DEAKIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA
MELBOURNE GEELONG WARRNAMBOOL

Citizenship and Globalisation Research Papers

Issue No.1, December 2010

Research Paper No. 4

Refugees' labour market access in Australia: A case study of Eritrea African Immigrants

Mr Hassan Ibrahim*, Prof. Pasquale Sgro*, Prof. Fethi Mansouri and Dr Christine Jubb*****

*Deakin Graduate School of Business, Deakin University

** School of International and Political Studies

*** Research Fellow - ANCAAR School of Accounting and Business Information Systems Australian National University

**This paper is dedicated to the late Ibrahim Hassan who sadly passed away while undertaking doctoral research on Eritrean refugees and migrants in Australia. The co-authors were members of his supervisory panel and wish to dedicate this paper to Hassan Ibrahim and his family.*

Citizenship and Globalisation Research Papers
Issue No. 1, December 2010
ISSN 1838-2118 print/ISSN 1838-2126 online
Published by
The Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Faculty of Arts & Education, Deakin University, Australia
http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/ccg/researchpapers.php

The Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Australia

ISSN 1838-2118 print
ISSN 1838-2126 online

About Citizenship and Globalisation Research Papers

The Citizenship and Globalisation Research Papers are peer-reviewed online and print publications that promote original and scholarly research on all aspects of citizenship and globalisation. The topics covered are diverse and represent the breadth of research excellence in this multidisciplinary academic field. Submissions for publication consideration may be sent to the following email: vince.marotta@deakin.edu.au.

Series Editors: Prof. Fethi Mansouri & Dr Vince Marotta
Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway
Burwood 3125 VIC
Australia

Refugees' labour market access in Australia: A case study of Eritrea African Immigrants

Hassan Ibrahimi*, Pasquale Sgro*, Fethi Mansouri and Christine Jubb*****

*Deakin Graduate School of Business, Deakin University

** School of International and Political Studies, Deakin University

*** Research Fellow - ANCAAR School of Accounting and Business Information Systems, Australian National University

This paper is dedicated to the late Ibrahim Hassan who sadly passed away while undertaking doctoral research on Eritrean refugees and migrants in Australia. The co-authors were members of his supervisory panel and wish to dedicate this paper to Hassan Ibrahim and his family.

Abstract

This paper investigates the patterns of labour market access and the employment outcomes of African refugees in Australia. It focuses on recently-arrived migrants and refugees from Eritrea who came to Australia predominantly on humanitarian grounds. The paper explores the correlation between academic qualifications and previous employment experiences on the one hand and employment outcomes in Australia on the other. In doing so, a number of related factors including language skills, links to community organizations and level and nature of job assistance services are analysed as variables that potentially impact upon access to and ultimately integration into the labour market.

Refugees' labour market access in Australia

Introduction

International studies on the economic integration of refugees have identified successful economic integration and wellbeing as being determined by the twin variables of refugees' social and human capital, and the social, political and economic context of the host country (e.g., Potocky 1995; Lamba 2003). Education, citizenship, ethnicity, English-speaking ability and length of residence were found to be the main predictors of integration success. The refugee populations in these studies generally compared unfavorably to the wider population and to other migrants, and correspondingly demonstrated downward occupational mobility, and high levels of unemployment or underemployment.

Australian studies of economic integration have revealed similar results. The Longitudinal Study of Immigrants in Australia (LSIA) for example showed that those refugees on humanitarian visas consistently had lower outcomes than others for employment, occupational status, use of qualifications, English language proficiency, health and sufficient income to meet needs (Richardson et al 2002:110-111; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999). For all categories of migrants, these outcomes improved with length of settlement, and parity with the wider Australian population is generally achieved after 5-15 years, depending on the indicator and visa category. Economic parity is achieved earlier than social parity. Although Humanitarian settlers take longer to achieve parity than others, they had the highest increase in participation in education, and the highest rates of citizenship (Khoo and McDonald 2001).

The 'costliness' to the public purse of humanitarian entrants is largely based on their relatively poor employment prospects, and has led to a migration policy which favours migrants with the greatest ability to integrate economically (English speaking, highly educated, culturally similar). However, Soon (2002) offers an economic analysis emphasizing the 'demand side' of immigration. Immigrants are consumers of products and services, increasing investment and leading to more employment opportunities. Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders, for example, are particularly keen to display their 'consumer worthiness' in the hope that it will translate to 'citizenship worthiness' by signing

contracts which expire after their visas, or by buying expensive consumer items such as sports cars which will take a long time to repay (Hoffman 2003).

Several studies have articulated the myriad factors which contribute to poor economic outcomes for refugees in Australia (Waxman 1998; Waxman 2001; Stevens 1998; Colic-Peisker 2003a; Colic-Peisker 2003b; Richardson et al 2002; HREOC 2003; Centrelink 2002). The most significant barriers were considered to be low English language proficiency, lack of domestic work experience, lack of recognition of skills or qualifications, unemployment and underemployment. Other significant barriers included discrimination, transport, unfamiliarity with Australian structure and bureaucracy, age, health and gender.

Women are disproportionately disadvantaged as they are often less educated, have little or no access to childcare and family support (Lamb 1996), are more affected by lack of transport (Marston 2003), fear for their safety (Centrelink 2002), and face additional discrimination, particularly those who bore visible markers of difference, such as the hijab (HREOC 2003). Women from refugee backgrounds have the highest unemployment rate in the Australian labour market, which is not declining with length of time spent in Australia.

One study of 67 refugee women seeking work over the course of one year found that only 20 obtained employment, and 17 of those were in casual or part-time work (Lamb 1996). The jobs obtained were generally low-skilled and did not match the educational qualifications of the women. Employment status was correlated with mental health, and depression was common amongst unemployed women (Lamb 1995). Poorly paid and repetitive jobs add to a sense of worthlessness and alienation, making it more difficult to retrain to obtain better work. Only 18 of the 67 women secured English language training, either because their quota of lessons was already exceeded, they were unable to access childcare, they were not targeted because their husbands were employed, family commitments, or transport difficulties for women in rural or outer suburban areas.

Discrimination appears to be a significant problem for ‘visible’ minorities. Arabic and Muslim Australians reported discrimination in employment due to language, religious background (including difficulties in finding a suitable place to pray) and identifiable Arabic or Muslim names. Women

experienced particular problems if they wore the hijab, which they believed raised assumptions that they were oppressed, uneducated and stupid. One woman commented that "people started talking to me very slowly and loudly as if I could not understand because the veil was blocking my communication skills" (HREOC 2003).

It has also been suggested that the 'immigrant' tag (and arguably more so the 'refugee' tag) may result in equivalent skills and qualifications for migrants being valued differently from that of the native born population (Thapa 2004).

A study conducted on the early settlement experiences of Bosnian, Afghani and Iraqi refugees found that newly arrived male refugees had unemployment rates nearly 20 percentage points higher than the next most unemployment prone group (Waxman 2001:474). Waxman argues that the success of initial post-arrival economic adjustment was influenced by the pre-migration background of humanitarian entrants, and their initial post arrival experience. The study identified the dominant influences on economic adjustment as: reception in host country; gender; loss of extended family; extent of torture and trauma experienced; support network; availability and appropriateness of services; social infrastructure; social distance; foreign education; recognition of overseas qualifications; level of English language competency; type of assistance provided on arrival; ethnicity; similarity of receiving and home countries' culture, economic and labour systems; education, retraining or training undertaken in Australia; health issues; number of dependent children; number of wage earners in the household; age; expectations; state of the economy at the time of arrival; length of residence in Australia; and racial discrimination.

Research documenting the experiences of Bosnian refugees in Australia differentiated between those from rural backgrounds, usually from lower socio-economic classes with lower levels of education, and urban professionals (Colic-Peisker 2003b). While English language was one of the main problems for both, rural people had a greater degree of difficulty with the bureaucratic and cultural style of Australian institutions, and tended to turn to their own communities for support and to fill the 'identity vacuum' experienced by forced migration. Interestingly, higher educated Bosnian refugees appeared to find acculturation more traumatic, possibly because of higher expectations of integration and the loss of social status when they were unable to achieve their previous levels of status and wellbeing. The inability to integrate and the shame and sense of 'failure' this engenders,

isolates them from both the Australian and Bosnian communities, leading to marginalization and depression: “In a society where the briefest description of any particular person is their occupation, joining the workforce means getting an identity, becoming ‘someone’” (Colic-Peisker 2003b:350). It has also been suggested that job placement agencies are ill-equipped to assist people find skilled work, and that work found through informal channels such as community contacts is usually unskilled or manual labour.

Asylum seekers and employment services

Asylum seekers on Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) are disqualified from accessing many of the employment services offered to other migrants, including those offered to other refugees. Little research has been done specifically on the economic status and wellbeing of TPV holders. As discussed above, refugees or those falling within the Humanitarian visa category have been demonstrated to have the least positive economic outcomes of all migrants to Australia. TPV holders are subject to all the barriers faced by other refugees or Humanitarian entrants, with the added burden of their temporary status and its practical, legal and social limitations.

The few studies completed identify high rates of unemployment or underemployment as a significant problem for TPV holders (Mansouri and Bagdas 2002; Leach and Mansouri 2004; Mansouri 2006). The temporary nature of the visa raised unique problems for this group. There was a mistaken belief among some employers that TPV holders were not legally entitled to work. Others were simply not interested in a worker who might not be permanent. The right to work was described as “somewhat theoretical” (Marston 2003:58). The visa itself is not recognized or understood in the wider community. One TPV holder tried to get a mobile phone when he was released from detention. When asked to provide identification, he produced his (temporary protection) visa. The salesman “laughed, he said ‘What’s this?’ I show him the bill for the electricity, he said ‘That’s alright’, it mean that the bill for the electricity is better than my visa.” (Hoffman 2003:34)

The conditions imposed by the TPV enforce a dependency that is neither the desire of the TPV holders nor in the interests of the Australian public. Hoffman argues that “(a) sylum seekers have been denied the opportunity to establish a moral relationship with the public, so their enforced

marginality prevents the recognition of their social legitimacy" (2003:40), a condition he sees as much more insidious than medical or welfare dependency. An alternative can be glimpsed in one group of Afghani men on TPVs who found employment at an abattoir in the rural NSW town of Young. The benefits brought to the community go further than mere economics - sustaining and reinvigorating the economy and has flow-on benefits for the cultural and social life of the town.

The importance of employment to identity formation is a persuasive argument for labour market integration to be a strong focus of any resettlement program. Integration can obviously benefit the refugees themselves but more studies are showing the positive benefits which can be accrued by host societies by providing settlement assistance (and the pitfalls of denying this) - whether they ultimately go, or whether by choice or necessity, they remain.

Eritrea: Historical Context

Eritrea is a small poor African country has a population of 4 million and bounded by Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti and the Red Sea. The population consists of a number of ethnic groups including Ethnic Tigrinya(50%), Tigre and Kunama(40%), Afar(4%) and Saho(3%). There are 9 languages spoken in the country with both Togrinya and Tigre spoken by 80% of the population.

The modern history of Eritrea commences with the Italian colonization in 1885. It was placed under British military administration in World War II after the Italian surrender and in 1952 the United Nations brought Eritrea and Ethiopia together to form a Federation. In 1962, the Emperor Haile Selassie dissolved the Eritrean parliament and commenced the fight for independence from Ethiopia. This fight continued after Selassie was ousted by a coup in 1974. The new Ethiopian government that governed Eritrea at the time was called Derg, a Marxist military junta led by Mengistu Haile Miriam.

The Eritrea People's Liberation Front (EPLS) formed in 1970 and became the dominant Eritrean opposition faction, under its leader Isias Afwerki, and fought against the Ethiopian government. Between 1978 and 1986, the Derg launched 8 unsuccessful major offensives against the independence movement, the EPLF.

In 1991, the Ethiopian forces in Eritrea were defeated and in July 1991, the US chaired talks in London to formalize the end of the war. Four major combatant groups, including the EPLF, attended these talks that established a transitional government in Ethiopia and the EPLF held talks with this new transitional government concerning Eritrea's status. A referendum on independence was agreed to be held and in May 1991, the EPLF established the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) to administer Eritrean affairs until the referendum on independence was held. The head of EPLF, Isais Afwerki became the head of PGE.

In April 1993, the Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence from Ethiopia in a United – Nations monitored referendum. As a result, the government was reorganized and after elections, the national Assembly was expanded with Isaias Afwerki elected as president.

In 1994 the EPLF became a political party called the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and commenced drafting a new constitution and setting up a permanent government. After much discussion and consultation, in May 1997, a constitution was adopted.

In 1998, border disputes between Ethiopia and Eritrea intensified and in 1999, a full-scale war was underway. By mid-2000, a ceasefire was agreed too whereby the United Nations would monitor compliance including the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Eritrean territory. A peace agreement was signed at the end of 2000. Part of this peace accord was the establishment of the Boundary Commission, a neutral body of the International Court of Justice in The Hague to draw a permanent boundary through a disputed region covering large areas of fertile farmland, this dispute over farmland had been one of the principal causes of the war. Throughout this period, the UN had a peacekeeping mission in place.

In April 2003, the Boundary Commission ruled that the disputed town of Badme officially lies in Eritrea. This decision was not accepted by Ethiopia and to this day, there is still an Ethiopian presence in Badme.

The people of Eritrea have, therefore been involved in a fight for independence for the last 30 years. During these years 750,000 people fled Eritrea for mainly the Sudan. After the end of the 1991 war, many returned especially with independence in 1993. However the border war in 1998-2000 caused many to leave again. At the end of the dispute in 2000, 356,000 Eritreans were refugees and another 310,000 were displaced within the country.

Eritrea Immigration: Push Factors

The economy of Eritrea consists of agriculture representing 12% of the GDP and supporting 70% of the population in the form of subsistence farming and herding. The manufacturing sector is characterised by light industries and accounts for 25% of GDP. The remaining 62 % is represented by services mainly port and distribution related services. It remains one of the poorest countries in the world with a GDP per capita of US$180 and a Human Rights Development Index ranking of 161 out of 177 countries in 2005. For example, the continuing border dispute plus a four-year drought has meant that in 2004, domestic food production suppled less than 20% of domestic demand. Thus both the war and poverty have been the main push factors driving Eritreans to other neighbouring countries such as the Sudan and Somalia and to foreign shores such as Australia.

The Eritreans arriving in Australia have come under the Humanitarian Programme. The main languages spoken at Home by Eritrean-born people arriving in Australia from 2000-2005 are Tigrinya (50%), Arabic (30%) and Amharic(7%). The majority of arrivals settle in Victoria followed by Western Australia. Table 1 below sets out the number of arrivals in Victoria and Australia as a whole for the period 1995/96- 204/2005

Table 1. Arrivals to Victoria and Australia from Eritrea(birthplace)

Year	Victoria		Australia	
1995/96	105	14.71	185	13.56
1996/97	64	8.96	131	9.60
1997/98	39	5.46	67	4.91
1998/99	120	16.81	187	13.71
1999/2000	79	11.06	142	10.41
2000/2001	54	7.56	137	10.04
2001/2002	53	7.42	133	9.75
2002/2003	59	8.26	109	7.99
2003/2004	74	10.36	148	10.85
2004/2005	67	9.38	125	9.16
Totals	714	100.00	1364	100.00

Methodology

During 2005, an anonymous survey questionnaire was administered by one of the authors (Ibrahim), himself an Eritrean, to members of the Eritrean community in Melbourne, Australia. One thousand (1,000) questionnaires were distributed via the Eritrean Community Centre in Melbourne and to individual family homes of Eritreans known to the author. Participants were invited to contribute through community meeting points e.g. mosques, churches, community halls and public gatherings. Some questionnaires were completed by individuals in the presence of the author but cultural requirements meant that especially for females, some questionnaires were completed by individuals without the author present. The questionnaires were returned via the Eritrean Community Centre and/or collected. The Eritrean consul assisted in helping to locate Eritreans living in Melbourne. Responses were collected from 403 participants, a response rate of 40%.

Respondents' Background

Males comprised 63% of the 403 participants who completed the questionnaire, and females 37%. Table 2 reports that the ages of participants ranged between 18 and over 55 with 14% 20 years or under, 35% between 21 and 30 years, 29% between 31 and 40 years, 11% between 41 and 50 years, and 10% over 50.

Table 2: Age of Participants

	Number	Percent
18-25	56	13.9
25-35	140	34.7
35-45	116	28.8
45-55	44	10.9
Over 55	39	9.7
Sub-Total	395	98.0
Missing	8	2.0
Total	403	100.0

Those born in Eritrea made up 80% of the 403 respondents as reported in Table 3, with those from Sudan the next most populous group with 10%. Other nations represented in country of birth statistics included Saudi Arabia (2%), and Egypt, Jordan, and Kenya, each with less than 1%.

Table 3: Country of Birth

	Number	Percent
Eritrea	321	79.6
Sudan	42	10.4
Saudi Arabia	9	2.2
Ethiopia	5	1.2
Egypt	2	0.5
not entered	2	0.5
Asmara	1	0.2
Jordan	1	0.2
Kenya	1	0.2
Sub-total	382	94.8
Missing	21	5.2
Total	403	100.0

When asked to indicate the year during which respondents left their region of birth, only 78% responded. Of those responding, Table 4 reveals that the majority (45%) had left during the 1970s, with 14% in the 1980s and 14% in the 1990s. Only 3% had left this century.

Table 4: Year of Leaving Eritrea

Year	Number	Percent
1961-1970	11	2.5
1971-1980	181	44.9
1981-1990	56	13.7
1991-2000	58	14.0
2001-2002	10	2.5
Sub-total	316	78.4
Missing	87	21.6
Total	403	100.0

As reported in Table 5, for the largest majority (79%), Sudan had been the country of first asylum, with Egypt next at 7.2% and then Kenya with 2%. Australia was nominated by only 2% as the country of first asylum.

Table 5: Country of First Asylum

Country	Number	Percent
Sudan	319	79.2
Egypt	29	7.2
Australia	9	2.2
Kenya	8	2.0
Saudi Arabia	3	0.7
Ethiopia	2	0.5
Algeria	1	0.2
South Africa	1	0.2
Yemen	1	0.2
Yugoslavia	1	0.2
None	1	0.2
Djibouti	1	0.2
Sub-total	378	93.3
Missing	27	6.7
Total	403	100.0

As revealed in Table 6, of the 94% responding to a question about the length of time spent in the country of first asylum, 48% had spent 5 years, 11% 4 years, 13% 3 years, and 11% 2 years and 9% 1 year. Less than 1% had spent more than 5 years in the country of first asylum.

Table 6: Period in Country of First Asylum

Number of years	Number	Percent
1 year	38	9.4
2 years	44	10.9
3 years	52	12.9
4 years	46	11.4
5 years	194	48.1
6 years	3	0.7
8 years	1	0.2
Sub Total	378	93.8
Missing	25	6.2
Total	403	100.0

As reported in Table 7, the largest cohort of 21% had arrived in Australia in the period 1992 and 1993 with the remaining years of the 1990s and 2000s featuring steadily at an average of around 5% per annum. Only 18% had arrived prior to 1992. Clearly, there elapsed several years between most of the participants leaving their country of birth and coming to Australia.

Table 7: Year of First Arrival in Australia

Year	No.	Per cent	Year	No.	Per cent	Year	No.	Per cent
1974	1	0.2	1992	40	9.9	2000	25	6.1
1984	8	2.0	1993	43	10.7	2001	16	4.0
1985	5	1.2	1994	24	6.0	2002	18	4.5
1987	5	1.2	1995	22	5.5	2003	22	5.5
1988	8	2.0	1996	28	6.9	2004	23	5.7
1989	7	1.7	1997	19	4.7	2005	5	1.2

1990	23	5.6	1998	20	5.0			
1991	17	4.2	1999	18	4.5			
Total	**74**	**18.1**	**Total**	**214**	**53.2**	**Total**	**109**	**27.0**
						Missing	6	1.5
						Grand Total	**403**	**100**

As Table 8 shows, overwhelmingly (72%) relatives had sponsored the participants to come to Australia, with Government sponsorship next at 12%, closely followed by sponsorship by a friend at 11%. The UN was cited by 2% of respondents and an employer in only 0.5% of cases.

Table 8: Sponsors

Sponsor type	Number	Percent
Government	50	12.4
Friend	43	10.7
Relative	291	72.2
Other	7	1.7
UN	8	2.0
Job	2	0.5
Total	401	99.5
Missing	2	0.5
Total	403	100.0

Reasons for leaving and post-arrival experience

When asked for the main reason behind the decision to leave their country, the overwhelming response was "war" or words to that effect, with Table 9 showing that 70% responding in this way. A further 14% gave the reason as associated with the political. The search for a better life (5%), education (3%) and marriage (2%) featured next, with only 1.7% citing economic or financial reasons.

Table 9 Reasons for Leaving Home Country

Reasons	Number	Percent
War-related reasons	283	70.2
Political-related reasons	58	14.4
Better life	18	4.5
Education	12	3.0
Marriage	8	2.0
Economic-financial	7	1.7
Military service	2	0.5
Total	388	96.3
Missing	15	3.7
Total	403	100.0

When asked about the difficulties encountered during transition, of the 78% answering this question, as Table 10 reports, 34% cited factors associated with culture and language, 8% cited financial factors, while 7% reported general refugee problems. Issues associated with documentation were reported by 2% of the participants. Health and employment issues were each cited by 1% of respondents. Refugee camps/imprisonment were cited by less than 1%. Interestingly 10% reported no or few difficulties. Around 10% of respondents interpreted this question to relate to difficulties in the physical aspects of transferring to Australia, and cited the distance and security issues as factors in the transition.

Table 10: Difficulties Encountered

Description	Number	Per Cent
Culture and language	136	33.7
Interpreted question in way not intended as relating to physical difficulties in transferring to Australia	40	10.0
None or few	39	9.7
Financial	32	7.9
General refugee related	28	7.0
Other	24	5.9
Documentation	9	2.2
Health	4	1.0
Employment	4	1.0
Total	316	78.4
Missing	87	21.6
Total	403	100.00

As reported in Table 11, the majority of respondents held refugee visas (51%) with humanitarian visas next with 29%, spouse visas at 14%, family reunion and skilled migrant visas at 2% each. Permanent visas were held by only 3 respondents. Only 5 or 1.2% of respondents had been held in an immigration detention centre in Australia. Each of the 3 respondents answering a question in relation to which detention centre cited different centres. Similarly, each of the 3 reported varying lengths of detention, ranging from 1 week to 30 months.

Table 11: Visa Type Held

Visa Type	Frequency	Percent
Refugee	206	51.1
Humanitarian	115	28.5
Marriage	58	14.4
Skilled migrant	7	1.7
Family reunion	7	1.7
Other	4	1.0
Permanent	3	0.7
Total	400	99.3
Missing	3	0.7
Total	403	100.0

Knowledge of Australia

When asked how much they know about Australia before their arrival, as shown in Table 12, 69% responded that they knew a little, 20% responded that they knew nothing, and 11% responded that they knew a lot about Australia. An approximately even split occurred between those who felt they had been given sufficient information (49%) and advice to prepare for living in Australia and those who felt the opposite (50%) with non responses accounting for the remaining 1%.

Table 12: Amount Known About Australia Before Arrival

Amount Known	Frequency	Percent
A little	278	69.0
Nothing	79	19.6
A lot	43	10.7
Total	401	99.5
Missing	3	0.7
Total	403	100.0

Participants were then asked what they felt other Eritrean refugees should know about Australia before arriving. Table 13 reports results for this question as culture (31%) and language (25%) featured prominently amongst the single factor responses, with employment opportunities alone cited by 15% of respondents. Culture and language (4%) and culture and employment (9%) were prominent amongst those citing dual factors, and 5% mentioned all three of culture, language and employment. Information about education did not feature prominently at all as needing to be known about before arrival.

Table 13: Factors Preferably Known before Arrival

Factor	Number	Percent
Culture	124	30.8
Language	99	24.6
Employment opportunities	61	15.1
Culture and employment	35	8.7
Culture, language and employment	20	5.0
Culture, language, employment	19	4.7
Culture and language	17	4.2
Other	12	3.0
Language and employment	9	2.2
Employment and other	4	1.0
Culture and Education	1	0.2
Total	401	99.5
Missing	2	.5
Total	403	100.0

Language

In terms of language spoken in the home, 65% speak Arabic, 34% spoke Arabic with at least one other language and 31% Arabic alone, 16% spoke Tigrenian alone, and 11% spoke Tigrean alone. Where two languages were cited, 20% spoke both Arabic and Tigrean, 5% spoke Arabic and Tigrean. In 8% of cases, all three of Arabic, Tigrean and Tigrean were spoken in the home. Very small percentages of respondents mentioned other languages such as Bilen and Ahmeric. English was rarely mentioned as being spoken in the home.

When asked if they spoke English when they first arrived in Australia, 224 or 55% answered yes and 44% answered no. When pressed on how well those who spoke English did so, as reported in Table 15, 108 or 48% responded that they had basic level English, 87 or 39% responded they had good level English, and 29 or 13% reported that they spoke English fluently. Of the 179 or 44% of the total sample who responded initially that they did not speak English when they first arrived, Table 14 reports also that 73 or 41% reported that they now spoke with basic level English, 55 or 31% with a good level of English and 32 or 18% at a fluent level. Only 20 or 11% reported no current English language skills.

Table 14: English Proficiency

On Arrival (N=403)			**At Time of Questionnaire Response (N=179)**									
			Basic		**Good**		**Fluent**		**None**		**Total**	
Proficiency	**No.**	**Per cent**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Basic	108	26.8										
Good	87	21.6										
Fluent	29	7.2										
Total	224	55.6										
No English	**179**	**44.4**	**73**	**40.8**	**55**	**30.7**	**32**	**17.9**	**20**	**11.2**	**179**	**100**
Total	403	100.0										

These results are perhaps not surprising when it is considered that 80% had attended English language classes. Of those who had not attended classes, when pressed on why not, as reported in Table 15, 69 or 17% answered. Of these 45 or 65% responded that they already knew English, 9 or 13% responded that looking after children was the reason, 4 or 6% responded that job responsibilities was the reason, and 5 or 7% responded that commencement of study was the reason. Only 2 or 3% responded that there was no need to attend classes.

Table 15: Reason for Non Attendance at English Classes (N=69)

Reason	Number	Percent
Already knew English	45	65.2
Children	9	13.0
Commended studying	5	7.2
Job	4	5.8
Other*	4	5.8
No need	2	2.9
Total	69	100.0

* Other reasons given were: DIMIA cancelled visa, pension, new to country, and one response was unreadable.

Of those who did attend classes, the next question requested information on the main source of English language tuition. Responses were received from 315 participants (78%). Government funded Adult Migrant English Program classes were used by 148 or 47% of respondents with TAFE classes next in frequency with 103 responses or 33%. These two sources were cited as both being sources by a further 18 or 6% of respondents to this question. Self-guided study was cited by 12 respondents or 4%, 10 or 3% cited a community organisation, 6 or 2% family and friends, and the same number or 2% citing secondary school. One or two people cited other sources such as volunteers or various combinations of previously mentioned sources. Delving further, 312 or 77% answered as to whether attended classes had been part- or full-time. Full-time was the most frequent with 231 or 74% and the remainder part-time.

Education and Recognition of Prior Learning

When asked about the level of education received in their home country, as Table 16 reports, 56% of respondents had secondary education, 19% tertiary, and 19% primary only. Reporting no education at all were 22 respondents or 6%.

Table 16: Level of Education Received in Home Country

Education Level	Number	Percent
Primary	76	19.1
Secondary	224	56.1
Tertiary (including TAFE)	77	19.3
None	22	5.5
Total	399	99.0
Missing	4	1.0
Total	403	100.0

In relation to whether or not their home country qualifications were recognised in Australia, 53% responded yes and 45% responded no, with 2% not responding to this question. Of those 181 or 45% with qualifications not recognised only 38 or 21% responded to the next question about why (an additional 5 had not applied). Of these, 10 or 26% reported that they had no documentation, 6 or 16% responded that they needed English training, 5 or 13% had not applied to the appropriate body and 4 or 11% responded that their qualifications were not accepted in Australia. Other responses indicated that a return to the profession in which the qualification was held was not desired or that there was not a desire to work because of home duties.

The majority (58%) had received qualifications or training since arriving in Australia, with 41% answering no to this question. A wide variety of fields of study or training were cited amongst the 209 who had gained qualifications, with 157 or 75% who answered in detail about their qualifications gaining tertiary or TAFE qualifications, 23 or 11% gaining English qualifications, 14 or 7% a trade qualification, and 13 or 7% a secondary school qualification.

In terms of current enrolments, 30% of the 403 respondents reported current study, whilst 69% reported no current enrolment. Of the 109 respondents who continued on to explain the nature of

their current enrolment, 77 or 71% were tertiary or TAFE level enrolments, 22 or 20% were English language enrolments, and 9 or 8% were secondary enrolments. A single enrolment in a trade qualification was also noted.

Employment

The next group of questions delved into occupations. The first asked about respondents' occupations in their countries of origin. This question was not answered by 10% of participants, and amongst those answering a wide variety of occupations was given. However, the most frequent at 44% was that of student, with 7% responding as home duties, 5% responding as teaching, 4% responding as sales or shop keeper, 2% responding as farmers, 2% responding as an accountant, 2% responding as working in their own business and 10% as not having an occupation. A variety of other occupations such as bakers, hospitality workers, cleaners, drivers, mechanics, panel beaters, painters, agricultural engineers, electricians, secretary/receptionists, technicians etc were represented at less than 1% each. Employment in their country of origin had been held by only 27% of the respondents prior to their leaving, with one reason for this no doubt the high proportion who had been students at the time.

Participants were then asked whether they had undertaken any volunteer work in Australia. Answering 'yes' was 30% of respondents. Of the 106 or 26% responding to more questioning about this work, 52 or 49% worked on a voluntary basis within the Eritrean community, 13 or 12% worked for a recognised charity such as the Red Cross, 8 or 7% worked within Islamic organisations. Small numbers at less than 1% each cited voluntary social work, child care, library work, tourism, and churches, etc.

When asked whether they had undertaken paid employment in Australia, 65% of the sample of 403 respondents replied 'yes'. Of the 248 or 62% of these respondents responding to further questioning about this paid employment, again a wide variety of skilled and unskilled occupations was cited, with several citing more than one occupation. The most represented occupations with 11 respondents each were cleaning and factory work.

Asked about current employment in Australia, 49% of the 403 participants responded that yes, they were currently employed and 50% responded that they were not currently employed in Australia. From the 203 respondents who answered 'yes', again a wide variety of occupations was cited with taxi driving the most frequent (13 or 7%), followed by cleaning (7 or 4%), customer service (7 or 4%) and factory work (6 or 3%). A question about the length of time in that job was responded to by 153 or 77% of respondents with current employment in Australia. Of these 20 or 13% reported less than one year, 55 or 36% between one and two years, 35 or 23% between two and three years, only 1 between three and four years, 14 or 9% between four and five years, and 28 or 18% beyond 5 years. Of the 203 or respondents answering as to whether their current job was casual, part- or full-time, 122 or 60% were working full-time, 45 or 22% were working casually and 36 or 18% were working on a part-time basis.

Of the 265 or 66% who responded to a question in relation to how they felt about their occupational role in Australia compared to that in their home country, 73 or 28% responded that they were very satisfied, 135 or 51% responded that they were satisfied, 46 or 17% responded that they were unsatisfied and 11 or 4% responded that they were very unsatisfied.

Interestingly, 25 or 12% of the 203 respondents currently employed were running a self-owned business in Melbourne, Australia. Of the 18 or 72% of these self owned business people who responded more deeply as to the type of self-owned business, 5 or 28% cited taxis, 3 or 17% cited a courier business, 2 or 11% cited import/export businesses. Cleaning, computers, driving instructors, satellite dish installation, family day care, and repairs were cited each by nor more than 1 or 2 respondents. When these self-employed taxi drivers are added to those working for others, the proportion from those currently employed who drive taxis increases to 8%.

When asked about the main factors which had played a role in the respondents' success or failure, 27 or 13% of the 203 currently employed in Australia answered. Hard work, or words to that effect, was cited by 21 or 78%. Other reasons included being well educated, coming at a young age to Australia, networking, community and/or family support, doing short courses to improve skills and voluntary work. Some cited more than one factor for this question.

The next group of questions asked about awareness of programs or resources in existence to enhance self-sufficiency and economic development within the respondents' community. Only 47 or 12% responded positively to this question with 88% responding "no". Of the 24 or 51% of the 47 who responded on further probing about this awareness, youth groups, women's groups, community leadership programs, handcraft groups, pensioner activities, resettlement programs, wood working groups and sports and leisure programs were cited.

When asked whether respondents or their communities had taken advantage of the resources available in pursuing economic development opportunities, only 46 or 11% responded affirmatively with 87% responding "no". When pressed, 21 or 46% of these 46 respondents gave more detail about having taken advantage of these resources. The types of resources listed included community development, food handling courses, assistance in securing a job, rural resettlement, handcraft classes, self development programs and unspecified training.

Respondents were then asked whether they received welfare benefits from the Australian government. Answering in the affirmative was 49% of the participants to the survey, with 50% responding 'no'. When pressed further, these 199 welfare recipients described the benefits received as Newstart (64 or 32%), Family assistance (31 or 16%), Austudy (21 or 11%), Pension (20 or 10%), Youth allowance (20 or 10%), Centrelink-unspecified (10 or 5%), and Widow (3 or 2%). Sole parent and Health care card holders represented less than 1% each.

When asked about the extent to which respondents felt their income enabled them to live above the poverty line, 4% answered 'very well', 46% answered 'well', 42% answered that it 'only met basic needs' and 7% answered that 'it was difficult to meet basic needs'. Those respondents with a family were then asked to respond to a question about the extent to which their income enabled them to live above the poverty line. Of the 391 or 97% of respondents answering this question, 3% answered 'very well', 39% responded 'well', 45% responded that it 'only met basic needs', with 10% answering that it 'was difficult to meet basic needs'.

Respondents were then asked about the extent to which "your income enables you to live above the poverty line ". Answering 'very well' was 31%, answering 'well' was 42%, answering 'only to meet

basic needs' was 18% and answering 'it is difficult to meet basic needs' was 7%. Respondents with a family were asked "to what extent does your income enable your family members to live above the poverty line in Eritrea'. Answering 'very well' was 25%, answering 'well' was 40%, answering 'only to meet basic needs' was 22% and answering 'it is difficult to meet basic needs' was 8%.

When asked whether respondents held any assets when they came to Australia, only 17% answered 'yes' and 82% answered 'no'. When asked, "do you send any money back home?" 59% responded 'yes' and 40% responded 'no'. Of the 128 or 32% responding to further questioning about how much money was sent home, 36 or 28% responded between $1-$100, 34 or 27% responded $101-$200, 19 or 15% responded $201-$300, 7 or 5% responded between $301-$400, 19 or 15% responded between $401 and $500, 2 or 2% responded between $501-$600, 8 or 5% responded between $1,000 and $2,000 and 3 or 2% responded $2,000 and over.

When asked how often money was sent home, of the 217 or 54% responding, 81 or 37% responded monthly, 2 or 1% responded two-monthly, 70 or 32% responded quarterly, 3 or 1% reported six monthly, 41 or 19% reported annually and 20 or 9% reported intermittently. When asked by what means the money was transferred, of the 223 or 55% responding to this question 52 or 23% nominated 'bank', 131 or 59% nominated 'people' and 40 or 18% nominated 'other'. Most (90%) of these 'other' responses specified 'money transfer' as the means.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 17 reports the results of a logistic regression using Yes/No responses to the question as to whether the respondent is employed currently in Australia. Being male, prior education and employment experience are expected to be positively associated with current employment, as is whether or not qualifications or training have been undertaken since arrival. Lack of awareness of programs or resources to assist and increasing age are expected to be negatively associated with currently employment.

Table 17

Logistic Regression N=370

Dependent Variable: Are you currently employed in Australia (Yes/No)	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Sig.**
Gender(Male/Female)	**1.244**	**.243**	**26.154**	**.000**
Age (5 categories, youngest to oldest)	.097	.108	.807	.369
English language skill on arrival (Yes/No)	**.568**	**.244**	**5.413**	**.020**
Employed before leaving country of origin? (Yes/No)	.024	.288	.007	.935
Feel a valued member of your ethnic community at least sometimes (Yes/No)	**-.573**	**.255**	**5.052**	**.025**
Awareness of programs or resources (Yes/No)	-.104	.348	.090	.765
At least tertiary education gained before arrival (Yes/No)	-.101	.292	.120	.729
Qualifications or training since arriving (Yes/No)	**.525**	**.231**	**5.170**	**.023**
Constant	.917	.474	3.741	.053
Chi Square	53.787			
Sig Chi Square	.000			
Cox & Snell R^2	13.5			
Nagelkerke R^2				
Overall % correctly classified	18.0 64%			

The results reveal that in explaining current employment in Australia, being male is positive and significant ($p<0.000$), having English language skill on arrival is positive and significant ($p<0.020$) and undergoing training or earning qualifications in Australia since arriving is positive and significant ($p<0.025$). Unexpectedly feeling valued as a member of the relevant ethnic community is significant, but in the direction opposite to that predicted ($p<0.025$). Age, prior employment in the country of origin, awareness of programs or resources to assist, and having a high level of education before leaving the country of origin are not significant.

The model explains 64% of currently employed status, with 68% correct classification for those employed and 61% correct classification for those currently not employed.

Conclusion

This paper set out to examine the patterns of labour market access and employment outcomes of African refugees in Australia focusing on recently arrived migrants, humanitarian entrants and refugees from the Eritrea. The paper's key aim was to examine whether academic qualifications and previous employment experiences can predict employment outcomes in Australia. The quantitative analysis focused on a number of key variables including language skills, links to community organizations and the type of job assistance services received. The overall analysis shows that gender, English language proficiency and further training in Australia all have significant positive impact on an individual's actual employment outcomes. Equally, significant is the fact that social connectedness in the form of community support is also a significant predictor of employment outcomes.

References:

Centrelink (2002) Building Links Report: Exploring Multicultural Settlement in the Goulburn Valley. Centrelink.

Colic-Peisker, V. (2003) 'European Refugees in (White) Australia: Identity, Community and Labour Market Integration. National Europe Centre Paper No. 111, 24 April.

Colic-Peisker V and F Tilbury(2006) "Employment Niches for Recent Refugees: Segmented Labour Market in the twenty-First Century Australia" Journal of Refugee Studies 19(2) pp203-229

Colic-Peisker, V. (2003b) 'Human Capital, Acculturation and Social Identity: Bosnian Refugees in Australia'. Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology 13:337-360.

Country Watch 2006 Eritrea Country Review

Dimia 2006 Eritrean Community Profile, Commonwealth of Australia

Hoffman, Nigel (2003) *Labour Rights and Border Protection: Attempts at a Viable Life on the Temporary Protection Visa.* UNSW Industrial Relations Research Centre.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003) Isma – Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians. [online] Newsletter No. 7, November-December. Available from: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/news7.htm

Human Rights Watch. *Human Rights Watch Commentary on Australia's Temporary Protection Visas for Refugees.* May 2003

Iyib Ruth (2000) "The Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict: Diasporic vs Hegemonic States in the Horn of Africa 1991-2000", The Journal of Modern African Studies 38(4) pp659-682

Khoo, Siew-Ean and Peter McDonald, (2001), *Settlement Indicators and Benchmarks: Report Submitted to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.* Australian Centre for Population Research, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University. October 2001

Lamb, Cherie (1995) *Refugee Women in Australia: The Relationship between Employment Status and Mental Health.*[online]. STARTTS Research Papers, NSW: Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. Available from: http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/areaser/startts/publications/article_5.aspn [accessed 14/06/2004]

Lamb, Cherie (1996) *Barriers to work for refugee women* [online]. STARTTS Research Papers, NSW: Service for the Treatement and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. Available from: http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/areaser/startts/publications/article_3.aspn [accessed 14/06/2004]

Lamba, Navjot K (2003) The Employment Experiences of Canadian Refugees: Measuring the Impact of Human and Social Capital on Quality of Employment' *CRSA/RCSA* 40.1

Leach, M.P. & F. Mansouri, (2004), '*Lives in Limbo: Voices of Refugee Under Protection*', University of NSW Press, Sydney, 160p.

Mansouri, F. (2006), 'Asylum Seekers in Howard's Australia: The Social and Economic Costs of Temporary Protection Visas'. Centre For Citizenship & Human Rights (CCHR), Deakin University: Geelong 198pp

Mansouri, F. & M. Bagdas, (2002), '*Politics of Social Exclusion: Refugees on Temporary Protection Visa in Victoria*'. Centre For Citizenship & Human Rights (CCHR), Deakin University: Geelong 119p.

Marston, Greg , (2003), *Temporary Protection Permanent Uncertainty. The experience of refugees living on temporary protection visas*. Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University. July 2003

Potocky, Miriam and McDonald, Thomas P (1005), 'Predictors of economic status of Southeast Asian refugees: Implications for service improvement.' *Social Work Research*; Dec95, Vol. 19 Issue 4, p219

Richardson, Sue, Lauren Miller-Lewis, Phong Ngo, Diana Ilsley, (2002), *Life in a New Land: The Experience of Migrants in Wave 1 of LSIA 1 and LSIA 2.* Report to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University, Adelaide. August 2002.

Soon, Jason (2002), "Stelzer on Immigration: Some Lessons for Australia." *Policy* Vol 17, no.4. pp11-16. 2001-2002

Stevens, Christine (1998). 'Migration Category and Labour Force Status: Policy Implications of the Performace of Refugees'. People and Place, Vol 6, No 1, pp34-43

Thapa, Prem J. (2004) On the Risk of Unemployment: A Comparative Analysis of the Labour Market Success of Migrants in Australia. Discussion Paper No. 473. Canberra: Australian National University, Centre for Economic Policy Research.

VandenHeuvel, Adriana and Wooden, Mark. 'New Settlers have their say – how immigrants fare over the early years of settlement. Australian Immigration Research DIMIA 2004

Waxman, Peter (1998), "Service Provision and the Needs of Newly Arrived Refugees in Sydney, Australia: A Descriptive Analysis." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 32, No 3 (Autumn, 1998), 761-777.

Waxman, Peter (2001), The Economic Adjustment of Recently Arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in Sydney, Australia. *International Migration Review* Vol 35 Number 2 (Summer 2001): 472-505