been spurred by civil wars, political instability, ethnic conflict and political persecution.

In 1967, changes in Canadian immigration policy led to an increase in the arrival of immigrants to Canada from non-Western European countries. Accordingly, changes to immigration policies included eliminating the view of preferred and non-preferred countries as an important factor in the immigration process. Instead, the emphasis shifted to age, education, and potential contribution to Canadian society through a points system. These indicators, under the new system, were intended to create an equal opportunity for potential immigrants, including Africans, to entering the country. In part, this change resulted from the need to recruit skilled workers for employers in the Canadian labor market.

The new Immigration Act of 1978 contributed to the establishment of three entry gates under which immigrants could be admitted into Canada. These included: the family class, the refugee class, and a class including independent applicants, entrepreneurs, and assisted relatives. Canada continues to rely on immigration as a source of skills and knowledge for the labor force. Data from the 2001 census reveals that immigrants who landed during the 1990s and were in the labor force in 2001 accounted for 70 percent of the net labor force growth in Canada during 1991–2001(Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2002).

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, significant waves of immigration came from the People's Republic of China, India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines (Tetty, 2005). The African source or group of people also benefited from the changes. Statistics show that African immigrants to Canada have increased substantially over the last two



decades. During the 1980s, 64,265 Africans immigrated to Canada, whereas the number of African immigrants between 1991 and 1996 was 76,260 (Tettey, 2005). The total number of African immigrants in Canada increased to 282,600 in 2001 (Tettey, 2005).

More recently in 2006, the Census reported that 411,840 African immigrants were living in Canada, accounting for 10.6% of all recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2006). Moreover, the African population in Canada is growing considerably faster than the overall population. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of people reporting they had African origins rose by 32%, whereas the overall population grew by only 4%. More specifically, the United Nations reported that 8.2% of all Africans living in Canada in 2010 were classified as refugees (UNHCR, 2012).

Presently, the African population in Canada is concentrated primarily in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta. In 2001, 59% of all Canadians of African origin lived in Ontario, 17% in Quebec, and 8% in both British Columbia and Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2001). The 2001 Census shows 25,000 African immigrants and 6,080 very recent African immigrants were living in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2001).

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## 2. Policy Problem

The unemployment rate among very recent African immigrants continues to remain the highest among ethnic groups in Canada, standing at 21.2% in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2010). This number is very high given that the average unemployment rate for very recent Latin American, European and Asian immigrants was 16.1%, 9.4% and 15.1%, respectively in 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2010). Moreover, regardless of whether the focus is on very recent, recent or established immigrants, the unemployment rate among Africans is the highest in all categories across Canada. The number is even more puzzling given that African newcomers are actively looking for work; for example, the labor market participation rate among very recent African immigrants is comparable to other very recent immigrants, standing at 72.5% in 2006 (average for very recent immigrants is 73.9%) (Statistics Canada, 2006). The unemployment rate among very recent African males and females is also comparable, standing at 19.8% and 21.9%, respectively. (Statistics Canada, 2010).

As a result of the above statistics, several studies have been undertaken on settlement challenges faced by various African groups in Canada. One study focuses on Somali and Ethiopian refugees settling in Toronto, and finds that African respondents were confident and optimistic about getting access to well-paid jobs, financial security and abundant opportunities for self-improvement. Through interviews and focus groups, the study also reveals that those who hoped for career advancement also expected to be able to obtain jobs and work in their area of training. Before arriving to Canada, participants were under the impression that skills and experiences from their home country were easily transferable to the Canadian job market. However, once arriving in Canada, many found the opposite to be true. One respondent describes his experiences shortly after arriving in Toronto:

“It is very difficult to get a job in Toronto even though you have very high qualifications. When I first came to Canada, I was very hopeful that with my experience and qualification, I would get a job soon, but boy, how

disappointing it was! It took me almost one year before I could get something that one could call a real job. I had to take it because I did not have any choice and I did not want to go on welfare or depend on others for support” (Danso, 2002)

The above statement is one of many examples where African immigrants have encountered challenges with finding employment in Canada. The African population in various regions of the country, including British Columbia, has also faced similar challenges. As a result, this research will address the following problem:

**Too many very recent African immigrants are unemployed in British Columbia**

The term “too many” is described as a comparison to other ethnic groups, where 21.2% of very recent Africans were unemployed in Canada in 2010. “African immigrants” are immigrants (including refugees) between the ages of 25-54 who are from Africa. Finally, the term “unemployed” follows the Statistics Canada definition, which refers to “a person who is without a job, is currently available for work and has looked for work in the last four weeks”.

It is important to note that African immigrants are a heterogeneous group with differences in culture, skills, and experiences. Specifically, the top ten countries that Africans in Canada immigrate from include: Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mauritius, South Africa, Tunisia, Cameroon and Somalia. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a more specific break down. As such, this research will focus on answering the following questions:

1. Is the unemployment rate dependent on refugee status or country of origin? If so, does this imply that different groups among the African population need to be addressed differently?

2. Are there similar challenges among all very recent Africans in finding employment in British Columbia? If so, what are they? What are the steps that can be taken to help address the unemployment challenge faced by Africans as a group?

Since the Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement has committed both the federal and provincial governments to improving the effective delivery of settlement services, departments both at the federal and provincial levels will be addressed. Specifically, recommendations based on the above questions will be directed to the federal department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), which is responsible for immigration and citizenship services throughout Canada. Furthermore, it was announced in December 2011 that CIC's allocation for settlement services in British Columbia will be \$109.8M for the 2012-13 fiscal year, which is an increase of \$4.3M from 2011 (CIC, 2011). Recommendations will also be addressed to the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, which administers the allocation of funding through the B.C. Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP).

### **3. Key Stakeholders**

In addressing the above-mentioned questions, key stakeholders and their interests need to be included and taken into consideration. As the research addresses settlement problems among very recent African immigrants, settlement agencies are the main providers of employment and career services. Examples include both larger, multi-service agencies, such as the Immigration Settlement Services of B.C. (ISSofBC), Mosaic and Diversity, as well as smaller ethnic-specific agencies. Due to the significant role these agencies play in helping newcomers settle into their communities, they require much consideration. Policy implications from this research can have an impact on how much funding agencies receive and what roles they are to carry out. As such, the majority of primary research will be based on interviews with, and experiences shared by settlement agencies.

The interests of funders, specifically under the Canada-British Columbia Immigration agreement, should also be taken into consideration. As mentioned previously, both the federal and provincial governments are committed through this agreement to monitoring and improving settlement services for immigrants. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation allocates and monitors funding through the BCSAP. There are four streams under the BCSAP, including Information and Support Services, Community Bridging Services, ELSA and Sectoral Support & Delivery Assistance (WelcomeBC, 2012). Specifically, settlement agencies can apply for funding by submitting requests for proposals (RFP) through these streams.

African immigrants as well as other immigrants are also stakeholders. African immigrants, of course, play a greater role as key stakeholders in this policy issue; however, policy implications for very recent African immigrants may lead to changes for other ethnic groups. Particularly challenging with this group is the wide range of educational, training, immigration status and cultural backgrounds. For this reason, various groups within the African population may want emphasis on certain issues (i.e.

accreditation) within the unemployment problem. As mentioned before, this research will focus on addressing issues that relate to the group as whole, as well as significant barriers among different groups in the African population.

The final group of stakeholders includes Canadian employers. Given the complexity and challenging nature of the policy problem, cooperation on the part of Canadian employers is important. Their cooperation may not be as crucial in addressing some barriers as it is for others. For example, employers could work in collaboration with settlement agencies to provide volunteer and training opportunities, in addition to paid employment positions. Policy implications could also affect the way hiring processes are run; for example, hiring policies could shift to offer more jobs to very recent African immigrants, as well as extending their training periods to help ease cultural adjustments.

## **4. Literature Reviews**

### **4.1. Racism**

Among the many challenges faced by very recent African immigrants is racism. Although the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms proclaims equality and freedom from discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, and other ascribed characteristics, some would argue that Africans have not yet been fully treated fairly. Several studies have been written on the treatment of African immigrants in the past, and make the point that Africans living presently in Canada still face racism in various aspects of their lives.

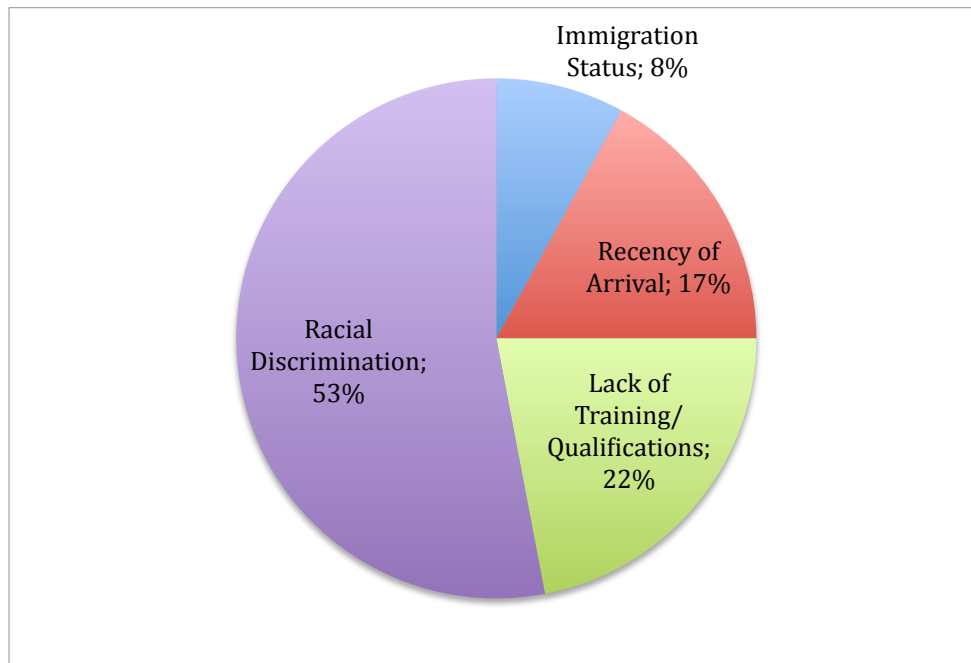
For example, Africans continue to deal with the mindset among immigration officials, not only from Canada, but also from other industrialized countries. These mindsets are reflected in the attitudes of officials towards applicants, including the kind of scrutiny they undergo, the rates of success among applicants and the services they receive at Canadian immigration offices in their countries (Olarinam and Williams, 1995). Furthermore, many Africans in Canada complain that there is a high rate of rejection of visitor visa applications by their parents and other immediate family members.

Those who received visas also complained of racist attitudes when they arrive at a Canadian port of entry. One participant, a British citizen, was refused entry into Canada and recounts how an encounter with Canadian immigration officers reveals discriminatory assumptions. According to the Canadian immigration officer, she “did not sound British” and had “an accent.” In this particular case, the supporting documents of her British identity, including a British birth certificate, were overlooked and ignored. As such, according to the immigration officer’s logic, having documents showing British citizenship was of less importance than sounding British. The British, according to the same logic, are not supposed to have an accent, and so, for failing to sound British while

having British documents, she had to spend a night in jail while her documents were being verified (Tetty, 2005).

In a Queen’s University study on Somali and Ethiopian refugees in Toronto, findings clearly revealed challenges with racial discrimination among the group. The study found that participants described their treatment in Toronto as being “marginalized and treated as ‘unwanted additions’ to the established order” (Danso, 2002). Other in-depth interviews revealed, however, the despair among Somali and Ethiopian refugees was partly caused by the lack of resources in the communities.

As the figure below shows, the study also reveals that the top cause of initial settlement problems identified by Ethiopians and Somalis was racial discrimination.



**Fig.1 Causes of initial settlement problems for Ethiopians and Somalis**

Respondents of the study identified four major factors as initial causes of settlement problems in Toronto. According to Fig.1, less prominent problems include immigration status as a refugee claimant (8%), recency of arrival (17%), and lack of training, skills, and education (22%). More than half of the respondents (53%) attributed the cause of initial settlement problems to discrimination based on ‘race’, ethnicity, and gender, as well as religion. To be more specific, participants in the study felt that, in



general, black Africans are not welcome, nor would they ever be accepted, as equal members of Canadian society (Danso, 2002)

The study further explains participants feeling that discrimination is largely to blame for the reduced socio-economic mobility and loss of status experienced by them since settling in Toronto. Given that a majority of respondents identifying racism as the most important cause of initial settlement difficulties, it suggests that Canada's local communities may not be as sufficiently prepared to accept newcomers as members, particularly those from black African origins, and treat them fairly.

## **4.2. Language**

Language is among the biggest barriers faced by very recent African immigrants in finding employment in British Columbia. A participant from a study by Gillian Creese, called 'Erasing English Language Competency: African Migrants in Vancouver, Canada' explains:

"Language is the first problem that non-English speaking Africans face because if you come here, you can't get a job if you don't know the English" (Creese, 2010).

The study goes on to further distinguish the specific problem areas with language: discrimination through accents and access to language services. As such, the study points out that those who come from non-English speaking African countries had trouble accessing language services in the initial years of arrival. Those who came from English-speaking African countries were faced with discrimination based on their accents, particularly when looking for work and trying to further their education.

The study points out that local educational institutions have disregarded English-speaking African's linguistic skills by directing them to ESL classes and creating required "professional English" classes to remould accents. Those told to enrol in ESL classes felt that their competencies in English were explicitly denied. The study also revealed that participants felt pressure to take ESL classes implied an inadequacy of participants' English skills, and the superiority of the local "standard English." Many African English-

speakers resisted the suggestion to take ESL classes, and those who did felt they were not useful. As one participant explains, it was a “waste of time” for most Africans:

“In VCC (Vancouver Community College), when I go there, I was like “I have my high school education at home”. I presented it to this lady, this lady said “what, this doesn't mean anything. We don't accept foreign documents here. We don't, you have to go to ESL”. Like I don't belong to ESL... Just looking at me, I belong to ESL. But I feel, ESL program is very low, very, very low, because I have been in adult education. I went there to see what they are doing there, and then I saw, it's really very low for me. You are just wasting your time” (Creese, 2010).

Similarly, another English-speaker with an M.B.A. from Nigeria, was taking additional courses at the University of British Columbia, where pressure was placed on her/him to learn the local Canadian accent:

“I come from West Africa, Nigeria. Our high school certificate, we use school certificate or general certificate of education, the GCSE of London. You come to this part of the world; they don't really evaluate it as a grade twelve or grade eleven. So they will still ask you to go back and get re-evaluated or to go and take English. It is an indirect way of telling you to go and change your accent...to change your way of speaking. They are trying to mold you from what you have been molded from, and recast you into the way it is suitable for them in this part of the world” (Creese, 2010).

Even more common than discrimination in educational institutions was accent discrimination in the labor market. Almost all participants in Creese's study identified African accents as a barrier to finding work. The study also points out that often times, employers would screen out African accents through phone conversations before offering an interview. This finding is consistent with other studies conducted in Toronto (Department of Justice, 2011). Moreover, many participants described a shifting of language competency perceptions between paper resumes and in-person interviews that were attributed to accent:

“ Because you just go and maybe somebody calls you on phone or for an interview. You are called for an interview, but then the accent comes in play. Because if you sent your resume, the resume doesn't speak. It has no accent. But now when they call, they hear an accent, then it changes” (Creese, 2010).

“Somebody reads your resume, just because you are not talking to him and they find it really good. So, they call you for an interview. And they are very excited when they are calling you for an interview. You almost think they are hiring you. But once you open up your mouth, and you have an accent, they kind of get discouraged. And you get all these ‘pardons’. And you are just wondering, which word, of all them, didn't he understand, really? And you just know it's almost intentional to put you down, just to know that, even if you are not taken, it's your accent. We won't hear what you are saying, so what do you expect from the rest, you know. An accent has always been a barrier” (Creese, 2010).

Although Canada is home to people with many different accents, participants in the study felt that there was a discriminatory attitude specifically towards African accents:

“There is a problem of the perceived accent acceptable to Canadians. And in the field of teaching that has put many people off. I mean, many people have been rejected employment because of one thing, an accent. It is perceived not to be right for Canadian children and it is more so if the accent is African and it is convoluted when it is from someone of color. Because the German can come with an accent, somebody from Quebec can come with accent, some from France can come with an accent, an Australian can come with an accent, British can come with an accent. But when it is an African accent then the eye brows are all up “(Creese, 2010).

Some participants also provided personal experiences where accents justified discrimination. For example, one warehouse worker wanted a promotion to an administrative position, where her work would be more in line with her experience in Zimbabwe. However, she was denied the position and told that her accent made her unsuitable for that type of work.

### **4.3. Difficulty Accessing Language Services**

The challenges facing those who come from non-English speaking African countries are different in nature. In a study based in Vancouver, it was found that African immigrants who came from French-speaking African countries were aware of Canada's official status as a bilingual country. As a result, they expected their command of French to be an asset in Vancouver. The realization that knowledge of French was not very

useful in British Columbia was a very big disappointment for many. One participant explains:

“Before I came here, you know, everybody say Canada is bilingual. Everybody can speak French, can speak English. So really when I came here for me it was French and English. So I have been surprised just to find that there is no French here” (Creese, 2011)

As a result, many very recent African immigrants are faced with the reality of having to learn a new language from the start. Learning another language while adjusting and understanding a new social and cultural environment is especially stressful and challenging, and requires a significant amount of resourcefulness, patience and the understanding of friends and strangers. One participant from the study based in Vancouver noted that although many Canadians are unilingual English speakers and unable to speak French, newcomers, despite their command of French, are often made to feel inferior because of their weak command of English (Creese, 2011).

As mentioned above, access to resources is particularly critical in the initial years of settlement. Studies have found that Africans, in particular, have not been accessing services such as language classes and employment counseling as much as other groups. For example, one study carried out by Queen’s University found that although many participants were not facing difficulties accessing language training at present, many did not receive reliable information on existing language services during the early stages of settlement (Danso, 2002).

Many of the participants also had no knowledge of multi-service settlement organizations. As such, most of them did not receive any assistance from these sources. The study also conducted interviews with service agencies and found that only a handful of their clients were of African origin. Furthermore, the study revealed that since larger settlement agencies are not African-specific, it is unlikely that they will be able to use the services of these organizations to any greater extent than they already have. (Danso, 2002)

In addition to challenges with accessing language services, many were discouraged from participating due to barriers such as entrance requirements and full-

time attendance requirements. Some African immigrants who participated in ESL classes were also not satisfied with the service. A study conducted in 1991 reveals that Somali-English students complained that ESL teachers could not speak Somali, thereby making it difficult for Somali students to benefit from the program. Others also complained that the classes are not interactive enough, making it difficult to practice in class, or that the programs were too short. Furthermore, it was noted that most language programs focus only on basic language skills, and do not go further in teaching specialized or industry-specific terms and language. Overall, studies show that the ability to improve English proficiency has been reduced by the lack of access to language services and the insensitivity to the cultural backgrounds of African immigrants (Opoku-Dapaah, 2006)

#### **4.4. Accreditation**

In addition to racism and language, the “brain waste” problem caused by accreditation cannot be ignored. Although a very complex problem, and beyond the scope of this research, it is still worth mentioning and discussing a few of the main points.

While the shortage of skilled labor continues to remain a problem in Canada, there is a significant brain waste caused by the complexities of recognizing foreign credentials and experience. There is an evident frustration among the African immigrant population with the non-recognition of credentials and experience. One participant from a study voices their frustration by asking: “What is so unique about this ‘Canadian experience’ every employer is always asking for?” (Danso, 2002)

In general, there is a lack of recognition of credentials, professional qualifications and training among visible minorities in Canada. As mentioned previously, immigration policies in Canada encourage applications from highly skilled migrants. However, the system of credentializing is a complex one, including multiple agencies; the federal government, provincial governments, post-secondary institutions, professional bodies and employers all take part in the process.

Many studies have been done on the matter, and have found a correlation between the value assigned the skills of specific professionals and their country of origin. One example used in particular to show the correlation focuses on medical doctors. Foreign-trained doctors who wish to practice in Canada must be evaluated on basic medical knowledge before being considered for licensure by individual provinces. In most cases this means that foreign-trained doctors must pass the MCCEE. The exam is offered four times a year, across Canada and is offered in English and French. The MCCEE was mentioned in a recent Canadian film, called *Doctors with Borders*, where applicants who had to repeat the examination many times were profiled. The film revealed that some were told by assessors of the examination that they did not speak English well enough or spoke it with an accent (Boyd and Schellenberg, 2005).

Once the MCCEE is passed, graduates of foreign medical schools are then required to have two to six years of post-graduate education at a Canadian university. In addition, foreign-trained doctors must pass the appropriate certification examinations of the College of Family Physicians of Canada or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. This process in total could take up to several years; for example, a family doctor from the Philippines took almost eight years to secure the accreditation needed to practice in Canada (Tetty, 2005).

Some foreign-trained professionals cannot dedicate this amount of time to receive accreditation, and as a result, work in lower-skilled jobs. In a study called "Re-accreditation demands and skilled labor flows: The paradoxes of professional migration", it was found that many do not practice medicine because of the accreditation process, including challenges with language (Boyd and Schellenberg, 2005).

Particularly for African immigrants, the accreditation system is a great barrier to finding employment. To support this, the following table displays the highest level of schooling for African and other immigrants.

	Africans	Asians	Caribbean and Latin American	U.S.A and Europe	Canadian born
<b>Men</b>					
Less than high school (%)	8.51	23.11	24.70	22.94	23.65
High school certificate (%)	9.42	11.08	13.15	10.15	15.26
Trades certificate (%)	3.05	1.96	4.64	6.81	5.51
Other non-university (%)	23.42	18.90	30.80	30.32	28.94
University (%)	55.57	44.96	26.70	29.78	26.63
<b>N</b>	1,868	9,685	4,052	18,464	26,846
<b>Women</b>					
Less than high school (%)	9.67	23.69	20.11	22.16	16.54
High school certificate (%)	12.83	13.10	13.73	14.87	17.89
Trades certificate (%)	2.88	1.64	4.07	3.50	2.95
Other non-university (%)	28.90	20.23	37.34	28.18	31.44
University (%)	45.72	41.34	24.75	31.28	31.18
<b>N</b>	1,076	7,814	3,540	11,588	18,332

**Table 1. Highest Level of Schooling for African Immigrants, Other Immigrants, and all Immigrants**

Source: African Diaspora in Canada

According to the above statistics, African immigrants have the highest level of university education when compared to other immigrants and Canadian-born. The numbers signal challenges that African immigrants might face with accreditation and the lack of Canadian experience in finding employment; a study was done to further

investigate this problem. The study based statistical analysis on the above numbers, where statistically significant coefficients of the interaction terms (country of origin \* educational level) were of interest. The study also looked at earnings differentials to support their findings. For example, the results show that the estimated return for a doctorate degree is 32.1 percent for Canadian-born men, 36.4 percent for U.S./European immigrant men, 30.3 percent for African immigrant men, 31.7 percent for Asian immigrant men, and 47 percent for Caribbean/Latin American Immigrant men (Boyd, 2005).

The study concludes that there were significant earnings gaps between African-born immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts. This gap exists despite the higher level of education among African-born immigrants in comparison to their Canadian-born counterparts. The study also found that there is an underutilization of skills, where African-born immigrants are less likely to be employed in a high-skilled occupation. Costs associated with skill underutilization were estimated in Canada to be at 10.9 billion dollars as of 1996 (Boyd, 2005). As previously discussed, other Canadian studies suggest the cause of such disparities are attributed to the existence of race-based barriers and the non-recognition of foreign credentials in the Canadian labor market (Boyd, 2005).

In summary, the recognition of foreign credentials is a significant barrier faced by Africans. As the data show, African immigrants have the highest proportion of university education among all immigrant groups as well as their Canadian-born counterparts. However, statistical studies have shown there is significant skill underutilization among the group, caused by both race-based discrimination and the non-recognition of foreign credentials. Although a significant barrier, research and policy changes should be made on an individual profession basis, which is beyond the scope of this research.

## **4.5. Canadian Experience**

In addition to the problem of credentials, Canadian experience as a requirement for work is another significant barrier faced by very recent African immigrants in finding employment. In Creese's study, most participants followed the advice of settlement



agencies, and sent out hundreds of resumes, but rarely heard back. This lack of response from employers made it difficult for newcomers to understand why a job was not attainable. However, when participants made more direct contact with the potential employer, the nature of the barriers became clear. Lack of Canadian experience was a typical reason given for the inability to get a job. A few participants shared their thoughts on Canadian experience as a requirement for employment:

“They look at what you have attained in Canada and not what you already had from back home”

“Ever since I came here I remember I have been faxing maybe some faxes, it might be twenty at times. I don’t get a response. Sometimes you are called for response, and then sometimes you are asked, ‘Did you do anything in Canada?’ Maybe when they find out that you haven’t done anything in Canada, they tell you we need a Canadian experience”

“The education people had in their own countries didn’t much help them to find a job as soon as they arrive in Canada. Because definitely they tell me that they are asked for Canadian experience in spite of their qualifications, skills, and the knowledge they have. They will always be asked for Canadian experience” (Creese, 2011)

In many cases, the lack of Canadian experience leads to the automatic disqualification from a job, regardless of education and other experiences. Accordingly, many of the participants from the study found the demands for Canadian experience to be very frustrating and irrational:

“Like here, it’s really very, very hard especially in Vancouver. Whenever you apply, they ask you for Canadian experience. And if you have never worked here, where will you get experience?” (Creese, 2011)

One strategy undertaken by a few participants to navigate the challenge with Canadian experience was to attain additional Canadian education. However, it was soon discovered by the participants that Canadian educational credentials was often times required to be supplemented with Canadian experience. One participant shares their experience:

“People will tell you--people told me, ‘If you get Canadian education, that will be much easier.’ So I said, ‘Oh right then.’ But that was not the whole story. It’s not just Canadian education. You need much more than that. Now they are telling me, ‘You need Canadian experience.’ So I said,

‘Give me a break! Where do I get Canadian experience?’ It’s right here! If I get employed, I will get it right here, you know” (Creese, 2011)

As the above experiences show, African newcomers are challenged with gaining Canadian experience in a place where it is often hard to do so. Some have tried furthering their Canadian education credentials through Canadian institutions, but have still faced rejections by potential employers based on their lack of Canadian experience. This has been a particularly frustrating barrier, as many feel a lack of opportunity to gain the proper Canadian experience.

## **4.6. Networks**

Another disadvantage faced by very recent African immigrants is the lack of powerful social networks. This is an important factor, particularly for very recent African immigrants seeking employment. In addition to facing challenging barriers with the non-recognition of foreign credentials and experience, as well as race-based discrimination, members of these groups must navigate their way through the social structures and connections in order to receive a position.

For example, a participant from a study based on barriers to employment among African immigrants, shares the narrative that even though he had the required qualifications, it was his connections that led to several job opportunities for him in his career. He explains that, in most cases, there was no competition because the job was not advertised. Essentially, no other search was conducted, and his powerful connections simply handed the job over to him. He also notes that: “it is not easy to build and maintain procedures that are truly meritocratic,” arguing further that “even the simple open posting (termed transparency) of job openings is easily subverted” (Boyd, 2005). Several years ago, he found a position which asked for a most unusual combination of experience and interests: “I learned that the job description was written to fit the individual whom the [organization] wanted to hire.” Based on his experiences and analysis, the participant asks a critical question. “If decisions [for example, hiring] will always come, in part, through social capital and networks, how do we ensure that the poor, the minority, the disadvantaged, get into the loop of the privileged?” (Boyd, 2005).

Networking becomes even more important in a place like British Columbia, where the African population is relatively small. Another of Creese's studies from 2011 called, 'The New African Diaspora in Vancouver', is a good example of this. In the study, 175 African immigrants are interviewed about various settlement challenges they face in Vancouver; throughout the interviews, finding employment is among the top challenges that is explored. One participant observes that not all very recent immigrant groups in Vancouver face the same pressures to acquire English language skills in order to find employment. The participant goes on to explain that some groups have large enough local networks that can assist them in finding employment, housing, and services. As a result, such newcomers can adjust to Canadian society through their ethnic network or community, which helps ease the initial transitions; in some cases, these networks and communities make it possible to live for the most part in one's native language. The participant uses their own personal experiences to explain the challenge with networks and community:

"Because everywhere I go for work, I find Chinese people, Phillipine people, Korean people; they didn't speak English but they have jobs, you know. I come back. 'You don't speak English.' I can tell you how many people there are, they don't understand English. I understand more than them" (Creese, 2011)

In places such as Toronto, where the African population is relatively larger, social networks have played a key role in helping very recent African immigrants with settlement challenges. Upon arrival to Toronto, very few Africans have friends, but those who arrived in more recent years had access to an established African community for support. For example, Somalis living in Toronto are known to be residentially concentrated in the city of Etobicoke, while Ghanaians and Nigerians are concentrated in North York and Brampton (Opoku-Dapaah, 2006).

Overall, networking through various other means poses a great challenge to those who have recently arrived in the country, and are struggling to find employment. In 2001, the first African-specific settlement agency was established in British Columbia through the efforts of a very small but committed group. It is a non-profit organization that was formed to support visible minorities with ethno-cultural barriers, including assistance with finding employment. Although it has taken several years, such

organizations have been helpful in creating networks, or connecting immigrants with various networks, particularly within the first period of arrival.

## **4.7. Settlement Agencies**

Although cultural networks and communities play an important role in assisting newcomers with settlement challenges, multi-service settlement agencies have also proven to be beneficial in finding initial employment. In Creese's studied, most participants had very few social contacts when they first arrived, and some turned to settlement agencies to help them with their challenges with finding employment. Specifically, settlement agencies helped with job search strategies and framed participants' experiences in the labor market. However, participants stated that most were encouraged to find 'survival jobs', where wage and previous training and experience were not important factors.

Furthermore, the lack of information regarding settlement agencies meant that many African newcomers are unable to access their services. A study of Somalis in Toronto in 1994 found that many were unaware of the services offered by Canada Employment Centers (Opoku-Dapaah, 1994).

## 5. Methodology

To investigate the barriers faced by very recent African immigrants in finding employment in B.C., primarily semi-structured interviews were used.

Data collection was predominantly qualitative in nature, and relied on interviews with settlement agencies and a government department. In total, three settlement agency representatives and one government department representative were interviewed in the Lower Mainland. All interviews were in-person and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Initially, plans were made to interview five settlement agencies, including both larger multi-service agencies, as well as smaller African-specific ones. After getting in touch with the larger agencies, it became clear that two of them were unable to offer interviews due to the lack of experience with African clients. Although the interview itself did not take place, the lack of experience with African immigrants was an important finding.

Interviews were chosen primarily for the purpose of generating in-depth and rich information surrounding such a complex problem. With semi-structured interviews, a researcher can elicit more in-depth responses and fill in information if the participant has a hard time understanding. Furthermore, extensive probing can also be used to collect detailed information. With this research in particular, it was necessary to interview settlement agencies in order to get an overview of the problem, and discuss policy alternatives with those who work in the settlement area.

Settlement agencies were chosen based on the level of interaction and work with the African population. For example, a few settlement agencies focus on B.C.'s larger Chinese population; for this reason, certain agencies were not approached for interviews. Similarly, government departments were approached based on experiences with employment barriers in B.C. and immigration. In addition, various positions in the settlement agencies were interviewed; the reasoning behind this was to get a good

understanding of the barriers through various levels of interaction with African immigrants. Interviewees include settlement workers and program managers.

Very recent African immigrants were not directly interviewed for two main reasons. The first is that a number of interviews are available with this population through other research; one example of this includes Gillian Creese's study from 2011, *'The New African Diaspora in Vancouver'*. The second reason is that settlement agencies work directly with a wide range of very recent Africans, including those who come from a variety of African countries and immigrant classes. As such, they can present a better overall picture of the employment challenges.

In analyzing the interview results, I will be following the thematic analysis technique. Specifically, after transcribing the interview, I will follow Jennifer Fereday and Eimear Muir-Cochrane's (2006) steps to thematic analysis:

Step 1: Develop the code manual

Step 2: Test the reliability of codes

Step 3: Summarize data and identify initial themes

Step 4: Apply template of codes and additional coding

Step 5: Connect the codes and identify themes

Step 6: Corroborate and legitimate coded themes

It is important to note that only interviews conducted with settlement agencies will be presented as a thematic analysis; the interview conducted with the government department will not. The reason for this is the government department representative was interviewed for information, rather than analytical purposes.

## **6. Interviews and Thematic Analyses**

As mentioned previously, the primary research focused on interviews with various settlement agencies and a government department. For analytical purposes, interviews with settlement agencies are presented below in the form of thematic analyses. More specifically, transcriptions from the interviews were studied and presented in a way that captures the main and re-occurring themes. The interview with the government department is not presented as a thematic analysis, as it was used for information purposes. Given the detailed level of questions being asked, the government department representative did not feel knowledgeable enough answering questions directly related to the research questions. All interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 2.

### **6.1. Interview 1**

This interview was held with the Director of a settlement agency.

#### **6.1.1. *Theme 1: Barriers to Employment***

Throughout the interview, several barriers to employment were mentioned. Language was the first barrier mentioned by the interviewee. Furthermore, it was also explained that the organization is attempting to address this barrier by offering several conversational classes.

“So we try to have them help them find jobs, we network with them to find jobs, to get English training, to get training. They are not able to speak English, as it is not their first language” (Person X, lines 51-53)

In addition to language, the lack of proper skills and accreditation were also mentioned as barriers. As explained by the interviewee, many arrive in Canada with minimal skills, which makes it difficult to gain even entry-level positions; and those who have the education or training are not recognized.

“They lack substantial trainings to go to you see. I’ve been trying to dig in to the opportunities, which are there. You don’t always find just one. For example, that’s why we started creating this skills development program to help some of them who cannot access the services which are not there, because some of them back in their country, they were like, tellers, they were sewing dresses to make a living. But now that they’re here, it’s not possible for some of them to get this kind of job, and we have some of them who were educated, they were engineers, they were teachers, and now here they have this problem because of accreditation they are not certified, it’s not recognized.” (Person X, lines 165-175)

The above quote also highlights the differences that various groups within the African population face in finding employment in British Columbia. Although there are general barriers faced by very recent African immigrants, there are also differences based on training and education also exist.

Further to this, the interviewee also mentioned specific barriers faced by very recent African refugees.

“Some of them are refugees because they’ve been in refugee camps for a very long time in Africa, and are being transferred to Canada. And then also having multiple barriers because of that, because they have a government loan to pay. Some of them, they came here, and they were sponsored by the government, so when they come here they have to pay it back. So it’s a lot of burden for them who have to learn language at the same time and pay these things” (Person X, lines 146-153)

Another barrier mentioned was cultural differences. This was an interesting point as it had not come up in previous research. The point was made with respect to how employers meet the needs of immigrants, particularly those from Africa.

“What most employers do is that they don’t even understand the black cultural differences that they have with most of these Africans. With the African people, some of them think like just yeah, the first thing that you need to have is somebody who can speak English who can articulate much more, much more you know, like a Canadian can do. They do need



more time to prepare themselves, in how they make sentences. For example, they might need about one second to think before they speak, so as an employer, you need to know that. The next thing they need to know is that when you employ these people, it's not how they speak, you need to give them some time on the job, before then you start assessing what they are doing, how far they are going. More or less, what we have here in some job places is they just have what they call it, work mentors, who is with them, but it should be more or less a kind of relationship. There should be someone they can build a relationship with, because the African people take a lot of time to open up. They might be a little bit slow, but most employers might think that actually these people are weak in the things they say, and the way they reason. So there is a kind of, a missing aspect there, that most employers are missing in how they deal with these people" (Person X, lines 255-276)

Overall, this theme is important in highlighting the barriers that had been mentioned in other literature pieces. This theme was also central for undertaking policy options and recommendations for addressing the issue of unemployment among very recent African immigrants.

### **6.1.2. Theme 2: Funding**

Lack of funding was central to the discussion. Several examples were used to explain how the organization has been held back by funding challenges, when trying to help very recent African immigrants.

"As you can see, it's not enough to accommodate the number of clients which we serve. Also, we have problems with funding, which is a very big issue for us. That's why we had to move to the space there, to accommodate about 30 or 50 people which we have at once come into our program" (Person X, lines 80-84)

"I am the side manager but then I have to jump in and do resumes and start connecting some of them to get jobs, which, you know it's just because I have the passion to do what I'm doing, but normally, we need to have employed staff doing just that then it runs much more quickly" (Person X, lines 244-248)

"That is really an issue, which I think, that agencies which are in the community, for example, like our's, we have the expertise, but we lack the funding. to build that kind of hub, that kind of network where they can actually meet here, they can go and do small, small, jobs, which can enhance their own skills to really access the market. We don't have that kind of funding, and that is something that we are able to offer these small

kind of programs, that we can help most of these people facilitate that kind of Canadian experience which most of them need. And this is absolutely lacking” (Person X, lines 206-214)

Overall, funding was a reoccurring theme that came up in this interview, and is something that will be taken into consideration when giving policy recommendations.

### **6.1.3. Theme 3: Partnerships and Collaboration**

In this interview, the need to work and collaborate with organizations was mentioned a few times. Partnerships seemed to be especially crucial in dealing with the lack of funding and resources, while continuing to meet the needs of a growing clientele.

“It all takes place from here and we just had a partnership with the central library because we have facilities here. We have computers as you can see, but it’s not enough to accommodate the number of clients which we serve” (Person X, lines 78-81)

This particular interview was done with a smaller, community-based organization that had much experience working with the African population. Interestingly, challenges faced by immigrants with larger, multi-service organizations were brought up; suggestions were also made as to how smaller organizations can collaborate with the larger organizations to help immigrants more effectively.

“I am talking about them because they are mostly over-crowded and to go there, to sit there, nobody is attending to them. They are not even able to tell them where they can get even, temporary jobs. That is really an issue, which I think, that agencies which are in the community, for example, like our’s, we have the expertise, but we lack the funding. We build that kind of hub, that kind of network where they can actually meet here, they can go and do small jobs, which can enhance their own skills to really access the market. We don’t have that kind of funding, and that is something that we are able to offer these small kind of programs, that we can help most of these people facilitate that kind of Canadian experience which most of them need. And this is absolutely lacking. Most agencies are just thinking about having the people, building the resumes, and sending them out to look for jobs, but there’s no meeting point where these people can come to and say ok, if I come to -----, I’m sure I will get a job which is not fully a job, but I can get that Canadian experience. Some of them, majority of them want to work. There’s no hope for that. So we are thinking that we are solving the problem by building resumes, training them, but we are forgetting that an important component is to create a kind of a hub where

these people can meet and start gaining that Canadian experience, which is there” (Person X, lines 203-224)

“That is exactly what I am talking about and these guys just get frustrated, you know because there’s nobody that they can connect to and then they just get thrown out. And we are like the guys who are the first stop for most of these people. It will be very advantageous for us to get that funding so we can provide the service and prepare them before they go to these big agencies. You see, so that we receive these people and we prepare them, and then we send them there” (Person X, lines 235-242)

Overall, collaboration with larger settlement agencies is an important point that was raised, as it can help alleviate the challenges faced with the lack of funding. In addition, smaller, community-based organizations can work towards providing expertise connected to specific ethnic groups, as well as creating a “hub” where very recent African immigrants can network and build relationships.

## **6.2. Interview 2**

This interview was held with the Director of a settlement agency.

### **6.2.1. Theme 1: Barriers to Employment**

Similar to previous interviews, language was a key barrier mentioned by the interviewee. More specifically, the lack of English skills and challenges with accents were discussed as being barriers.

“ Language is the number one factor. That’s number one. With the language, you actually may have the accent that is a factor because you may be from Ghana or from Nigeria, but your accent is still difficult to understand. Yeah, so that’s a big challenge for them. And I know in Africa, it’s a big part” (Person Y, lines 453-459)

Education and training were also important and mentioned as significant barriers to employment. This point was also used to further describe the complexity of the challenge, as very recent African immigrants include a wide range of backgrounds, skills and education levels. For example, refugees often times not only lack certain skills and education levels, but cannot prove the existence of skills and education due to missing paper work.

“Other than language, you have the, I will say, the educational background because many of them who came as refugees or sometimes doesn’t have that level or degree, so education is a problem. Ummm..or if they have education, it’s another type of education. An example is sometimes you use computer here, but in Africa you are not using computer. So basically, here you are using a computer in High school, but in Africa, not often. It’s when you come here; you still have to go through that process, even if it’s for a customer service job. You still have to go through that process. So that’s the education part of it.” (Person Y, lines 459-468)

The above quote also points out the differences that various groups within the African population face in finding employment in British Columbia. Although there are barriers faced by the very recent African population in a general sense, differences based on training, education and experience exist.

One barrier that was more universal among the African population included cultural and social shock. Upon the initial years of arrival, very recent African immigrants have challenges adapting to new environments and learning new social norms. This becomes a challenge especially while balancing other important aspects of their lives, such as family. One example was shared where an African employee did not attend work due to a sick child at home, and failed to notify the employer. Although not all would have responded this way to the situation, it shows the challenge with applying new social and cultural norms, while adjusting to a new environment.

“The last one would be, social. So by this it means that it goes from the culture, or where you came from, living in an environment where you’re used to work or not or if your family is balanced or not. Because when you come here, there’s a cultural shock. And it’s how you deal with that, and how you manage all that. That is a big factor.” (Person Y, lines 498-503)

Finally, networks were a re-occurring barrier that were mentioned by all interviewees. This point is crucial, as networks are one barrier that distinguishes the African population from other ethnic groups. For example, larger ethnic groups, such as the Chinese and Indians, have immediate social networks to turn to upon arrival. This is an important factor, since many immigrants end up finding connections to work through their own cultural networks. Due to a lack of networks, the role that settlement agencies play as a place for networking is very important for the African group.

“Networks are key. Newcomers, you will struggle because you don’t have a network. You have to have a network, I mean, you have to be open, you have to speak the language, so you have to have all of these actually to have a network. So if you don’t have a network, it will be difficult for you, same thing, most jobs, you get them through connections and relationships. So, if you cannot make relationships, you have trouble getting a job. So actually that’s a very big one. Lack of network.” (Person Y, lines 518-526)

Overall, five main barriers were discussed in this interview. Barriers such as training and education pointed out the complexities of working with such a diverse group of people. Barriers such as cultural adjustments, as well as networks applied to the group in a more general sense, with networks being a key barrier. Language was also mentioned as being important, and included challenges with accents.

### **6.2.2. Theme 2: Funding**

The lack of funding was also central to this discussion. As with other settlement agencies, the topic of funding was a re-occurring one throughout the interview. The example below is an illustration of funding-related topics brought up in the interview.

“Ok, so now, we used to have implement services here this year until May, but the government of BC has a new program now for implement services. So we lost the funding for implement services, but eventually next year we’ll be back to still offering implement services with some partners” (Person Y, lines 416-420)

Overall, the funding challenge is one that is beyond the scope of this project. However, as mentioned in this interview, as well as others, partnerships with larger settlement agencies could be a policy alternative that could help ease the funding challenge.

### **6.2.3. Theme 3: Improving Current Programs**

During the interview, two suggestions were made on how integration for very recent African immigrants can be improved. The skills connect program was mentioned, which focuses on higher-skilled immigrants assisting them with training and getting Canadian work experience. The type of immigrants the program focuses on included

professionals such as engineers and accountants. Similar to the skills connect program, it was suggested that a program be created to help those with a lower skill set gain Canadian experience.

“So, I’m not aware of other programs, but I will encourage that there be more investment in that type of program because, I mean, there is nothing better than volunteering and gaining that experience. One of the things I say the most is that it takes away all the pressure, because the day you sign a job, you sign a contract, there is pressure. You see. But volunteering takes away all that pressure. You know that you can leave any time, you know that if you don’t like the thing, you can leave. So, of course, we encourage people to volunteer, but at the same time, organizations have to go and look for volunteers. The government should fund programs that allow volunteers to work in certain organizations” (Person Y, lines 576-586)

In addition to the above suggestion, improving the ESL program by introducing an internship component to it was also discussed.

“So basically, ESL is good, but I think we should have some type of training with ESL, like training for people to learn English in the social environment or in the job, not just in the classroom. Yeah, so ESL classes should help with that portion of internship. I think that would be a great idea to have. So at every level, you have to do two weeks in an enterprise, or something like that. Yeah, the more I think of that, the more I love that idea. You know, because I learned English from traveling, not from sitting in a class” (Person Y, lines 613-621)

Overall, both suggestions are helpful in addressing the unemployment challenge among very recent African immigrants. However, further analysis is required to assess both with respect to criteria such as effectiveness, fairness and cost-effectiveness.

### **6.3. Interview 3**

This interview was held with a program administrator at a settlement agency.

#### **6.3.1. Theme 1: Barriers to Employment**

Similar to the previous interviews, several barriers to employment were discussed. General barriers faced by the African population as a group included

marketable skills and language. It is important to mention that these barriers apply to the group as a whole, as later barriers that apply to certain groups within the African population were discussed.

Much emphasis was placed on marketable skills and language through direct contact and experience with very recent African immigrants. This interviewee in particular had the chance to work directly with very recent African immigrants and learn about their challenges in finding employment.

“The biggest barrier would be marketable skills, and then language is also there. Yeah, that would be the main issues that were pressing for them. We used to have a skills training program many years ago, where a lot of our GAR clients were able to have access. But those programs have been gone for almost 10 years now” (Person Z, lines 696-700)

In addition to marketable skills and language, barriers for skilled African immigrants include lack of Canadian experience. The distinction was made with this barrier, as many very recent African immigrants, particularly refugees, arrive in Canada without basic work skills. As such, the focus for this group should be on training basic skills and learning the English language. Once an immigrant has been trained and can speak the language, focus should be given to gaining Canadian experience. However, those who arrive in Canada with both work and language skills (i.e. skilled workers) should devote more focus to gaining Canadian experience.

“I would say that lack of Canadian experience is more an issue for our skilled workers. They have already the education and the qualifications. A lot of our African immigrants that have our, that fall under the refugee category, have a lack of training. So, they’re really starting from nothing. First thing first, English and skills training, then Canadian experience” (Person Z, lines 730-735)

The final barrier pointed out by the interviewee was an important one, as it shows the challenges that arise even after finding employment. Settling in a place that is so different culturally and socially, many very recent African immigrants are faced with the challenge of finding stability in their new lives while maintaining a job. The example given in the interview is one of many that point to the on-going challenge with employment in the initial years of settlement.

“But even if you get them on the job, there’s still a lot of strategies that need to be in place to stabilize them. Because at home things are still a little chaotic. Someone may get sick, and they come from a large family, they have to miss work. The shift, because it’s so early in the morning, when the shift starts, there’s no bus yet. Or if they work late, when they finish, there’s no more bus. So there’s a lot of challenges. They may get a job, but because there’s not enough resources for them to actually fulfill the job, the success is somewhat hampered by that” (Person Z, lines 798-807)

Overall, the barriers mentioned in this interview are similar to the ones mentioned in other interviews. However, an important point was raised in that different groups within the African population have different needs, especially in the initial years of finding employment. Furthermore, policies in place should take into consideration challenges that very recent African immigrants continue to face once employment has been found.

### **6.3.2. Theme 2: Funding**

Similar to other interviews, funding was an issue that was raised. Although not central to the discussion, the theme was brought up to show the limited resources that settlement agencies have to work with in addressing complex problems such as unemployment.

“But, the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, which is the funder for our employment programs, did an RFP this year, and as I mentioned, we lost the funding. So, basically, a good chunk of our employment programs will be gone after March. My department, specifically, is also an employment program, but we are housed under the settlement contract. So, we will continue, but the employment program that is funded under employment will probably be 70% gone. So that will be a huge loss for a lot of our immigrant clients” (Person Z, lines 645-653)

As previously mentioned, the issue of funding is beyond the scope of this research project. However, it is a reality faced by all settlement agencies, and factors in to policy decisions.

### **6.3.3. Theme 3: Employment Programs**



Given the interviewee's experience, much of the discussion was focused on previous programs that were made available to very recent African immigrants. More specifically, the interviewee had much experience with various pilot programs aimed at helping immigrants, with the majority being from Africa, find employment in the Lower Mainland.

Three programs were discussed, the first being similar to the existing Skills Connect program. To give a brief overview, the Skills Connect program aims at matching up skilled immigrants with employers, while offering training and opportunities to gain Canadian experience. Such a program has been found to be effective, but is only available to a certain group of higher-skilled immigrants, including accountants and engineers.

It was also discussed that making a similar program available for lower-skilled workers could be very beneficial. In fact, a program was available through the agency ten years ago to very recent African immigrants, which proved to be effective.

“Before we had hospitality training, painting and decorating, warehouse, resident care aid, home support. I mean those are entry level positions that require training and certification, because even for like a good warehouse job, it would be nice if they had forklift training, first aid, not to mention language training and then the self-management skills they would learn to function in a Canadian environment, like you know problem solving and teamwork. I mean of course they do that in their country, but not in the Canadian environment, so when they don't have the chance to practice that here, they don't actually have the formalized courses..it's really hard for them to get a good entry job that would pay a living wage. So, that's a really big challenge” (Person Z, lines 702-713)

In addition to training, the interviewee discussed a pilot project that was launched to help immigrants, many of whom were from Africa, find entry-level positions. Although proven to be very effective, such a program is not sustainable due to limited time and resources. As such, elements from the program could be applied to help very recent African immigrants find employment.

“But you know, my department, for example, when we got funded in 2007, our goal is to serve the under-served population, which is mostly the GAR population, especially back in 2007 we had a lot of African clientele, and we have tried different methods. For example, we tried to market them to

employers. We tried to, they can't attend the job search classes, because their English is too low or their work experience is very little. So really you need to bring them to the store, bring them to the mall, instead of in the classroom, teaching them how to job search. You're basically teaching them in life how to approach employers. We have tried a few of those techniques, but you can't do that for every client. If you have one councilor who has a target of 20 a month, in a year 240, and serving really high needs, it's not sustainable. So we've tried with a few, because you know, it's like a pilot project. So we were testing what is possible. So that was working. People were getting jobs through that. They managed to get past the front door. There's a lot of preparation though--you're explaining to them how to do it, you're preparing their resume, you're telling them about the company, what they do. You really explain it from the beginning. You don't take anything for granted. And so you do a field trip to the mall, for one or two clients, and then you demonstrate how it's done. For most of them you get some employers that are very willing to help. We go to Value Village, to Zellers, Home Depot, to Walmart and then we do that. We also have for Costco, we have food demonstrators. Those are not livable wages or hours, but they're getting a taste. They're getting Canadian experience" (Person Z, lines 769-794)

In addition, the settlement agency also worked closely with several companies to ensure employment for their clients. As a result, it was agreed that several of these companies would adjust their qualifications and training processes to accommodate for various needs.

"So we even managed to contract with the company that contracts with Costco to do the food demonstrations, to somewhat adjust their orientation best, food safe course, and we got their cooperation and they value helping this group of refugees" (Person Z, lines 794-798)

The final program discussed had to do with preparation for interviews through classes that focused on appearance and presentation in front of potential employers. An existing program, called "dress for success" is made available to women; however, it was discussed that no such options are made available to men.

"Some of the same clients, when I had first seen them, and then years later I'll see them in the streets, out in Metrotown and their look has changed from the geeky provincial look they have when they first arrived to the gangster look that they now sport. I do wonder whether or not that has a negative impact on them, because it's not a positive image change. It's not the Canadianized look; you know, if I was an employer I would feel

somewhat unsettled. I had this client, really tall and quiet, from Sudan. He looks really nice and innocent when he first came. And years later I saw him in Metrotown, and yeah, he was sporting a gangster rapper kind of look. I wanted to take him aside or take him to a store, or just get rid of his gold chain and his baseball hat. And you know, I don't know whether or not he missed the workshop on presentation and wardrobe. I wish there were a lot more services that were available for them. You know for women, we have a program called "dress for success", so if you're looking for work, and you don't have clothes for work. You can go there and they will outfit you for one interview. From head to toe, your shoes, your purse, your shirt, they will outfit you. They coach you a bit on makeup and how to present yourself. Colors--because you know for some cultures, like red is a good color, but going into an interview, wearing a red suit, some people are like, it's too much. But there's a counterpart with that for men, with work gear, but that's outfitting you if you're going for a job in construction, and not for interview clothes and such. And I wonder, there aren't many clients of ours that are successful in accessing it" (Person Z, lines 818-843)

Overall, the programs discussed in this interview are very helpful in assessing various policy alternatives. Particularly, such insight is crucial as they are based on personal experience with very recent African immigrants.

## **7. Policy Objectives, Criteria and Measures**

The goal of this research paper is to enhance or create policies that will help very recent Africans find employment more easily during the first five years of their settlement in B.C.

In analyzing research done through literature reviews as well as interviews with settlement agencies and a government department, three policy objectives stood out. Although several barriers to employment among very recent African immigrants were brought up, four barriers, which policy objectives are based on, will be analyzed. Specifically, the barriers that will be directly addressed include access to settlement services, networks, Canadian experience and training.

It is also important to note that policy objectives, along with the alternatives, will be addressed primarily to very recent African males. In doing much of the literature reviews, as well as the interviews, it became clear that very recent African women face somewhat different challenges in finding employment in B.C., and would require further, more extensive research.

Barriers such as racism will not be further analyzed or discussed since results from literature reviews are not consistent with results from interviews with settlement agencies. Interviews with African immigrants pointed to a problem with racism when applying for work, whereas discussions with both African-specific and multi-service agencies consistently mentioned racism not being a barrier to employment.

Similarly, interviews with African immigrants in literature reviews pointed out basic challenges with ESL classes, such as full-time requirements. In doing further research into the ESL classes and discussing the matter with a representative from a government department, such challenges seemed to be inconsistent. For example, ESL is offered in a variety of schedules, to accommodate for various life circumstances. In addition, the ESL program is very vast and would require further research in order to

determine what type of improvements could be made to help the African population acquire English skills more effectively.

Access to ESL classes was another challenge raised in the interviews with African immigrants. Although an important issue, the interview with a representative from a government department showed inconsistencies with this challenge. The representative worked closely with programs available for vulnerable groups, and was surprised to learn of the challenge with accessing ESL classes. Due to inconsistencies, further research is required in this area; as a result, policies recommendations for this paper will not focus on this challenge.

Finally, accreditation is another barrier that requires further research and focus. Although a very important barrier, it is one that is very complex in nature and requires much analysis.

Due to the inconsistencies in the above-mentioned barriers, the policy objectives examined in this research will focus on barriers that were strongly supported by both literature reviews and interviews. These barriers include: access to settlement services, networks, Canadian experience and training. As such, policy alternatives will address the following objectives:

- Allow settlement agencies to make the most effective use of resources in order to help very recent African immigrants find work in B.C.
- Improve or create network opportunities for very recent African immigrants
- Improve opportunities among very recent African immigrants for Canadian work experience

## **7.1. Objective 1**

**Objective 1: Allow settlement agencies to make the most effective use of resources in order to help very recent African immigrants find work in B.C.**

In conducting interviews, it became very clear that funding and lack of resources was a on-going issue faced by all settlement agencies. Furthermore, in a few interviews, the importance of collaboration and partnerships with various groups and organizations

was also mentioned. One interviewee in particular mentioned the importance of collaboration with other organizations, including other settlement agencies, to provide for the needs of their clients. Given the challenge with limited funding and resources, policies and guidelines can play a role in ensuring resources are used in the most effective way possible.

For example, in trying to set up interviews with larger, multi-service agencies, it became very clear that they do not have a significant African clientele; only one out of three of the multi-service agencies had enough experience to provide an interview. Furthermore, the one settlement agency that was able to provide an interview dealt with African GAR's, as it is standard for GAR's to go through their welcome house. Despite the lack of African clientele, such agencies were equipped with more appropriate resources to meet the needs of a large group of very recent African immigrants.

On the other hand, smaller African-specific agencies had a large number of African clients, but were faced with very limited resources. As such, in order to provide the most effective services for very recent African immigrants, policies need to be in place in order to address the resource problem.

### **7.1.1. *Alternatives and Criteria Measures***

Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo: The status quo refers to the current situation, where many of the very recent African immigrants continue to turn to smaller, African specific-agencies for employment services. These smaller agencies have limited resources, and frequently cannot provide the needed services.

Furthermore, the fact that only one out of three, larger multi-service agencies had sufficient experience with the African population to provide an interview speaks volumes. The one agency that was prepared to offer an interview gained much experience through their jurisdiction over GARs; more specifically, through the "Welcome House", GARs are directed to that specific agency for initial settlement services. In addition, the remaining multi-service agencies were not contacted due to their focus on larger ethnic groups living in B.C., such as the Chinese population.

The status quo also includes the current resource scarcity among larger, multi-service agencies. For example, it was discussed in an interview with a smaller settlement agency that a few of their current clients had tried to turn to larger settlement agencies for services, but were often frustrated at the long waits and lack of available services. Moreover, in interviewing the larger settlement-agency, lack of resources was also a strong theme.

2. Defining roles and Collaboration: This would include defining specific roles for multi-service agencies and African-specific agencies in a way that will alleviate the resource problem, when it comes to meeting the needs of very recent African immigrants. For example, African-specific agencies provide an initial place for information and basic training skills; while larger, multi-service agencies are a second-stop, for more advanced language and employment training.
3. Marketing campaign for multi-service agencies aimed at very recent African immigrants.
4. Increase government funding, particularly for smaller, African-specific agencies, to meet the needs of their African clientele.

In order to assess the above alternatives, the criteria in Table 2 will be used. Furthermore, each criterion will be scored relative to the other alternatives under the same objective.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Cost</b>	Financial expense to implement the policy; primarily capital and operating costs.	\$ High(1)/Med(2)/Low(3)
<b>Equity</b>	Whether or not the policy alternative helps create a more equal opportunity for very recent African immigrants to find work, in comparison to the all very recent immigrants.	High (3)- alternative has a direct impact on equity (i.e. improves individual's education, skills or experience directly) Med (2)- alternative has an indirect impact on equity (i.e. does not improve individual's education, skills or experience directly) Low (1)- alternative has neither a direct or indirect impact on equity
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Extent to which policy alternative can dedicate the appropriate time and resources to employment services aimed at assisting very recent African immigrants in finding employment.	High (3)-Increase in both time and resources available to helping very recent African immigrants find employment Medium (2)-Increase in time or resources available to helping very recent African immigrants find employment Low (1)-No change in the time allocated and resources available to helping very recent African immigrants find employment.
<b>Administrative Complexity</b>	Extent of administrative requirements.	High (1)- Requires the involvement of more than 4 additional organizations. Medium (2)- Requires the involvement of 2-4 additional organizations. Low (3)-Requires the involvement of 1 or less additional organizations.
<b>Political Feasibility (Provincial, Federal)</b>	Level of acceptance among key stakeholders.	High (3)-Acceptance among Provincial and Federal Medium (2)-Acceptance among Provincial or Federal Low (1)-No acceptance

**Table 2. Objective 1 Criteria Measures**

## **7.2. 7.2. Objective 2**

**Objective 2: Improve or create network opportunities for very recent African immigrants**



A lack of networks for African immigrants is a barrier emphasized in both the literature reviews and all interviews. Given the focus is on Africans who have been in Canada for five years or less, networks play a key role in helping newcomers settle into their communities. Specifically, networks can offer a place for newcomers to learn about job training and opportunities, while allowing them to make important contacts. Many Africans who were interviewed in Gillian Creese's study, *'The New African Diaspora in Vancouver'* commented that it is especially hard to find work in a place like Vancouver due to a small African network. Furthermore, unlike larger ethnic groups living in the Vancouver area, Africans have a harder time accessing information related to training and employment upon their initial years of settlement. Networks could play a crucial role in disseminating information related to training, language classes as well as other settlement services.

Furthermore, networks provide for a place where newcomers turn to in times of difficulty and instability. As a result, networks play a key role in helping newcomers find work, while also providing support throughout the initial stages of employment. As discussed with one of the settlement agencies, the employment challenge for very recent African immigrants does not end with a job offer. Many have considerable challenges maintaining stability in their new lives, which can often times interfere with work.

### **7.2.1. Alternatives and Criteria Measures**

Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo
2. Focus on community events and a website planned for Africans living in BC
3. Use existing ethnic-specific agencies for network opportunities

In order to assess the above alternatives, the criteria in Table 3 will be used. Furthermore, each criterion will be scored relative to the other alternatives under the same objective.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Cost</b>	Financial expense to implement the policy; primarily capital and operating costs.	\$ High (1)/Med (2)/Low (3)
<b>Equity</b>	Whether or not policy alternative helps create a more equal opportunity for very recent African immigrants to find work, in comparison to all very recent immigrants.	High (3)- alternative has a direct impact on equity (i.e. improves individual's education, skills or experience directly) Med (2)- alternative has an indirect impact on equity (i.e. does not improve individual's education, skills or experience directly) Low (1)- alternative has neither a direct or indirect impact on equity
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Extent to which policy alternative can create on-going networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants.	High (3)-Creates on-going networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants. Medium (2)- Creates temporary networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants. Low (1)- Does not create networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants.
<b>Administrative Complexity</b>	Extent of administrative requirements.	High (1)- Requires the involvement of more than 4 additional organizations. Medium (2)- Requires the involvement of 2-4 additional organizations. Low (3)-Requires the involvement of 1 or less additional organizations.
<b>Political Feasibility (Provincial, Federal)</b>	Level of acceptance among key stakeholders.	High (3)-Acceptance among Provincial and Federal Medium (2)-Acceptance among Provincial or Federal Low (1)-No acceptance

**Table 3. Objective 2 Criteria Measures**

### **7.3. Objective 3**

**Objective 3: Improve opportunities among very recent African immigrants for Canadian work experience and training**

Canadian work experience and training was listed among the main barriers in both literature reviews and interviews. All interviewees mentioned the challenge with getting Canadian work experience, including volunteer positions. Training, especially for entry-level positions, were scarce.

One existing program, called the Skills Connect Program, focuses on training those immigrants with professional backgrounds. Specifically, the Skills Connect program helps immigrants by offering the following:

- Assessing English language skills, academic qualifications, technical skills, essential skills, career management skills, and financial means
- Identifying short and long term employment goals
- Developing individualized career action plan Information and referral to appropriate services

Although a very successful program, it does not meet the needs of those with lower-level skills. One interviewee discussed a program that used to be available through their agency, where immigrants were offered trainings in hospitality, painting and decorating, and resident care aid. This program was said to be successful in helping many African immigrants get jobs, particularly entry-level positions. Similar to the previous program, suggestions were made by the interviewee to introduce programs that focus on forklifting training, first aid and self-management.

Furthermore, with such a diverse group, different Africans will have different needs. For example, someone with existing training may need to focus more on gaining Canadian experience, whereas someone with very little training may need to initially focus on developing basic skills. For this reason, focus needs to be given to both Canadian experience, as well as training; in particular, research shows that trainings focused on entry-level positions are lacking. This is a significant problem for many Africans who arrive in Canada from refugee camps, or from countries that lack resources such as computers. As one interviewee explained, *“in Canada you are using a computer in high school, but in Africa, you are not using one very often. It’s when you come here that you still have to go through that process, even if it’s for a customer service job”*.

### **7.3.1. Alternatives and Criteria Measures**

Alternatives for this objective include:

1. Status Quo
2. Training for entry-level positions
3. ELSA to incorporate volunteering/Canadian experience

In order to assess the above alternatives, the criteria in Table 4 will be used. Furthermore, each criterion will be scored relative to the other alternatives under the same objective.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Cost</b>	Financial expense to implement the policy; primarily capital and operating costs.	\$ High (1)/Med (2)/Low (3)
<b>Equity</b>	Whether or not policy alternative helps create a more equal opportunity for very recent African immigrants to find work, in comparison to all very recent immigrants.	High (3)- alternative has a direct impact on equity (i.e. improves individual's education, skills or experience directly) Med (2)- alternative has an indirect impact on equity (i.e. does not improve individual's education, skills or experience directly) Low (1)- alternative has neither a direct or indirect impact on equity
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Extent to which policy alternative can increase training and work experience opportunities for very recent African immigrants who do not have existing programs meeting their current needs (i.e. Based on existing education level, training, skills).	High (3)- Increase in training or Canadian work experience for very recent African immigrants whose current needs have not yet been addressed. Medium (2)-Increase in training or Canadian work experience opportunities for very recent African immigrants whose current needs have already been addressed. Low (1)- No increase in training or Canadian work experience opportunities for very recent African immigrants whose current needs have or have not yet been addressed.
<b>Administrative Complexity</b>	Extent of administrative requirements.	High (1)- Requires the involvement of more than 4 additional organizations. Medium (2)- Requires the involvement of 2-4 additional organizations. Low (3)-Requires the involvement of 1 or less additional organizations.
<b>Political Feasibility (Provincial, Federal)</b>	Level of acceptance among key stakeholders.	High (3)-Acceptance among Provincial and Federal Medium (2)-Acceptance among Provincial or Federal Low (1)-No acceptance

**Table 4. Objective 3 Criteria Measure**

## **8. Analysis**

### **8.1. Objective 1**

Objective 1: Allow settlement agencies to make the most effective use of resources in order to help very recent African immigrants find work in B.C.

#### **8.1.1. *Status Quo***

As referred to earlier, the status quo for this objective includes a current situation where very recent African immigrants have been turning mostly to smaller, ethno-specific agencies for employment services. Accordingly, interviews with smaller agencies have revealed a great struggle with meeting the needs of the African population due to a lack of resources and expertise.

On the other hand, larger, multi-service agencies are also facing a lack of resources, but have the advanced expertise and capacity to meet many of the group's needs. For example, an interview with the larger settlement agency revealed experience with an employment program from the past that had showed positive results in finding employment, particularly for the African population. In addition, the larger settlement agencies are equipped with teams of professionals, such as employment coaches and counselors to help immigrants find work.

#### **8.1.2. *Defining Roles and Collaboration***

Given the lack of resources, collaboration with larger settlement agencies and smaller ethno-specific agencies could be very fruitful. The ethno-specific agencies provide much experience with the African population, and can assist larger agencies understand issues such as cultural and social barriers. Furthermore, ethno-specific agencies have more initial contact with ethnic groups, such as the African population.

Due to a lack of resources and capacity at the ethno-specific level, larger agencies can provide the professional services that are required, particularly in the later stages of finding employment. As discussed in one of the interviews, smaller agencies can provide an initial contact point for very recent African immigrants, where contacts can be made and information gained on various aspects of settlement. For example, information and guidance could be made available on issues like education and accreditation services; smaller agencies can also continue to provide conversational classes and other initial settlement services. Once made more familiar with the settlement process, very recent African immigrants can be referred to larger agencies to receive more professional services such as employment counseling.

### **Cost**

Specifically, cost refers to any additional administrative and operating costs that would have to be incurred as a result of implementing this alternative. Although some additional costs would have to be incurred, it would most likely happen as an initial administrative cost, and would therefore be counted as a sunk cost. The initial cost would include items like wages and materials for setting out specific duties and functions for the agencies.

Similarly, agencies themselves may incur initial administrative costs for setting and carrying out their specific roles.

Since the cost for both the government and agencies is incurred only once, and does not include any capital costs, this alternative is rated as “low” for cost.

*Score: 3/3 (Low)*

### **Equity**

Defining roles could lead to more efficiency among settlement agencies, thereby creating better employment services for very recent African immigrants. However, this alternative does not directly improve chances for employment.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for equity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to how well an alternative can improve the resource efficiency among employment services, which would result in an increase in both time and resources available to very recent African immigrants who are looking for employment.

As such, this alternative would help create a systematic approach to helping very recent African immigrants find employment, by setting out specific roles; smaller agencies could provide an initial point of contact for Africans, where information on matters such as furthering education and accreditation could be made available. In addition, smaller agencies should continue providing conversational classes, which have proven to be successful. This would result in a comfortable place where very recent Africans can turn to for information and advice on various matters, while also creating friendships and connections. As suggested in an interview, smaller agencies would provide a “hub” for very recent African immigrants.

Once very recent African immigrants have become more familiar with the Canadian labour system, smaller agencies would refer them to larger agencies for services such as employment counselling and interview coaching. This is an area that larger agencies would have more experience and capacity.

As a result, this alternative would allocate time and resources more efficiently among the agencies, while addressing the challenge in a systematic approach. Since both time and resources would be allocated more efficiently, this alternative is rated as “high” for effectiveness.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

As alluded to in the cost criteria, administrative requirements would exist with this option, particularly in the initial stages of implementation. Specifically, one additional



organization or government department would be involved in determining and implementing the specific roles

As a result, this alternative is rated as “low” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 3/3 (Low)*

### **Political Feasibility**

Since the Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement has committed both the federal and provincial governments to improving the effective delivery of settlement services, this alternative should be politically feasible. However, since the alternative targets specifically very recent African immigrants, political feasibility may be hampered at the provincial level by the fact that other ethnic groups are being left out. For example, since Africans account for a small proportion of immigrants in B.C., it may not be politically feasible at the provincial level to implement policies focused solely on the group.

For these reasons, this alternative is rated as “medium” for political feasibility.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **8.1.3. Marketing Campaign**

A marketing campaign could be used to increase the number of very recent African immigrants who initially turn to larger, multi-service agencies for employment services. This alternative is based on the finding that two out of three multi-service agencies were unable to provide interviews due to the lack of experience with the African population. One multi-service agency was able to provide an interview due to its experience with GAR's. More specifically, the “Welcome House”, which is run by the agency, is the first stop for almost all GAR's.

Also in doing interviews, it became clear that most immigrants find out about services through word of mouth. Furthermore, there are websites available for newcomers to access for further information on various agencies and services available. All agencies interviewed had a website that was relatively easy to find.

As such, a marketing campaign could go beyond having a website, and include television, radio and newspaper campaigns. These, in addition to word of mouth, could increase the number of very recent African immigrants who are made aware of multi-service agencies.

### **Cost**

The cost of a marketing campaign includes both capital and operating costs. For example, creating a television or radio advertisement would require initial capital costs to create the advertisement, as well as operating costs to air them. Newspaper advertisements are similar, but lower in cost.

It is hard to rate this alternative, as marketing campaigns can range in cost, depending on how extensive the campaign is. However, given that most agencies only have websites available, it is assumed that at least an additional medium, such as television, radio or newspaper will be used. Depending on how many mediums are used and how extensive the advertisements are, this alternative is rated as “medium” for cost.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium-High)*

### **Equity**

A marketing campaign aimed at increasing very recent African clients for multi-service agencies could lead to more expert employment services. This could indirectly help the African population increase their chances for employment.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for equity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to how well an alternative can improve the resource efficiency among employment services, which would result in an increase in both time and resources available to very recent African immigrants who are looking for employment.

This alternative presents two challenges in meeting the effectiveness objective. First, marketing campaigns have been, in general, effective in exposing target groups to various messages, while also changing behavior. However, this is most often the case with groups that are very well studied by marketers before carrying out marketing campaigns. Research on target groups is crucial to designing a successful marketing plan; given that there have not yet been focus groups or surveys done on the African population, it is hard to tell how challenging such a campaign will be. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that exposure to a message will lead to a change in behavior (i.e. stop smoking or start purchasing a product).

Secondly, increasing the number of very recent African immigrants who turn to multi-service agencies upon their initial interactions with settlement agencies, may not necessarily meet the effectiveness objectives. For example, very recent African immigrants may turn to multi-service agencies initially, and feel overwhelmed and frustrated with some of the complexities of a larger agency. Furthermore, this alternative could worsen the situation by over-crowding multi-service agencies. An interviewee from an African-specific agency describes the frustration with multi-service agencies, "I am talking about them because they are mostly over-crowded and to go there, to sit there, nobody is attending to them. They are not even able to tell them where they can get even, temporary jobs".

Given that marketing campaigns may not change behavior, and may in fact lead to over-crowding and less efficient resource and time allocation at the multi-service level, this alternative is rated as "low" for effectiveness.

*Score: 1/3 (Low)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Similar to cost, administrative complexity depends on the complexity of the marketing campaign. However, in a general sense, complications with translating advertisements into various African languages as well as accessing mediums such as the radio or television need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, a committee or an organization would have to take on the responsibility to do the marketing, while collaborating with other organizations.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Political Feasibility**

There are no foreseeable issues surrounding political feasibility with a marketing campaign.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for political feasibility.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **8.1.4. Increase Government Funding**

The issue of funding was a significant and re-occurring theme in almost all interviews. Particularly, smaller agencies described the challenge with being unable to meet the needs of their large African clientele. Particularly, agencies felt that budget constraints were preventing them from helping very recent African immigrants find employment. For example, many smaller agencies did not have the space to accommodate the number of African immigrants in their conversational classes.

Although all agencies had concerns over budget constraints, smaller agencies had the biggest challenge meeting the needs of their very recent African clientele as a result. For this reason, this alternative focuses on increasing funding to smaller, African-specific agencies.

### **Cost**

The cost for this alternative includes whatever increase in funding is awarded to agencies, as well as the opportunity cost of lost funding for other services. Since funding would have to be re-allocated, other services will lose funding. Furthermore, increasing funding is not limited to one African-specific agency, but includes several in British Columbia.

For the mentioned reasons, this alternative is rated as “high” for cost.

*Score: 1/3 (High)*

### **Equity**

Increasing funding to smaller, African-specific agencies would lead to better employment services for very recent African immigrants. Depending on how the funds are allocated, this alternative will most likely have an indirect impact on equity.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for equity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to how well an alternative can improve the resource efficiency among employment services, which would result in an increase in both time and resources available to very recent African immigrants who are looking for employment.

Increasing funding to African-specific agencies would allow them to dedicate more time and resources to helping very recent African immigrants. However, increasing funding to African-specific agencies will not allocate resources more efficiently among all agencies. This alternative will not change the current reality of multi-service agencies, which lack very recent African clientele. This alternative will, in fact, increase the number of very recent African immigrants turning to smaller agencies.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for effectiveness.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Since this alternative includes increasing funding to smaller agencies, assessment criteria and analysis would have to be done to determine how much more agencies would receive. Furthermore, allocating funds from other services also needs to be analyzed.

As such, this alternative is rated as “low” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 3/3 (Low)*

### **Political Feasibility**

Although this alternative would work towards improving settlement services for African immigrants, many other ethnic groups would be left out. As a result, feasibility is high with regards to improving settlement services for Africans, but low at the provincial level with regards to excluding other ethnic groups. For example, since Africans account for a small proportion of immigrants in B.C., it may not be politically feasible at the provincial level to implement policies focused solely on the group.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for political feasibility.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

## **8.2. Objective 2**

Objective 2: Improve or create network opportunities for very recent African immigrants

### **8.2.1. Status Quo**

Currently, the African population in Canada is concentrated primarily in Ontario, with 59% of all Canadians of African origin living in that province in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Unlike Ontario, the African population in British Columbia accounts for approximately 8% of the total population, with approximately 25,000 African immigrants living in B.C. in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2001).

As such, networking has been a key challenge among Africans who settle in B.C. In particular, African immigrants in Gillian Creese’s study remarked on the non-existence of networks. Many expressed that the current situation, particularly in Vancouver, is very challenging as they have very weak networks to turn to for the exchange of information on matters such as employment opportunities and resources. It was also mentioned that

many other ethnic groups, because of their large numbers have an automatic advantage at finding employment due to networks.

### **8.2.2. African Campaign**

Similar to a marketing campaign, an African campaign can be launched to create opportunities for Africans living in B.C. to gather and make connections. Examples would include various community events, websites and online networking options.

The idea behind this alternative is that Africans will gather at larger events, which take place on a fairly regular basis, to meet other Africans and continue to create their own networking opportunities as a result. Events would also allow spaces for very recent African immigrants to get connected to various settlement and employment services fairly quickly.

#### **Cost**

The cost for this alternative would include initial capital costs for setting up a website, which would include an online networking platform for Africans. Initial costs would also include whatever planning costs and capital costs would be needed to plan, advertise and carry out events. A team would also have to be formed in order to take on this task, which would also be included in the cost.

Depending on the complexity and frequency of events, this alternative is rated as “medium” for cost.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

#### **Equity**

Increasing network opportunities could lead to potential job opportunities. However, this is not a guaranteed outcome for the majority of very recent African immigrants who attend networking events. Furthermore, this alternative does not directly improve areas such as training, education or Canadian work experience.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for equity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness for this objective measures the extent to which a policy alternative can create on-going networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants. The importance of “on-going” opportunities stems from the necessity of being able to turn to networks whenever is necessary, as different African newcomers will have varying needs at different times.

Given that events may not be held regularly, on-going networking opportunities may not be created. A website, however, would create an opportunity to network online more regularly.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for effectiveness.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Implementing this alternative would require coordination and planning. As a result, a committee would have to work specifically on creating and managing the website, as well as planning events, while collaborating with other organizations.

As a result, this alternative is rated as “medium” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Political Feasibility**

This alternative would not improve settlement services directly, towards which both the federal and provincial governments are working. For this reason, political feasibility may not exist at the federal level. Provincially, African events can contribute to other areas of interest such as B.C. tourism and multiculturalism.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for political feasibility.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*



### **8.2.3. Networking Through Ethno-Specific Agencies**

In many of the interviews, it became clear that very recent African immigrants turn to ethno-specific agencies for networking opportunities. For example, many use the space and resources as a hub where they can interact and learn from others, while establishing connections. This, however, is not the focus of ethno-specific agencies. Instead, creating network opportunities has rather become a minor role that ethno-specific agencies have taken on.

As such, this alternative suggests that African-specific agencies take on a more direct role in establishing on-going networking opportunities. African-specific agencies can continue to focus on providing employment services, while dedicating more focus on creating a network hub for newcomers. This alternative is related to an earlier alternative that suggested ethno-specific and multi-service agencies collaborate together to ensure efficiency among limited resources. In this situation, roles would be defined for African-specific agencies; for example, that they provide basic settlement services, including conversational classes and settlement information, while focusing on creating a networking hub. In order to do this, African-specific agencies would be responsible for providing networking spaces and organizing networking events.

#### **Cost**

The cost for this alternative would be primarily administrative in nature, and would be incurred mostly as an initial cost. For example, roles for African-specific agencies would have to be re-defined to include a focus on networking. Once this is established, costs would be at a minimum in comparison to other alternatives.

As such, this alternative is rated as “low” for cost.

*Score: 3/3 (Low)*

#### **Equity**

Creating a hub where very recent African immigrants can share advice and information, while making connections, can help increase employment chances for the

group. However, this alternative does not directly improve areas such as training, education or Canadian work experience.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for equity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness for this objective measures the extent to which a policy alternative can create on-going networking opportunities for very recent African immigrants. As mentioned previously, the main focus with this criterion lies with the on-going nature of networking opportunities.

The focus of this alternative is to provide a networking space, as well as regular networking events for very recent African immigrants. In addition, networking would be clearly laid out as a focus for African-specific agencies.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for effectiveness.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Implementing this alternative would require re-defining roles for African-specific agencies and planning on the part of the agencies. Specifically, agencies would have to shift some of their focus on improving a networking space and planning events. However, many already have experience in this area, making ease of implementation fairly straightforward. At most, this alternative would require the guidance of selected officials through a government department.

As a result, this alternative is rated as “low” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 3/3 (Low)*

### **Political Feasibility**

This alternative works indirectly towards improving settlement services, which is something that both the federal and provincial governments are working towards.

Due to the indirect impact on improving settlement services, this alternative is rated as “medium” for political feasibility.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **8.3. Objective 3**

Objective 3: Improve opportunities among very recent African immigrants for Canadian work experience and training

#### **8.3.1. *Status Quo***

Canadian work experience and training are listed among the top barriers in both literature reviews, as well as interviews. All interviewees mentioned the challenge of obtaining Canadian work experience, including volunteer positions. Training, especially for entry-level positions, is also scarcely available.

Only one program exists to help immigrants gain training, called the Skills Connect Program. However, the program focuses only on professional backgrounds. Previously, programs offering training for entry-level positions have proven to be successful, but no longer exist. No programs exist to help those with lower skills gain Canadian work experience. Furthermore, in doing interviews, training for entry-level positions was a particular concern for those working with very recent African immigrants.

#### **8.3.2. *Training for Entry-Level Positions***

As previously mentioned, only the Skills Connect program exists to help immigrants update credentials and work skills. It has proven to be successful, but does not focus on entry-level positions. In doing interviews with settlement agencies, it became clear that there is a great need for entry-level skills training among very recent African immigrants. This alternative focuses on a program that would equip newcomers in areas, such as forklift driving, hospitality and customer service training.

## **Cost**

The cost of creating a new program includes both capital and operating costs. For example, costs would have to be incurred for similar things as starting up a business; this would include costs related to employees, facilities and materials. Furthermore, costs would continue to be incurred throughout the existence of the program.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for cost.

*Score: 1/3 (High)*

## **Equity**

The existing Skills Connect program is only meeting the needs of those with higher-level skills. As such, creating a program where basic, entry-level skills are taught can equip Africans with the skills required to take on an initial job.

Due to the direct impact on improving work skills, the alternative is rated as ‘high’ for equity.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

## **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness criterion for this objective differs from the others as it focuses is on creating equal training and work experience opportunities for all very recent African immigrants, regardless of education or training backgrounds. More specifically, it measures the extent to which a policy alternative can increase training and work experience opportunities for very recent African immigrants who do not have existing programs meeting their current needs.

Due to the great need for entry-level training, this alternative meets a crucial gap that exists with respect to helping very recent African immigrants find employment in B.C. More specifically, it meets the needs of those who cannot benefit from the Skills Connect program.

As a result, this alternative is rated as “high” for effectiveness.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Due to many administrative and governmental procedures, this alternative would be fairly difficult to implement, especially in comparison to other alternatives. For example, a government department would have to be involved with the creation and implementation of the program. Similar to the Skills Connect program, the program would be overlooked by a government department, but would be administered by a couple or a few agencies working together.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Political Feasibility**

This alternative would have a direct impact on improving settlement services in B.C. For this reason, both the federal and provincial governments would benefit from creating such a program. Furthermore, it would help other ethnic groups struggling with similar employment challenges.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for political feasibility.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **8.3.3. Incorporate Canadian Experience Component into Existing Programs**

Similar to training programs for entry-level positions, very few organized opportunities exist for newcomers to gain Canadian work experience. Some settlement agencies that were interviewed discussed some efforts made to set up volunteer opportunities with various organizations, but did not focus on this area due to lack of resources. Instead, it was suggested during interviews with settlement agencies that a

Canadian work experience aspect could be very useful, particularly if it is integrated into an existing program that already serves very recent African immigrants.

This alternative suggests integrating work experience opportunities into other established programs, such as ELSA. In particular, ELSA attracts many newcomers, and has some focus on preparing newcomers for the workforce, specifically with training on language specific to the Canadian workforce.

### **Cost**

The cost of integrating a work experience aspect into existing settlement programs, such as ELSA, includes primarily operating costs. For example, costs would have to be incurred for contacting and organizing work experience opportunities with various organizations, and administrative costs for adjusting the ELSA to include work experience opportunities. Capital costs would be at a minimum, as many of the costs have already been incurred with the existing program.

As such, this alternative is rated as “medium” for cost.

*Score: 2/3 (Medium)*

### **Equity**

Since many very recent African immigrants are lacking Canadian work experience, this alternative would help create better chances at finding work. However, it is important to keep in mind that gaining Canadian experience will not be the initial focus of all very recent African immigrants. Upon arrival, some will initially focus on developing language and training skills before gaining experience. Nevertheless, this alternative would have a direct impact on improving Canadian work experience for many very recent Africans.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for equity.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **Effectiveness**

Since there are no current programs providing Canadian work experience opportunities, this alternative would meet the needs of a large proportion, if not all, very recent African immigrants.

For this reason, this alternative is rated as “high” for effectiveness.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

### **Administrative Complexity**

Due to many administrative complexities, especially when integrating into an existing program, this alternative would be fairly difficult to implement. Furthermore, the existing organization would have to collaborate with more than four other organizations to create work experience opportunities.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for administrative complexity.

*Score: 1/3 (High)*

### **Political Feasibility**

This alternative would have a direct impact on improving settlement services in B.C., and would, as a result, gain support of both the provincial and federal governments.

As such, this alternative is rated as “high” for political feasibility.

*Score: 3/3 (High)*

## 9. Recommendations

In doing the analysis, it is important to note that the intended recipients of this report were taken into consideration when assigning criteria. For example, cost, effectiveness and administrative complexity are deemed to be important to the provincial and federal government. Given that the purpose of this research is to create more work opportunities for very recent African immigrants, equity is also an important criterion.

It is also important to note that recommendations are aimed specifically at very recent African males. In doing the research, it became clear that female Africans face various other challenges, including inequalities between men and women, which would require further focus and study.

With the above points in mind, analysis of the alternatives resulted in four recommendations:

- to have African-specific and multi-service agencies collaborate and set more defined roles to ensure better resource efficiency
- to use African-specific agencies as a “hub” where very recent African immigrants can network
- to create a program that focuses on training immigrants for entry-level positions
- to incorporate a Canadian work experience aspect into existing settlement programs, such as ELSA

The first recommendation is related to the first objective, which aims to allocate limited resources and expertise among settlement agencies in such a way that would lead to better employment services for very recent African immigrants. The table below shows that, in comparison to others, this alternative was more favorable in terms of cost, effectiveness and administrative complexity.



Options	Roles and Collaboration	Government Campaign	Increase Government Funding
Criteria			
Cost (/3)	3	2	1
Equity (/3)	2	2	2
Effectiveness (/3)	3	1	2
Administrative Complexity (/3)	3	2	3
Political Feasibility (/3)	2	3	2
<b>Total (/15)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**Table 5. Objective 1 Rated Alternatives**

This objective stemmed from comments made by various settlement agencies about the lack of resources, funding and expertise. More specifically, the African-specific agencies had a large proportion of very recent African immigrants, but do not have the appropriate resources to meet their needs. On the other hand, larger settlement agencies do not get as many very recent African clients, but have the appropriate expertise to help with the latter stages of finding employment. As such, roles need to be defined in such a way that would allow African-specific agencies to be the initial point of contact for very recent African immigrants, by informing them of Canadian credentials, education and training. Furthermore, smaller agencies can continue to provide conversational classes and provide workshops on resume writing. Multi-service agencies can gain from smaller agencies' experiences with very recent African immigrants, and be the second point of contact. More specifically, multi-service agencies can provide very recent African immigrants with important expertise, such as employment counseling. The idea of collaboration among settlement agencies is something that has been discussed and suggested in many studies. As explained in a study by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, "mainstream agencies can gain the experience and specific expertise of ethno-specific agency workers and ethno-specific agencies gain the resources of larger organizations" (George, 2002).

The second recommendation is in response to the second objective, which aims to improve or create on-going network opportunities for very recent African immigrants.

The table below shows that, in comparison to others, this alternative was also more favorable in terms of cost, effectiveness and administrative complexity.

Options	African Campaign	Networking through Agencies
Criteria		
Cost (/3)	2	3
Equity (/3)	2	2
Effectiveness (/3)	2	3
Administrative Complexity (/3)	2	3
Political Feasibility (/3)	2	2
Total (/15)	10	13

**Table 6. Objective 2 Rated Alternatives**

The recommendation to use African agencies as a “hub” for networking is related to the first recommendation to define agency roles. In addition to providing information and basic employment services, smaller agencies can naturally focus on creating an environment where very recent Africans can share information and make connections with one another. This would also imply that the smaller agencies’ focus would shift to creating events and bringing in various speakers to create more extensive networking opportunities.

The third and fourth recommendations are related to the third objective, which focuses on creating better training and work experience opportunities for very recent African immigrants. The table below shows that both alternatives rated fairly well; although the cost of implementing a Canadian work experience component in existing settlement programs is more favorable, the administrative complexity is more favorable for an entry-level training program.

Options	Entry Level Training	Canadian Experience through Existing Programs
Criteria		
Cost (/3)	1	2
Equity (/3)	3	3
Effectiveness (/3)	3	3
Administrative Complexity (/3)	2	1
Political Feasibility (/3)	3	3
Total (/15)	12	12

**Table 7. Objective 3 Rated Alternatives**

Although both alternatives may not be implemented at once, each recommendation addresses a critical problem among the group in finding employment. As mentioned previously, the Skills Connect program addresses the needs of very recent African immigrants who are skilled in higher level jobs; the needs of those with lower skill levels, including many refugees, are not being met. As such, a program that equips immigrants with entry-level skills, such as forklift training, can increase the chances for many whose needs are not currently being addressed. Furthermore, Canadian work experience opportunities can help all very recent African immigrants; specifically, gaining work experience is a priority for those who already have the skills and are ready to find immediate work. It is important to note that incorporating the work experience aspect into the ELSA program was based on a suggestion from an interview; further research would have to be done to ensure that ELSA would be the appropriate program to implement a work experience aspect in.

## 10. Conclusion

Unemployment among very recent African immigrants is a problem that needs to be addressed, especially given the steady increase in immigrants from Africa. Canada is one of the leading countries with advanced immigration and settlement policies in the world; in addition, with an increase in immigration to other countries, many will be looking to Canada for best practices and policies on immigration. Although the unemployment problem presents itself across Canada, the focus of this research was on British Columbia. Specifically, alternatives were targeted towards settlement agencies and services, which fall primarily under provincial jurisdictions. Furthermore, due to limited resources and funding, settlement agencies were most accessible in B.C. Similarly, the reality of B.C. is much different than, for example, the reality of Ontario, which has naturally lead to recommendations specific to the province. A similar approach could be taken to assess and analyze the unemployment situations in other provinces in Canada.

Primarily, research was based on literature reviews and interviews with settlement agencies. Case studies were also an option, but were not accessible. All settlement agencies assumed to be working with African immigrants were contacted; interestingly, two out of three multi-service agencies were unable to provide interviews due to a lack of experience with very recent African immigrants. Furthermore, one African-specific agency could not provide an interview, due to its closure during the course of the interview process. The interview process presented much insight into the reality and struggles of settlement agencies; for example, it became very clear that the majority of very recent African immigrants do not turn to multi-service agencies as a first point of contact.

In conducting interviews, focus was also given to research questions surrounding policies that should be in place specific to Africans as a general population. Questions specific to refugees were discussed, but did not lead to suggestions that were specific to

the group. However, one interviewee revealed that many refugees are lacking work skills, and could benefit from entry-level skills training. As such, further research could focus specifically on the various needs of different groups within the African population, with recommendations being made specific to those groups.

Finally, research done through literature reviews presented barriers to employment that were not consistent with interview results. For example, racism was a significant barrier described by African immigrants themselves; in doing interviews, settlement agency officials did not necessarily agree. As a result, further research should look into barriers such as racism and access to ESL. In addition, language as a barrier was mentioned in some interviews as well as in the literature review; however, due to inconsistencies, and the scope of the problem, more research should be done on the area of language. For example, interviews should be held with ESL instructors, as well as very recent African immigrants to learn more about the challenges faced with ESL. Accreditation is also a barrier that cannot be ignored, and should be examined more closely; the scope of this research was unable to encompass such a topic.

Overall, the recommendations stem from efforts to answer the research questions; interview questions were formulated with the research questions in mind. Although interviews did not present a clear answer to the questions, it became clear that some differential, as well as similar needs exist among the African population. For example, many refugees are lacking work skills and would benefit from a training program aimed at lower-skilled positions; on the other hand, all very recent African immigrants can benefit from more networking opportunities and improved employment services. As a result of the complexity of the issue, only a few barriers that were consistent in both the literature reviews and interviews were addressed. At a minimum, such a complex problem requires further focus and research on the areas suggested previously, including racism, accreditation, language and access to ESL classes.

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## **Appendices**



## Appendix 1

**Table 1: Canada-Permanent Residents by African Source Country**

Source Country	2008	2009	2010
Morocco	3,906	5,221	5,946
Egypt	2,314	2,486	4,305
Algeria	3,228	4,785	4,124
Nigeria	1,837	2,661	3,268
Ethiopia	1,473	1,212	1,746
Mauritius	691	840	1,402
South Africa, Republic of	1,227	1,316	1,349
Tunisia	900	1,164	1,229
Cameroon	959	872	1,224
Somalia, Republic of	750	988	1,194
Cote-d'Ivoire, Republic of	681	649	1,024
Congo, Democratique Republic of	1,133	1,247	971
Ghana	770	675	745
Eritrea	470	662	744
Sudan, Republic of	723	455	618
Kenya	567	558	590
Senegal	454	465	539

Source Country	2008	2009	2010
Libya	402	380	502
Burundi	390	464	486
Zimbabwe	597	527	478
Rwanda	288	337	339
Uganda	221	225	254
Benin, Republic of	172	280	234
Togo	154	174	211
Tanzania, United Republic of	230	134	202
Burkina Faso	125	140	162
Madagascar	83	147	149
Sierra Leon	66	54	149
Mali	136	128	131
Djibouti, Republic of	48	60	120
Zambia	69	74	117
Chad, Republic of	93	82	82
Botswana, Republic of	61	26	74
Gabon	93	70	62
Niger, Republic of	69	57	52
Angola	70	59	51
Congo, Republic of	53	45	50
Mauritania	41	45	44

Source Country	2008	2009	2010
Gambia	33	11	41
Malawi	51	38	39
Namibia	37	59	26
Liberia	16	30	25
Central Africa Republic	10	11	14

Source: CIC 2010

## Appendix 2

### Interview Transcripts

#### Interview 1

1. Interviewer: So I've actually recently found out about your organization
2. through -----, I wrote them an email asking maybe what organizations
3. could help me. So maybe if you're ok with it, we could start off by talking a
4. little bit about what your organization does, like what services they
5. offer..that type of thing?
6. Person X: yes, our organization is actually working mostly with new
7. immigrants, refugees and newcomers who have newly arrived in (Surrey)
8. actually. Our agency is actually umm..targeting clients who are also new.
9. Our agency is also like kind of the first stop for most new refugees,
10. immigrants and newcomers in BC. We have programs ranging from umm
11. zero to six, that means mothers with their kids, which we run hand in hand
12. with ----- and ----- . With this program, women come and they get taught
13. how to kind of get connection and they do have access to community
14. services like dental care, counsellors and all of those things. And most of
15. these women come from different countries and about 27 nationalities
16. which we have here, so it's a very very big population. And these women
17. also we have them, they have health problem and some of them have

18.been traumatized and some of them have been they've got multiple  
19.barriers in accessing the job market and different aspects like that. Most of  
20.these people have been professional in their countries, but when they  
21.reach Canada, they get depressed and traumatized or stigmatized  
22. because of their new home and they have several different issues to deal  
23.with. so what we try to do is we try to bridge that gap in which these  
24.people are having in the community. That's just one program. Next to that  
25.we have the six to thirteen program; that is for children. This is mostly for  
26.immigrant children or children of some of these mothers who attend our  
27.program who have problems with their homework club. We do have the  
28.summer camp as well when kids are here, they play and they have games  
29.and they do a variety of activities which are mostly intellectually and uhhh  
30.we have a lot of programs to help these kids, some of them will be coming  
31.from war-torn places like Sudan and Somalia and even middle east, so we  
32.have all of these kids here and we have child uhhh child workers who work  
33.together with them and a series of volunteers to help with these programs,  
34.and next to that, next to that program we have the thirteen to twenty-four  
35.program, that is mostly for the youth. And this program is mostly oriented  
36.also that we have kids who are coming out of school who have difficulties  
37.to learn and some of them have multiple barriers as well in the educational  
38.system which is new to them, so we have homework club, so we meet  
39.here after school for three days and on Saturdays as well, just like the  
40.children's program, they meet here two days and on Saturdays they also  
41.stay here. Uhh..in the mornings and then the youth program begins from  
42.3-6pm in the evening. These are very very big programs; it's been very

43.very successful, we've had a lot of youth who come from the community  
44.and are taking part in our programs and it's mostly all uhh youth driven,  
45.in the sense that we have these programs in the afternoon because most  
46.of our youth attend our program, these programs are mostly run after  
47.school, just to keep them away from trouble and then next to that, we  
48.have the outreach program. With the outreach program, our outreach  
49.worker goes to the community and try to bring out most of these  
50.immigrants and refugees who have been kind of like uhh excluded from  
51.the system, so we try to have them help them find jobs, we network with  
52.them to find jobs, to get English training, to get training. They are not  
53.able to speak English, as it is not their first language, so we have a  
54.whole host of activities that we do then. We have computer programs  
55.where we bring them, teach them how to write their resumes; there are  
56.several things that can facilitate their integration in the community. It's  
57.more about empowering them; that's basically what we do here, and  
58.then errr next to that we have the literacy program. With our literacy  
59.program, we do have English basics. Among them for example we have  
60.the conversation class, where most the women they meet and the men,  
61.who are coming to that program, they discuss, more or less, just talking  
62.and then expressing themselves in trying to gain some self esteem

63.because most of these people they come from they have problems in  
64.expressing themselves, and in this program they do also computing on  
65.thursdays and Tuesday is basically everyone working on the computers.  
66.They learn how to type, they learn how to use the computer because  
67.some of these people they have never seen a computer in their life, so  
68.we give them the opportunity to gain their skills and to know what it is  
69.and through that we have some of them to write their resumes and then  
70.to get out, so they can go to the community and look for jobs.

71.I: Ok, so you do outreach; you sort of connect them with...

72.X: with other different services which are in the community.

73.I: Right, Right

74.X: and we try to expand that as well in house.

75.I: So you offer services here as well

76.X: Yes.

77.I: Like computer classes, some conversational classes...

78.X: Yes, yes. It all takes place from here and we just had a partnership

79.with the central library because we have facilities here..we have

80.computers..as you can see, but it's not enough to accommodate the

81.number of clients which we serve, and also we have problems with

82.funding, which is a very big issue for us, so that's why we had to move

83.to the space there; to accommodate about 30 or 50 people which we

84.have at once come into our program.

85.I: Wow.

86.X: so that's one step of it, and then we have the skills development

87.project which just began. The skills development project is also a kind

88.of project that we have for women who are able and interested in

89.sewing and who want to start their own business.

90.I: Oh wow.



91.X: Yes, these women, we do receive donations from the city, like used  
92.banners and all of that kind of things that they need. So those women  
93.they produce things like handbags, scarfs, and then we sell them to  
94.sustain the programs. Because some of these programs ,we don't have  
95.any funding for it, so what we do is sell those things, maybe \$10 or \$15  
96.to meet us with the expenses of paying the instructor who's paying the  
97.women.

98.I: Oh that's such a great idea. So innovative!

99.X: Yeah. Yeah. That's how we're doing. So we're walking on other  
100.partnerships to see how we can get funding for it. It's not been easy,  
101.but our intentions is to have as much women and men as possible  
102.can come to this program, the skills development program and be  
103.able to do their own business and be able to write their own business  
104.plan and be able to go to the community and then access loans which  
105.allows them to do their own thing. So that is more or less a run down  
106.of our programs of what we do.

107.I: So you're clients are a wider range of all ages, and from all

108.countries.

109.X: Yes.

110.I: Ok. And different immigrant statuses? you said you mentioned

111.you deal with refugees as well.

112.X: Yes. Yes.

113.I: What would you say is the biggest population, what group of

114.immigrants access your services the most?

115.X: Before, ----- was founded by Africans, who were kind of like not

116.happy because most of the African people were here in the

117.community, they never had an agency to go to because they were like

118.very very minority group. But now after the last err.. year we've

119.discovered that we have a lot of people who are coming from Burma,

120.different countries from Asia, we have a lot of people who are coming

121.from Russia, we have a lot coming from Middle East. So we thought

122.it's necessary for us to start doing something, so we now changed our

123.mission and started accommodating these other groups of immigrants  
124.which are here; as long as they can speak English and have not been  
125.in Canada for longer than 5 years because that's our mandate with  
126.the government, so we have about 27 nationalities now in house.  
127.Yes, I can't name all of them. Hahahahaha. We have Mexicans, all  
128.group of people you know, and I meet with them every day. Most of  
129.these people, I do respect their efforts, because really they are so  
130.determined to come here and learn, and they feel at home here  
131.because we also get food from the food bank and we give them away.

132.I: So you're meeting a variety of their need?

133.X: Yes. Exactly.

134.I: It's great to learn about that. Um. So currently, how many of your  
135.clients would you say are from Africa?

136.X: Well, I will say like for example, about 30%

137.I: 30%. And do they come mostly from specific countries. A few

138. specific countries in Africa or is it more from Sudan?

139.X: More from Eastern African. Yeah, so Sudan. Somalia, we have a

140. lot of Sudanese, Somalia. Eritrea, Ethiopia. More or less of Eastern

141. Africa. Uganda, Congo, most of that area.

142.I: Ok, so Eastern African. Most of them are from there.

143.X: Yes.

144.I: And in terms of immigrants statuses, are they mostly refugees?

145. economic immigrants?

146.X: Yeah. I think I have mostly more or less, some of them are refugees

147. because they've been in refugee camps for a very long time in Africa,

148. and then being transferred to Canada. And then also being having

149. multiple barriers because of that, because they have a government

150. loan to pay. Some of them, they came here, and they were sponsored

151. by the government, so when they come here they have to pay it back.

152. So it's a lot of burden for them who have to learn language at the

153.same time and pay these things.

154.I:That's actually why I'm asking, because I wanted to know if barriers  
155.differ. Like when you look at African immigrants, even from country to  
156.country, like to these differ? And I'm talking about employment in  
157.particular. And when I look at immigrant status, does that make a  
158.difference in terms of finding employment? Like, do you think it's  
159.harder for refugees to find employment?

160.X: Yes. Yes. Because of the loans they have to pay. And even the  
161.immigrants, I put all of them in one basket because they all have this  
162.problem where they are not accepted into the job market because first  
163.of all they do have an education that is not recognized. And it all  
164.begins from there. Secondly, some of them, they have cultural issues  
165.which are associated with the environment as well. They lack  
166.substantial trainings to go to you see, I've been trying to dig in to the  
167.opportunities which are there. You don't always find just one. For  
168.example, that's why we started creating this skills development  
169.program to help some of them who cannot access the services which  
170.are not there, because some of them back in their country, they were  
171.like, tellers, they were sewing dresses to make a living. But now that

172.they're here, it's not possible for some of them to get this kind of job,  
173.and we have some of them who were educated, they were engineers,  
174.they were teachers, and now here they have this problem because of  
175.accreditation they are not certified, it's not recognized, and some of  
176.them also have a lot of problems to build a good resume that can help  
177.them to resonate with the market, and there is also a lack of...we do  
178.have a series of services in the community that people have where  
179.they can meet and build resumes, but the networking that they're  
180.supposed to have, that networking, a specific hub where they can  
181.meet, like in an agency, and then have those kind of opportunities  
182.where they can connect with the employers to see what kind of jobs,  
183.even small, small jobs where they go to pick strawberries, they go to  
184.do these kind of small, small things that kind of thing that can help pay  
185.for their bills. We do that kind of thing, and also they have a lot of  
186.problems with, you know, with the system, that they don't understand  
187.exactly and they make mistakes and some people throw them out, so  
188.that is really really some of the problems that these people go through  
189.really in their job search, and some agencies are overflowed with  
190.specific groups, and then, it's not accommodating to most of them, so  
191.then these people feel like, who is helping me here? You know, and  
192.we have cases that we even do referrals, but by the time the referrals

193.reach them, they get to the office, and the people in the other  
194.agencies are not able to attend to them, because then they might  
195.need interpreters or some of them, they don't really know how to  
196.accommodate this kind of culture. Because for example, if you look at  
197.it, the issue is that some of them, they feel like nobody is listening to  
198.them; that relationship is missing between most of them and the  
199.agencies, which are operating around here and that makes it very  
200.very difficult.

201.I: When you say "agencies", do you mean other settlement

202.agencies? Like the multi-service agencies?

203.X: Exactly. Yes. I am talking about them because they are mostly  
204.over-crowded and to go there, to sit there, nobody is attending to  
205.them. They are not even able to tell them where they can get even,  
206.temporary jobs. That is really really an issue, which I think, that  
207.agencies which are in the community, for example, like our's, we have  
208.the expertise, but we lack the funding. To build that kind of hub, that  
209.kind of network where they can actually meet here, they can go and  
210.do small, small, jobs, which can enhance their own skills to really

211.access the market. We don't have that kind of funding, and that is  
212.something that we are able to offer these small kind of programs, that  
213.we can help most of these people facilitate that kind of Canadian  
214.experience which most of them need. And this is absolutely lacking.  
215.Most agencies are just thinking about having the people, building the  
216.resumes, and sending them out to look for jobs, but there's no  
217.meeting point where these people can come to and say ok, if I come  
218.to -----, I'm sure I will get a job which is not fully a job, but I can get  
219.that Canadian experience. Some of them, majority of them want to  
220.work. There's no hope for that. So we are thinking that we are solving  
221.the problem by building resumes, training them, but we are forgetting  
222.that an important component is to create a kind of a hub where these  
223.people can meet and start gaining that Canadian experience, which is  
224.there.

225.I: In doing some of my research already, and a few African  
226.immigrants who were interviewed in one study that I was reading, felt  
227.that they needed to update their Canadian education, which is what  
228.they did, but they still felt that it was very difficult to find work because  
229.they were lacking that Canadian experience. So it's good that you  
230.bring this up, because also in doing my research, it was a main point.



231. Another thing, was this networking, that was a big point. when we look  
232. at Vancouver, for example, when you look at the Chinese population  
233. or even the Indian population, they have a network, because there's a  
234. large Chinese population

235. X: Thank you. Yes. That is exactly what I am talking about and these  
236. guys just get frustrated, you know because there's nobody that they  
237. can connect to and then they just get thrown out. And we like the guys  
238. who are the first stop for most of these people. It will be very  
239. advantageous for us to get that funding so we can provide the service  
240. and prepare them before they go to these big agencies. You see, so  
241. that we receive these people and we prepare them, and then we send  
242. them there, and then finally these people, some of them, they still  
243. come back and we don't have the staff to do most of the work so then  
244. we have to try. I am the side manager but then I have to jump in and  
245. do resumes and start connecting some of them to get jobs, which, you  
246. know it's just because I have the passion to do what I'm doing, but  
247. normally, we need to have employed staff doing just that then it runs  
248. much more quickly. This is just one part of the problem which these  
249. people face in the community; it's really really kind of holding them  
250. back and you know most of the agencies you talk to, they'll tell you

251.they've been trying their best, but we need to do something in this  
252.area that we create a hub. A place where they can come to and say  
253.ok, you can get everything here, you can even get that Canadian  
254.experience here where you should need to jump in to be able to have  
255.most of them. What most employers do is that they don't even  
256.understand the black cultural differences that they have with most of  
257.these Africans. because with the African people, some of them think  
258.like just yeah, the first thing that you need to have is somebody who  
259.can speak English who can articulate much more, much more uhh  
260.you know, like a Canadian can do. But what has happening is some of  
261.them, for example, don't understand some of these people because  
262.English is not their first language. They do need more time to prepare  
263.themselves, in how they make sentences. For example, they might  
264.need about one second to think before they speak, so as an  
265.employer, you need to know that. The next thing they need to know is  
266.that when you employ these people, it's not how they speak, you need  
267.to give them some time on the job, before then you start assessing  
268.what they are doing, how far they are going, and more or less what  
269.we have here in some job places is they just have what they call it,  
270.work mentors, who is with them, but it should be more or less a kind  
271.of relationship. There should be someone they can build a relationship

272.with, because the African people take a lot of time to open up. they  
273.might be a little bit slow, but most employers might think that actually  
274.these people are weak in the things they say, and the way they  
275.reason. so there is a kind of, a missing aspect there, that most  
276.employers are missing in how they deal with these people.

277.I: Like in terms of cultural awareness?

278.X: Yes, because they lack that cultural awareness. You know, these  
279.people have to come today and start working immediately right now.  
280.that's not going to happen. You need some time with them to build a  
281.specific relationship before they go through, because if you put it the  
282.other way around, if you get mostly Canadians to go work in their  
283.shoes, they wouldn't even try and the level of motivation these people  
284.have, that's something we should promote. Employers instead  
285.discourage that because they think, oh they're not fast enough, but  
286.you know, they might just need some time to encourage and motivate  
287.them and then you see them meeting up. And some of them they get  
288.frustrated because sometimes employers they just give up, they don't  
289.give them a chance. And that's something that we, as agencies, if we

290.can start creating a hub where they can get a first hand training, it  
291.makes it easy for employers to hire them, because then it fixes  
292.everything for them before they go to them. Well, not everything, but  
293.at least 70%. People know where they're going too, because we can  
294.orient them more on how the Canadian workplaces are. You know,  
295.your distance between you and a Canadian, and you know some  
296.people get fired because African people sometimes they might not  
297.tend to understand that sometimes there are things like "space" and  
298.communicate body language, some employers might think they are  
299.not competent but you know it's not really so, it's about understanding  
300.their own culture, putting tools in place that most of these people can  
301.pass through, for them to really go through the jobs. Some of them  
302.they finish school, I've seen some of them, they are engineers,  
303.teachers, but still they don't get the jobs. Even to get a practicum, it's  
304.not possible for some of them. Even to just go get a volunteer, it's just  
305.not possible. So we try to provide as much volunteer opportunities  
306.within these organizations to help some of them who are here for a  
307.longer time and that is what is really really happening in the field. So,  
308.if something can be changed there, that agencies start building these  
309.kind of networks, it would be very very helpful, especially job wise.

310.I: Yeah

311.X: If you have new immigrant who is here one year, you can say ok

312.after one year, this person can, you already know an employer that

313.you can send them there. They may not be paid the same as normal

314.employees are supposed to get paid, but they can pay partly just to

315.compensate for their time and everything, while they gain that

316.experience. This is something that's lacking in the whole system.

317.I: How do most, specifically the African clients, find out about your

318.services?

319.X: Yeah, most them you know, most of them, through word of mouth.

320.It's just word of mouth, mostly. Because what people fail to

321.understand about services is from the name, it's just African, that's

322.not so. So there's that misconception that it's only African driven. It

323.was founded that way, but it changed.

324.I: Ok, and how long has your organization been established?

325.X: It's been here since uhh 2004. Yes, that it became very very active

326.and running.

327.I: Um. So you mentioned that you offer conversational classes.

328.Another thing that I found in doing my research was that a lot of

329.Africans have gone to these ESL classes, but they've had complaints

330.about them. The general ones. So I just wanted to know, what are

331.some of the things that you've found to be effective? or maybe what

332.hasnt worked so well?

333.X: Yes. Yes. Actually, the conversational class has been very useful

334.and some of the challenges we have is that most of these people who

335.are from war-torn zones who come into our programs, some people

336.who have not been used to expressing themselves and speaking. But

337.it's happened that in the past month, what I've discovered is that most

338.of them have started to open up, and we don't just use the

339.conventional conversation class, like other agencies do. We can pick

340.up a topic, which is very very simple, and bring it to conversation. Like

341.one day, we say, ok we want to talk about 9-1-1, so we do it through

342.demonstration and everyone there is participating how can you call 9-

343.1-1? For example, what do you do when you have an emergency in

344.the house? You don't know exactly where to go to. How do you call

345.the doctor? What do you do when you go to the doctor's office? How  
346.can you take the train? So we do it through role-play and things like  
347.kind of activities, and then the people, then they get used to it to  
348.speak and they get to talk umm..more about themselves and the  
349.issues they face or there are days that we just sit them in the  
350.conversation class and we just ask them about how their weekend  
351.was. For example, that is always where we start, what's their energy  
352.level? Then from there, we start knowing, oh this person is feeling  
353.good, this one is not feeling good and then, we start going around,  
354.around, around. So it's more or less about a kind of family  
355.discussion. And then they also have activities that they do. Play  
356.around and then do a lot of things together, just to show unity. So it's  
357.been very successful, but we have a lot of challenges because we  
358.dont have child minders on Mondays, most of our people, they just  
359.dont turn up, because there's no child minder and there's just one  
360.ticket. we provide just one ticket, because the literacy program here  
361.doesn't have funding, so trying to remove money from the program to  
362.pay these people who are doing the classes. Also another major  
363.challenge is we have all the people from different groups, we have  
364.level 1, level 2 and level 3. Level 1 is mostly people who know their

365.abc's, right and who can speak a little bit. Level 2 is for people who  
366.know their abc's and who can count to 100 and do a little bit of math.  
367.Level 3 is people who can read, write, who can do most of the things.  
368.So these three groups are combined on Mondays, so then you can  
369.imagine how difficult it is to coordinate all these different levels for one  
370.teacher.

371.I: And they're all from different countries? Different backgrounds?

372.X: Yes. So we really rely on all the volunteers who come in and  
373.sometimes who are doing interpretation and doing one-on-one with  
374.them. So these are kind some of the few challenges that we have. So  
375.we have a lot of the people, who are in these classes who are  
376.traumatized. We have some sensitive issues that they might not like  
377.to talk about. We also have a lot of women who have a lot of  
378.problems in their homes, even right here in Canada because some of  
379.their men don't like for them to come to an English class. Yes, that's a  
380.problem because what we're doing is empowering these people and  
381.for example, most of them they are people who are family members  
382.with husbands might not like them to learn how to read and write. So



383.when you teach these people how to read and write, she's able to  
384.read the bank statement and the men may not want them to know  
385.how much money he has. so there you have a kind of a conflict in the  
386.home. So those are the kind of things that we go through, and we've  
387.had cases where they may come and say, please, we don't want  
388.anyone to know we're coming to class. Those are women like that,  
389.we've had women in Canada for five years, who never knew there  
390.was a place they could go to and they were so happy with our  
391.program. We do also have the possibility of them to decide and say  
392.ok, to Monday, we would like to talk about driving lessons. We do it on  
393.monday. So they decide that on Thursdays, and we bring it on  
394.Mondays. Some might say, would like to know about the Canadian  
395.system, some might say, they like to know about how you can  
396.become a Canadian citizen. We bring in firefighters who come to  
397.help, professionals to really give them the experience they need, who  
398.come with videos and medias to project their own thing to pass the  
399.message on.

400.I: Wow. Ok, well, I think I've covered everything. Thank you again for  
401.taking the time to meet with me, this was very informative.

## Interview 2

402.I: I was thinking, I don't know too much about your organization, so

403.maybe we can start off by talking a little bit about your organization,

404.what services it offers, how do immigrants in particular normally find

405.out about the services you offer?

406.Y: Ok. I will. Ok. So my name is -----, I'm the Executive director of

407.----- . I have been serving at the executive director for the last

408.5 years and ----- is a French community centre, so we offer a

409.few different types of services, so we are a social service and we are

410.also a centre. So for the social services, we offer social services for

411.French speaking people and then we have access to health services

412.and we used to also have implement services, what we call social

413.services in general and in the centre, we just do different activities for

414.our client, and it goes from labor clinic or we do taxes for them or we  
415.provide food. Ummm, and then they can use computers and things  
416.like that. Ok, so now, we used to have implement services here this  
417.year until may, but the government of BC has a new program now for  
418.implement services. So we lost the funding for implement services,  
419.but eventually next year we'll be back to still offering implement  
420.services with some partners. So ----- has existed for almost  
421.20 years now, so we'll have 20 years next year. And then, so now, so  
422.65% of our clients come from Quebec and are Canadian, and then the  
423.35% are newcomers or immigrants. Most of them are coming from  
424.Africa and Europe. But in terms of immigrants, most of them come  
425.basically from Africa.

426.I: Ok. So, what percentage of your immigrant clients would you say  
427.are from Africa?

428.Y: Uhh. I would at least say 85% comes from Africa. Yeah.

429.I: Oh ok. And do they come from a variety of African countries?

430.Y: No. The three main countries are Congo, Burundi and Rwanda.

431.I: Oh ok.

432.Y: So this is where, for the last 10 years or so, there was some issues.

433.You know, war or political issues.

434.I: Ok. And are most of them refugees?

435.Y: Umm. Not specifically. There are some refugees, of course. We

436.don't have too many people coming here for business reasons, so

437.most of them have refugee status or are refugee claimants. So yeah.

438.It's more political or social. But sometimes with the French speaking

439.immigrant, the first, the port of entry is Quebec, and then Vancouver is

440.the second destination or wherever they move to. You won't find too

441.many coming directly to Vancouver from French-speaking countries.

442.So most of them will go to Montreal first and then move to Vancouver.

443.I: So are they fairly recent then to Canada?

444.Y: Oh yes. Yes, yes, most of them are very recent. Because the one

445.we receive, they have for the last five years, some of them five years

446.in Canada. Because the one in Canada are already established and

447.may not come to ----- because ----- really helps people

448.in need, like if you're lost or if you're new or you don't speak English

449.and you need to find a job. All that.

450.I: Ok. Ok. So through your experiences, what are some of the

451.challenges that very recent African immigrants in general face in

452.finding employment in BC?

453.Y: Ok. Language, of course. Language is the number one factor.

454.Umm.why, because sometimes where you come from, it depends on

455.the type of language. That's number one. With the language, you

456.have, you actually may have the accent that is a factor because you

457.may be from Ghana or from Nigeria, but your accent is still difficult to

458.understand. Yeah, so that's a big challenge for them. And I know in

459.Africa, it's a big part. Other than language, you have the, I will say, the

460.educational background because many of them who came as

461.refugees or sometimes doesn't have that level or degree, so

462.education is a problem. Ummm..or if they have education, it's another

463.type of education. An example is sometimes you use computer here,

464.but in Africa you are not using computer. So basically, here you are  
465.using a computer in High school, but in Africa, not often. It's when you  
466.come here, you still have to go through that process, even if it's for a  
467.customer service job. You still have to go through that process. So  
468.that's the education part of it. So it's education plus training, right.  
469.And now, the other thing is also in English I call it "the structure of the  
470.labour market". Because the type of job you have in the market,so it's  
471.different of course. For example, in Vancouver, one of the things that  
472.i've noticed, and even if you have an immigrant coming from Africa,  
473.like a person living in Canada, example in the finance industry, if you  
474.have a degree in finance, the only way for this to work in Vancouver is  
475.to do banking. Is to work as a teller, or something. But if you really  
476.want to do investment and things like that, you have to go to Toronto.  
477.So the way the labor market is structured is different. So that's why  
478.actually, here, people struggle to find a job because there are not that  
479.many jobs and then you don't have that many headquarters in  
480.Vancouver. You have headquarters in Toronto, in Montreal, all of that.  
481.But you don't have that many headquarters here. That means, like,  
482.an organization may hire like 10 people, but the same organization in  
483.Montreal or in Toronto will hire 1000 people, so there are not that

484.many ummm. Headquarters here. So basically, the labor market  
485.makes it difficult. And then in Vancouver, it's become more for  
486.tourists, because residents in Vancouver don't work in Vancouver,  
487.they make money elsewhere and then they come and buy a house  
488.here. So basically, one of the main things, it's funny, because  
489.downtown Vancouver, it's residential because if you look at other  
490.downtowns, it's very professional and for work and all that. But here,  
491.the downtown is for residential. So that makes it difficult for people,  
492.because people think there are many jobs here, but they get  
493.disappointed when they get here. So the structure is a problem. So  
494.language, education and labor market. And of course, I will say,  
495.economy and the way that, if the economy is good or not, so that  
496.varies. There are some sectors here, some main sectors. I'm not sure  
497.what they are, but if you're not in that main sector, you'll have a hard  
498.time finding a job. So, umm. that's one of the barriers, I think. And,  
499.the last one would be maybe, social. So by this it means that it goes  
500.from the culture, or where you came from, living in an environment  
501.where you're used to work or not or if your family is balanced or not.  
502.Because when you come here, there's a cultural shock. And it's how  
503.you deal with that, and how you manage all that. That is a big factor.

504. And then, what is connected to social and actually like, the example  
505. where you live in housing in Vancouver, but if it's difficult for you to  
506. live in Vancouver, and live elsewhere and maybe there, they don't  
507. have the jobs. Let's say, for example, you live in Richmond, or if there  
508. are not enough jobs for you, that makes it difficult and then you have  
509. to think about transportation. When we used to have employment  
510. services here, for a person to come here to -----, for us to help  
511. him, so it's \$5 that you pay for a bus ticket and then \$5 when you  
512. return. So that's \$10 just to come to a service and then try to find a  
513. job. But I mean the government changed the way they do implement  
514. services, but still, it's challenging, for you, it's difficult for you to get a  
515. job if your social level is already low and then you don't have that  
516. many opportunities. People don't realize that, but sometimes people  
517. who are already stable get the jobs, you know people get a job and  
518. then they'll just try to get another one. Number six, and this is key, are  
519. networks. Newcomers, you will struggle because you don't have a  
520. network. You have to have a network, I mean, you have to be open,  
521. you have to speak the language, so you have to have all of these  
522. actually to have a network. So if you don't have a network, it will be  
523. difficult for you, same thing, most jobs, you get them through  
524. connections and relationships. So, if you cannot make relationships,



525.you have trouble getting a job. So actually that's a very big one. Lack  
526.of network. Look at, in my case, ok, so if I look at all these, language-  
527.-I speak French and I went to school in English. Education--I have a  
528.level of education. I know about the labor market because I have  
529.some work experience. Actually, labor market, you can put work  
530.experience there, Canadian work experience. And then, economy, I  
531.will say I'm ok. Social--I'm balanced. But, if I don't have a network,  
532.then that becomes a problem . And another thing is, with all this, I'm  
533.working with a francophone environment, because French is my first  
534.language, right. If I had a job in the English-speaking environment,  
535.that would be a challenge for me because I will never be able to  
536.deliver, like I'm delivering here. Yeah, so I think these are the main  
537.ones for me---language, education, structure of the labor market  
538.(which includes the work experience),economy, social..your life  
539.basically, and then your networks. That social will give you more  
540.confidence, because you know, it plays, do you want to try that? You  
541.believe that you can do it. Some people would actually prefer to do a  
542.physical work than an intellectual one, because they know that with an  
543.intellectual one, they have to talk but with the other job, they just have  
544.to prove that they are strong enough and then work for Safeway, and  
545.carry stuff but you just don't want them to ask you questions. So

546.that's one of the things.

547.I: Ok. So that was very informative. So, have you noticed any

548.differences in the challenges or barriers based on different things like

549.immigrant status or African country of origin? Umm. I guess you don't

550.get English-speaking African immigrants?

551.Y: No. But they will come, and we'll send them to other organizations.

552.I: Ok. So for like, for example, with refugees, do you see that they

553.face maybe additional barriers to employment than maybe other

554.African immigrants?

555.Y:Yes, they do. Simply because of paper work. It depends on the type

556.of paper work you have to work through. If you are a resident, you

557.don't need a work permit, you just show up with your card, right. But if

558.you are a refugee claimant, you need a permit and you need to renew

559.that every year, so that becomes a challenge. So if an employer, so if

560.you and I go, and you have a resident card and I have a permit, so

561.imagine, they'll just take you because they'll say it's more convenient

562.than to have to deal with someone who will have to apply again next  
563.year and you don't know what will happen. As an employer, you don't  
564.want to invest in a person who may not be here for the long term. So  
565.they don't want to take that risk.

566.I: Ok. Do you know of any programs in BC that help immigrants gain  
567.Canadian experience? Have you heard of anything like that?

568.Y: I know there are some that to me, there is not enough because, I  
569.don't recall seeing a program that really puts you in there. So the city  
570.of Vancouver tried one last year actually. They are working with a  
571.mentoring program. So what they're doing is, in the city there are  
572.engineers and things like that, so they will introduce some  
573.newcomers. But that is specifically for a certain level of people, with  
574.degrees and all that. So they tried that because they know they are  
575.taking a lower risk, because the people they are training will most  
576.likely take that job. So, I'm not aware of other programs, but I will  
577.encourage that there be more investment in that type of program  
578.because, I mean, there is nothing better than volunteering and gaining  
579.that experience. One of the things I say the most is that it takes away

580.all the pressure, because the day you sign a job, you sign a contract,  
581.there is pressure. You see. But volunteering takes away all that  
582.pressure. You know that you can leave any time, you know that if you  
583.don't like the thing, you can leave. So, of course, we encourage  
584.people to volunteer, but at the same time, organizations have to go  
585.and look for volunteers. The government should fund programs that  
586.allow volunteers to work in certain organizations.

587.I: Ok. So also in doing my research, I found that problems with  
588.racism has also come up. Have you noticed this coming up at all as a  
589.problem with the people you work with?

590.Y: Umm. I think racism is always there. You know, depending on what  
591.level. Also, racism is on both sides. People always used to say this  
592.guy doesn't want to hire this person because he's a racist, but  
593.sometimes that guy doesn't want to work with another person  
594.because he's racist. Maybe a black person wants to work in an  
595.environment where there are only black people, because they don't  
596.want to be with white people, you know. So I feel that racism is always  
597.there, but I think Vancouver is open enough to not reach that 'red

598.level', or whatever, you know. So that's number one. Number two, all  
599.the cultures and so much diversity creates a type of racism because  
600.you may not have something against white people, but you do against  
601.Chinese, and I've seen that. For example, with housing, they say  
602.Chinese man landlord is more difficult, or something like that. And  
603.that's a problem. Why would someone go get a job in Richmond when  
604.he knows he's going to be the only black person? You know?

605.I: Ok. How accessible do you feel that language classes or ESL  
606.classes are to very recent African immigrants?

607.Y: Ok. Ok. So, you know, you perform best when you speak your first  
608.language. I mean, no doubt about that. And then if English is your  
609.second language, of course you'd be able to manage it. So ESL  
610.classes are good and they put you out there, but they'll never be able  
611.to take you to a level, unless, the people that can manage with other  
612.people that didn't only study language in school, but they speak it, I  
613.mean it's more than school. So basically, ESL is good, but I think we  
614.should have some type of training with ESL, like training for people to  
615.learn English in the social environment or in the job, not just in the

616.classroom. Yeah, so ESL classes should help with that portion of  
617.internship. I think that would be a great idea to have. So at every  
618.level, you have to do two weeks in an enterprise, or something like  
619.that. Yeah, the more I think of that, the more I love that idea. You  
620.know, because I learned English from traveling, not from sitting in a  
621.class.

622.I: Perfect. Well, thank you. Those are all the questions I have. Again,  
623.thank you so much for your time.

### Interview 3

624.I: Ok, so I thought to maybe start, you can tell me a little bit about the  
625.organization, maybe what services are offered and how immigrants  
626.find out about the services that are offered.

627.Z: Sure. Yeah. K. So, umm. ---- has been around since 1972, and  
628.formally. So, probably it even started in the late 60's and then it was  
629.formalized in 1972. And umm. currently, we deliver a lot of  
630.employment programs and settlement services. We also have a

631. language college. And in the language college, there's two portions.

632. We have the international studies, which is a fee paying program

633. where the students are international student or are on holiday visa

634. here, so lots of Japanese, Korean, Latin American and Brazil. And

635. then the other English courses are the ones funded by the ministry of

636. jobs, training and innovation. We have what you call ELSA level 1

637. and recently we've been successful in getting funding for ELSA levels

638. 6-7, and ELSA for the workplace. So we run the whole English

639. language service classes for the adults. Employment programs--we

640. currently, but that will change after March because we lost in our

641. proposal. We were the, probably, the biggest contract holder, for

642. employment programs, and we have job search and career planning

643. courses, we have case management services and we have locations

644. in Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby, New West and Coquitlam. And then a

645. lot of off site locations. But, the Ministry of housing and social

646. development, which is the funder for our employment programs, did

647. an RFP this year, and as I mentioned, we lost the funding. So,

648. basically, a good chunk of our employment programs will be gone

649. after March. My department, specifically, is also an employment

650. program, but we are housed under the settlement contract. So, we will

651.continue, but the employment program that is funded under  
652.employment will probably be 70% gone. So that will be a huge loss for  
653.a lot of our immigrant clients. But, currently, we have lots of services.  
654.And when you say settlement services, we also do a lot of community  
655.development and a lot of initiatives. But, other interests, particularly  
656.for your study, is that ISS hosts contracts from the federal government  
657.to receive GARS. And, in a year, we probably receive 800 GARS and  
658.they arrive directly from the airport to our welcome house. Most recent  
659.African immigrants, I'm not sure, because the GARS also falls under  
660.immigrants. When they come here they already have their permanent  
661.residency status.

662.I: Ok. Do you know approximately how many of your African clients  
663.are refugees?

664.Z: Really, to be quite honest, there aren't too many skilled workers  
665.coming from Africa. So when you're looking at your stats for very  
666.recent African immigrants, as I said, many of them, I'm imaging are  
667.GARS. Bear in mind that we receive all the GARS for BC.

668.I: How do immigrants normally find out about your services? Is it



669.through advertisements? through word of mouth?

670.Z: Yeah. Well, basically when they apply to get their PR, there is

671.something on the CIC website, who are the settlement service

672.providers for all of BC. There should be a list for Vancouver area, so

673.they know through that route. There should also be something from

674.when they received their PR, you know, some sort of website

675.guidelines where they can find settlement services. The CIC has a

676.project right now in 3 countries: Philipines, India and China, where

677.they do overseas orientation, where if you are a skilled worker

678.immigrating to Canada, they would require you to attend a labour

679.market orientation in their home country. Only in those three

680.countries. Otherwise, really, it's through websites. If you have friends

681.here, it's through word of mouth. But, the internet and our website is

682.probably number one.

683.I: And do you know how many, approximately how many of the

684.clients are from Africa?

685.Z: No. There's very little. From the skilled worker, PR category, hardly.

686.Hardly. If you're going to ask me, you're really looking at the GAR  
687.arrivals. So for employment really, I would say that in the last five  
688.years, I hardly see Africans. It's because they live in Burnaby, New  
689.West and Surrey. Over three years ago when I had a male councilor  
690.in Burnaby location and he did more outreach, in my stats there was  
691.more Africans. But I went away on a parental leave last year, and that  
692.male councilor also left. When I came back, the stats had changed.

693.I: So through him, was there anything that you've learned about the  
694.challenges that these Africans were facing in finding employment?  
695.What was the biggest barrier?

696.Z: Biggest barrier would be marketable skills, and then language is  
697.also there. Yeah, that would be the main issues that were pressing  
698.for them. We used to have a skills training program many years ago,  
699.where a lot of our GAR clients were able to have access. But those  
700.programs have been gone for almost 10 years now. And so, there's  
701.very little funded skills programs where they could access, where they  
702.could plan for themselves in the job market. So for example, before  
703.we had hospitality training, painting and decorating, warehouse,

704.resident care aid, home support. I mean those are entry level  
705.positions that require training and certification, because even for like a  
706.good warehouse job, it would be nice if they had forklift training, first  
707.aid, not to mention language training and then the self-management  
708.skills they would learn to function in a Canadian environment, like you  
709.know problem solving and teamwork. I mean of course they do that in  
710.their country, but not in the Canadian environment, so when they don't  
711.have the chance to practice that here, they don't actually have the  
712.formalized courses..It's really hard for them to get a good entry job  
713.that would pay a living wage. So, that's a really big challenge.

714.I: So that's not available anymore?

715.Z: Not anymore. The last time it was available, that was about  
716.10 years ago. There's a request for proposal that's coming up, and  
717.this is for the vulnerable populations, which include GAR, refugees,  
718.women and youth. So I'm really looking forward to see if there is a  
719.skills training for the vulnerable group.

720.I: Yeah. Because there is the skills connect program, that focuses on

721.higher-level type jobs.

722.Z: Yes. Yes. They focus on professionals. Yeah, somebody who

723.works in skills jobs, but not necessarily considered a bachelor's

724.degree. Trades would be a very good match with our African clients.

725.There's more chance for them to succeed in those type of

726.occupations.

727.I: What about lack of Canadian experience? Does that sort of fall into

728.there as well?

729.Z:MMhmm. Yeah, we're not even there yet because of the lack of

730.education and language. I would say that lack of Canadian

731.experience is more an issue for our skilled workers. They have

732.already the education and the qualifications. A lot of our African

733.immigrants that have our, that fall under the refugee category, have a

734.lack of training. So, they're really starting from nothing. First thing first,

735.English and skills training, then Canadian experience.

736.I: Ok. Do the few African clients that you do have come from a

737.variety of African countries? For example, are there some who come

738.here speaking English and some who don't?

739.Z: It's pretty mixed. Yeah. For example, we did have professional

740.African immigrants, GAR background, somebody who has, you know,

741.almost no English, no education.

742.I: So they have different needs?

743.Z: Different needs. Yeah. And it's depending on where's the trouble

744.really. At the height of the Sudanese arrival, even with the Sudanese,

745.it's really different. It varies. For example, you have the community

746.leaders who were persecuted. And you have an ethnic group that was

747.persecuted. So you have the really professional ones and you have

748.the ones who have lower education and work experience, and who

749.are very young. And then you have someone from, Burundi, and all

750.this French speaking African countries. Then we don't see them

751.because then they would go to French-speaking job searches and

752.organizations. Yeah. It really differs. We used to have a staff, our

753.volunteer coordinator, he's from Senegal, he speaks French. He

754.worked for the UN, and when he arrived to Vancouver, basically his

755.volunteer position was his survival job. So straight off, after

756.graduating our job search class, he was hired here as a volunteer

757.coordinator.

758.I: Going back to the English classes that are offered here. What are

759.those exactly like? Is it conversational type classes? Do you know of

760.maybe some of the challenges that have been faced or maybe what

761.works well?

762.Z: Umm. I think that question is best answered by one of the ELSA

763.instructors. But, I would say it's a mix of grammar, conversational. But

764.it's using the adult educational model. So it's a lot of hands on and

765.practice. And they have a set curriculum that they follow. And the

766.number of hours that they get is based on how many, what level they

767.were assessed. So if they did get an assessment and then they were

768.assessed at ELSA level 2, per level there's like set hours. But I think

769.for the details, it's better to speak to our ELSA department. But you

770.know, my department, for example, when we got funded in 2007, our

771.goal is to serve the under-served population, which is mostly the GAR

772.population, especially back in 2007 we had a lot of African clientele,

773.and we have tried different methods. For example, we tried to market

774.them to employers. We tried to, they can't attend the job search  
775.classes, because their English is too low or their work experience is  
776.very little. So really you need to bring them to the store, bring them to  
777.the mall, instead of in the classroom, teaching them how to job  
778.search. You're basically teaching them in life how to approach  
779.employers. We have tried a few of those techniques, but you can't do  
780.that for every client. If you have one councilor who has a target of 20  
781.a month, in a year 240, and serving really high needs, it's not  
782.sustainable. So we've tried with a few, because you know, it's like a  
783.pilot project. So we were testing what is possible. So that was  
784.working. People were getting jobs through that. They managed to get  
785.past the front door. There's a lot of preparation though--you're  
786.explaining to them how to do it, you're preparing their resume, you're  
787.telling them about the company, what they do. You really explain it  
788.from the beginning. You don't take anything for granted. And so you  
789.do a field trip to the mall, for one or two client, and then you  
790.demonstrate how it's done. For most of them you get some employers  
791.that are very willing to help. We go to Value Village, to Zellers, Home  
792.Depot, to Wal Mart and then we do that. We also have for Costco, we  
793.have food demonstrators. Those are not livable wages or hours, but

794.they're getting a taste. They're getting Canadian experience. So we  
795.even managed to contract with the company that contracts with  
796.Costco to do the food demonstrations, to somewhat adjust their  
797.orientation best, food safe course, and we got their cooperation and  
798.they value helping this group of refugees. So those were helping. But  
799.even if you get them on the job, there's still a lot of strategies that  
800.need to be in place to stabilize them. Because at home, things are  
801.still a little chaotic. Someone may get sick, and they come from a  
802.large family, they have to miss work. The shift, because it's so early in  
803.the morning, when the shift starts, there's no bus yet. Or if they work  
804.late, when they finish, there's no more bus. So there's a lot of  
805.challenges. They may get a job, but because there's not enough  
806.resources for them to actually fulfill the job, the success is somewhat  
807.hampered by that.

808.I: So you're saying that the balance between family and family  
809.issues can come up?

810.Z: Yes



811.I: This is something that came up in my research. I'm just trying to  
812.verify this. In going around to different managers, did you notice that  
813.there was maybe any type of racism towards the African population in  
814.particular? Or, was that not an issue you think?

815.Z: I would not entirely rule it out, but I would not say that it's active.

816.You know. But, personally, in my experience, i don't remember a time.

817.Not that it hasn't happened, I just don't remember a time. But I do, I'm

818.very concerned, for example, some of the same clients, because I

819.mean the world is small. Some of the same clients, when I had first

820.seen them, and then years later I'll see them in the streets, out in

821.Metrotown and their look has changed from the geeky provincial look

822.they have when they first arrived to the gangster look that they now

823.sport. I do wonder whether or not that has a negative impact on them.

824.Because it's not a positive image change. It's not the Canadianized

825.look; you know, if I was an employer I would feel somewhat

826.unsettled. I had this client, really tall and quiet, from Sudan. He looks

827.really nice and innocent when he first came. And years later I saw

828.him in Metrotown, and yeah, he was sporting a gangster rapper kind

829.of look. I wanted to take him aside or take him to a store, or just get

830.rid of his gold chain and his baseball hat. And you know, I don't know

831.whether or not he missed the workshop on presentation and  
832.wardrobe. I wish their were a lot more services that were available for  
833.them. You know for women, we have a program called “dress for  
834.success”, so if you’re looking for work and you don’t have clothes for  
835.work. You can go there and they will outfit you for one interview. From  
836.head to toe, your shoes, your purse, your shirt, they will outfit you.  
837.They coach you a bit on makeup and how to present yourself.  
838.Colours--because you know for some cultures, like red is a good  
839.colour, but going into an interview, wearing a red suit, some people  
840.are like ehh, it’s too much. But there’s a counterpart with that for men,  
841.with work gear, but that’s outfitting you if you’re going for a job in  
842.construction. But not for interview clothes and such. And I wonder,  
843.there aren’t many clients of our’s that are successful in accessing it.  
844.So, from my own feedback as a councilor, from seeing my own clients  
845.from before. And you know when I started in the industry in 95’, so we  
846.had a lot of clients from Ethiopia, Somalia at that time, and these are  
847.the clients who have low skills, experience and language. We put  
848.them into that skills training program, and that really helped them and  
849.that kind of was done. But we still have this job search program that  
850.we serve GARs who are from Africa. A lot of Sudanese, few Nigerian,

851.but mainly in the late 80's-2000, a lot of Sudanese. But we stopped  
852.seeing them here in this location because rent just got so high here in  
853.Vancouver, so I mean, 2000-2003 shoots up very fast, so all of the  
854.sudden you cannot find. If their WRAP allowance is the same as  
855.welfare, they're not going to pay the rent here, so thats when you  
856.would start seeing them more in the Burnaby/New West area and  
857.Surrey.

858.I: Interesting. Well, those are all the questions I had. Thank you

859.again for your time and your help, I really appreciate it.

#### Interview 4 (Ministry)

I: Ok, so, what type of programs and services are available to newcomers in finding employment in BC?

W: Ok, That through our branch?

I: Yes. Or that you're aware of.

W: I don't want to give you the things that I'm not familiar with..I know umm there's a devolution of funding from the federal government coming to the province under the labor market agreement or the labor market development (LLA or LLD funding). So it used to be under service Canada or previously HRDC whereby they will have employment counseling programs whereby they will have training program, that kind of funding, to provide non-profit or whatever organization to help immigrants to find work. But since the devolution, the ministry of social development got the majority of the funding, so they will be contracting out to organizations and I believe there was a recent announcement, umm..the ministry has a news release..I can show you the link. There's 72 contracts across the province where they will have a specific agency that will help organizations to help different constituent to find work, like either citizens or immigrants. And all different groups, like visible minorities or women, different constituent groups. So I believe there are 72 different contracts, but within each contract they have some contractors. I think on average, they say there are 8 sub-contractors in each contract. So they're all spread out across the province. So those are the projects that specifically fund to help participants to find work. Through our ministry, or branch, currently, we have a labor market strategy under development. We haven't ruled out this kind of policy or strategy, but it will be in very soon. Currently we have a program called the settlement and integration program and that started in October of this year, where service providers, where under this program they will have referral, orientation and life skills, education courses. So under this program they will help an individual, if they will identify employment or labor market needs..and based on the individuals commitment or needs, and willingness to participate, they will have a guided pathway coach or specific staff that will help when work with this individual and do an initial assessment and do action plan and they will monitor they're progress and make referrals and see how they go. So this is the kind of program that we offer. When I say the life skill and education course short-term program, this is no longer than 18 weeks in length, this kind of courses can happen either once a week or twice a week, where the organization will offer courses like how to write a resume, how to go for job interviews, that kind of thing. So it's sort of geared towards individuals and their employment needs or career goals, and so on. And they will make a referral if they need to get an update or get a credential

assessed or get the training accredited, so that's kind of the assistance they will get from our funded agency at the moment. So until the labor market strategy is rolled out, I suppose under that strategy, there will be specific type programs or strategies that will focus each different kind of immigrants, either the skilled workers or professionals, or what not and also we are currently funding a program called immigrant employment council of BC. They mainly work with employers to, and then identify what are the employers, what kind of employee they are looking for. So an immigrant can go into the website and put down their own training or education and they will be able to match with a certain type of employer.

I: Yeah. I've been to their website. Yeah, I've seen it.

W: Yeah. Hopefully the employer will go on and write down what their requirements are.

I: Is this a fairly new thing?

W: ICBC has been around for a couple years, at least. It's not new, new but it's fairly new. It's funded by our branch and also Vancouver Foundation. Yeah, so it seems to be, and also we have under our branch, a program called Skills Connect. That you can also find information on from our welcome B.C. website. Skills Connect works with professionally skilled immigrants that may have specific training in the health sector, or engineering background or accounting. Umm. and they will work with employers and we have some, and work with people who have that specific training and work with them either to upgrade or to sort of get additional training to be able to work in BC under that profession.

I: Actually, this was going to be my last question, I'm going to ask it now because it makes sense. Are there any programs in place that would help to gain Canadian experience?

W: Right. Skills Connect, probably. Right now there's only a focus on skilled or professional immigrants. As far as I'm aware, because this is also under a different program area that I don't have day-to-day contact with. But they are still within this branch, it's called the skills connect program. You can get more information on WelcomeBC. And they will have even some stories from individuals who have gone through and talk about their own experience.

I: Ok. That's good to know. Do anything about language services that are offered in BC?

W: Our branch also has this program. There are three pillars within our branch. One area is English language development; that's where the English language services for adults (ELSA) is provided primarily to permanent residents in the major cities. Outside the major cities, meaning Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Victoria, in other smaller communities, they may allow other permanent residents to attend classes and these are up to level 6-7 ELSA. Level 6-7 ELSA is currently being piloted. Right now it's not available across the province. Right now what is available across the province is up to level 5. And it's all based on the Canadian language benchmarks that assess the person's reading, speaking and writing skills.

I: Mmmhmm. Do you know anything about the requirements for these courses? Are they full-time or part-time?

W: They offer part-time basis or full-time. Part-time is morning, afternoon or evening. I don't know if any classes are being offered on the weekends. Maybe some are starting to offer even Saturdays, too. You can get more information on [elsanet.org](http://elsanet.org). Child minding is also provided. If they have child care needs, they have access to services.

I: Ok. Great. Great. Do you have a sense of how many African immigrants access these programs?

W: We do track who accesses on our reporting. But currently we don't have anything up-to-date because we're changing and updating contracts. So I don't have that information, but we do collect that information to some extent under the settlement program, under the ELSA program.

I: Ok. The reason why I'm asking is because when I was doing my background research, I've been reading studies on interviews with very recent African immigrants, and some of them didn't know or weren't aware of the services, especially the very recent ones. So I wanted to get a sense of, you know, are they accessing these services? Do they know about them? How are these services advertised? How do people hear about them?

W: Are you referring to very recent? Because immigrants from African countries, I have to say, a lot came from government assisted refugee program. And if they come under that category, they would should have access or whatever or should be aware of these services that we offer because ISSofBC has a welcome house that settles the GARs initially for 2-3 weeks in the location and they will provide orientation, and subsequently their own organizations, they also have the funding program, the sip program, and those settlement councilors will be able to follow up and refer and provide that kind of information. So, if those individuals you spoke to, if they are in that category, and they

are not aware, then I'm a little bit surprised. So it depends on who or where you got the information from.

I: No. I didn't actually personally talk to them. This was a study done by a UBC professor with African immigrants, and I think it is probably like a mix. It wasn't necessarily that group, umm, and I don't think she made it clear what group it was. But she made it clear that they were a group of very recent African immigrants who were interviewed.

W: Right. Because if you look at the landing data, they will have the source country and then they will probably be able to tell you the immigrant category that they come under so if you go with that and find out what percentage come independently or under family class or sponsorship or under GAR's or some may be refugee claimants that may be landed here and that's a different scenario because refugee claimants are eligible for some of our services, but not all. For example, the English service classes, the ELSA program, they can't, it's not open to them to, because they are still going through the legal process. Once they are confirmed by the immigrant refugee board that they are conventional refugee, then they can apply, even while they are applying for permanent resident status, they can still apply to go into the program, the ELSA program. Our SIC program, they can go and get help by a settlement agency, so that's something that makes a difference. So even if they are aware of the service, they may not be able to access it because of eligibility issues. Because our funding is through CIC, through the immigration agreement that we sign with them, whereby they transfer funding and then under that funding, there's accountability eligibility requirement. So unfortunately, refugee claimants are not eligible under the funding, so the provincial government put in some additional money to allow claimants to access some of the services, but not language.



I: Ok. Good to know. So I guess, that pretty much covers what i want to talk about. Again, that you so much for taking the time to meet with me. IF you'd like to see the results of my project, I can send it to you once it's complete.