



Wellesley Urban Health Research Program
Enabling Award Final Report Template

Report from: The Indaba Aid Development

Project name: The Indaba Southeast Toronto New Immigrant Youth Project

Research period: September 2004 – February 2005

1. Abstract

Principal aims and outcomes as well as plans for the future

The Indaba Southeast Toronto New Immigrant Youth Project was planned and developed by The Indaba Aid Development in partnership and consultancy with Jiamini Community Consultants and the Health and Life Promotion Research Consultancy (H.E.L.P.).

This project was aimed at identifying challenges and difficulties faced by new immigrant youth of ages 16 – 29 originating from Southern Africa, as they attempt to integrate themselves into Canadian lifestyles and culture. The main focus of the project aimed at especially identifying health, and health related challenges faced by these youth as a result of the various circumstances they go through in the integration period. Organizational community assessments that led to the initiation of this project found a need to investigate, in more detail, matters like social exclusion, access to existing services, and the possibility of establishing a more focused structure to service the needs of these youths. Also amongst these difficulties was the stress and frustrations imposed by immigration processing policy, the emotional, psychological and mental impact suffered during the extended and uncertain waiting period. Outcomes to this project will be discussed in detail in the following sections of this report. In brief, we have investigated and found the need to apply for more funding which will aid in unveiling more of the issues that were only scrapped on the surface during this enabling phase. Such a proposal, defined as the “main research proposal” is already underway and will be completed within the next month for submission to various potential funders, including the Wellesley Urban Health Central. Our future plans in relation to this project are to focus a lot on community based research targeted at helping the youth find solutions and answers to the problems and challenges they are facing in Toronto; with the scope of expanding the organization’s work to cover communities countrywide.

2. Project Update

Activities completed during the enabling process.

Describing the activities and outcomes (e.g., identification of research priorities or questions, capacity-building needs, partnership development, and community involvement); concisely exposing the extent to which expected outcomes were achieved, innovative methods or approaches used and as well as results seen that were not expected.

During this enabling process The Indaba Aid Development together with its partners coordinated a series of get-togethers in the form of workshops and simple discussion forums with the targeted youth. Coordination of such events and other activities was carried out through electronic networking with other community organizations that help youth immigrants in Southeast Toronto.

During this and the preceding workshops, youth formed discussion groups aimed at identifying other priority areas affecting them, and on each time a subject of investigation would be proposed. Another of the existing concerns brought forward was that these youth do not know of any existing community services agencies that really focus on understanding their lives and culture, especially those from Southern Africa. These youth feel isolated and distanced from organizations which in-fact would offer the services they actually need, due to fear of identity and culture misinterpretation. The Southern African community was described as scattered and without representation in most existing services and yet the population continues to grow. The youth from that part of the region of Africa is at risk to unprecedented means of attempting survival, such as violence and drug abuse.

Educational integration and racial inequality were also identified by the youth as areas needing more attention and consideration. It was felt that some policies need change at governmental levels and probably a thorough look into the acceptance and/or denial of foreign earned academic qualifications needed for college or university admission. The following were recommendations by participant youth:

- Identify professionals in minority populations who can be employed
- Consider qualifications including foreign earned skills in hiring
- Consulting the Education Ministry, and human rights bodies, etc for advocacy to policy change through micro to mega levels, for new immigrant youth's plight
- Patience exercised by foreigners before obtaining professional licenses should not be abused by prolonged waiting periods.
- Although the youth need to be encouraged to sacrifice, the adults should be seen to be succeeding in order for them to integrate with dignity.
- Making the Educational System accessible to all e.g. recognizing that some Africans have English as their first language due to the colonial influence

Also with regard to racial inequality, the participant youth detailed the following areas of concern to be further investigated through research:

- Job opportunities should be made available to all – some youth participants felt that new immigrants are only used as cheap labour irrespective of qualifications
- In schools African children are mostly discriminated against and profiled for Apprenticeship even when they qualify for University subjects
- There is policy bias – being misjudged because of race
- Some participants of this research also said they feel mistreated by other systems of survival as well e.g. lack of the ability to borrow money/get credit from financial institutions due to poor credit records as a result of job insecurity and low income
- Employers do not provide permanent jobs adding to job insecurity and therefore inability to invest

In closing to this section of the final report, we will mention the fact that, facts raised above were somewhat a great shock to us, especially considering that these are areas of concern that are significantly faced by our youth who should and in fact deserve a steady and comfortable environment as they try so hard to be a part of Canada's progressive communities.

Provided the current support structures provided by the Wellesley Central continue to exist, new research collaborations will always be focused for success.