

SNAPSHOT of Ghanaian Youth 2002



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Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) is an independent, community-based organisation dedicated to empowering people from culturally diverse backgrounds and promoting a culturally rich and diverse Australia. Operating from a base in Blacktown we service people and communities at our centre, through people's homes and from a number of strategic bases around Sydney.

Blacktown MRCs Small & Emerging Communities Project, provides support to communities across Sydney, especially in relation to their settlement needs. The project targets the Sudanese, Tamil, Ghanaian & West African communities in their process of settling in Australia.

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Executive

The *Snapshot of Ghanaian Youth 2002* compiles the outcomes of a number of projects undertaken by the Blacktown MRC Small & Emerging Communities Project over the last 12 months. These projects are:

- Random Survey of 40 young people
- Youth Camp
- Workshops and seminars covering topics such as relationships, intergenerational conflict and leadership
- Focus groups on health services for young people

This report identifies key issues for Ghanaian young people and provides new directions for service providers, the Blacktown MRC and the Ghanaian community in better servicing young people.

Key findings

There was a wide range of issues that were identified through these processes. Four main areas encapsulate issues identified.

1. Discrimination

In the survey, 85% of respondents reported that they had experienced racial discrimination through either educational institutions or the workplace. This issue has been consistently raised in all activities undertaken by the project. Many of the young people surveyed and contacted felt that this had not been effectively dealt with by educational institutions and their families. The flow on effects have been young people having to deal with issues of lowered confidence and self-esteem and not feeling a part of the broader community.

2. Family Settlement

The different times of migration within families presents a complex settlement picture within some Ghanaian families, and has a great effect on family dynamics.

A common pattern of migration is the male of the family will migrate first and then sponsor his spouse or spouse and children. At times young people will migrate once their parents have settled. In our survey, half of the respondents did not come to Australia at the same time as their parents. In these cases, young people were looked after by their extended family in Ghana.

Summary

3. Intergenerational Conflict

Many young people identified the issue of parental expectations, a clash of culture between young people and parents' cultural expectations and peer pressure from other young people as an area of stress and disharmony in their lives.

4. Underutilisation of services

Many of the young people were not aware of the range of health services available. In addition some had misconceptions about the role of counsellors in preventative health, and only identified these professionals as someone you see when you are in trouble.

Most young people did not access youth services, and felt that there were not enough recreational and social opportunities. Some perceived youth services as not catering for them, while others reported pressure from families not to participate, due to perceptions that services only cater for young people in trouble.

The findings show that there are a number of strategies that could be employed to address some of these issues for example youth service providers could get parents involved in their activities and thus raise awareness in the community of programs they offer.

Conclusion

The research shows that Ghanaian young people like other young people have aspirations for the future - a career, positive relationships and independence. Like other young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, conflict between the home culture and the broader society is a source of stress. Ghanaian young people experience a high degree of discrimination, leading to feelings of not belonging to the mainstream culture. The pattern of settlement within Ghanaian families affects family dynamics and the ability of young people to settle in Australia.

The findings indicate that the needs of Ghanaian young people are often not taken into consideration in planning and service provision. This report provides guidance to service providers on what are the key issues and action needed for Ghanaian young people. Resources on Ghana and the Ghanaian community are also included to assist services in this process.

Strategic directions are aimed at assisting service providers to more effectively target their work to take into account the needs of Ghanaian young people and their families, as well as identifying key issues for the Blacktown MRC's Small & Emerging Communities - Ghanaian Project and the Ghanaian community to undertake.

Background to the Snapshot of Ghanaian Youth 2002

The *Snapshot of Ghanaian Youth 2002* was undertaken to assist and educate the broader community and service providers about the needs of young Ghanaian people in Sydney.

The process for development of the *Snapshot* included:

- Random Survey of 40 young people
- Youth camp
- Workshops and seminars covering topics such as relationships, intergenerational conflict and leadership
- Focus groups on health services for young people

This process was a partnership between the Ghanaian community and the Blacktown MRC. A number of families in the community were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the youth camp.

The survey was developed and administered with the assistance of members of the Ghanaian community. Community members pre-tested the survey and young Ghanaian people were involved in distributing and collecting surveys. The survey was given out to young people randomly selected from the community at a wedding, youth gatherings and at two of the Ghanaian Churches. Young people between the ages of 13 and 25 were surveyed. The group were made up of 28 females and 12 males.

Included in this report is a *Guide to the Ghanaian Community in Sydney*. This guide is designed for service providers to assist them in understanding more about the background of people from Ghana, demographic data as well as a list of up-to-date community contacts.



Blacktown MRC's Ghanaian Community Project

Since the beginning of the Small & Emerging Communities - Ghanaian Project at the Blacktown MRC in 1997 young people and their issues have been given priority. Young people have been assisted to think through issues and to come up with strategies through seminars and forums tailored to assist them to achieve outcomes in preparation for their future.

Among the activities and seminars the young people have participated in are the following:

- Excursion to the Blue Mountains
- Leadership Training Camp for young people
- Identity and values as a Ghanaian young person
- How to handle changes during Adolescence
- Dating and relationship Seminar
- Forum on why young people leave home
- Focus groups on awareness of health services for young people

The Ghanaian community are a small community, numbering approximately 1215 in NSW and 2047 in Australia (ABS Census 2001). Ghanaians, like other small and emerging minority communities are not concentrated in one geographic area. Ghanaians are scattered all over Sydney with concentrations in the Canterbury-Bankstown Blacktown and Liverpool areas.

Ghanaians have generally migrated as skilled migrants and under the Family Reunion Program. Due to frequent military take-overs and its attendant human rights abuses, political influences dominated migration between 1979 to late 1999/2000.

The men are usually the first ones to arrive here followed by the spouse and sometimes the spouse and children. This staged migration has led to different family members being at different levels of settlement. The differing needs were clearly identified in the youth survey and through consultations with young people.

The young people easily take on the culture and lifestyle of their new country. This leads to conflict due to the contradictory expectations and perspectives between young people and their parents especially in the choice of careers. Pressure is exerted on young people to choose prestigious and well-paid professions without consideration sometimes of their interests and skills, leading to disagreements and conflicts. Another area of contention is the adoption of "western" lifestyles and culture.

In addition to the research and activities undertaken specifically with young people, the Ghanaian Project also initiated a Family Harmony Project starting in 2001 in the community addressing issues of intergenerational conflict, through cross generational workshops and dialogue.

Cultural Background

All respondents were born in Ghana with the exception of two, one of whom was born in Australia and one in an unnamed country. Both parents of respondents were born in Ghana.

Residence in Australia

The respondents have been in Australia from periods ranging from less than 5 years to 14 years. 85% of the respondents have been in Australia for less than 10 years whilst none has been here for 15 years or more.

Migration with Family

Child rearing in Ghana is the responsibility of both the parents and the extended family.

Half of the respondents did not come to Australia at the same time as their parents. Most of the young people were looked after by extended family, mostly grandparents whilst their parents were in Australia.

In Australia the lack of extended family support in the care and upbringing of children is the cause of some of the difficulties experienced by families. This gap in parenting can be remedied by establishing a support system in the community where members of the community will act as extended family for each other's children.

Language used at home - Ghanaian Identity

The majority of respondents use the Ghanaian language at home with Akan being the most popular language used at home. Most of them will speak a Ghanaian language to a friend from similar background when in the company of Australian peers.

Generally, Ghanaian young people are proud of their language. Unfortunately, some of the children born here cannot speak their mother tongue due to the unavailability of ethnic language schools in the community.

As language and culture help determine one's identity most of these children are growing up without belonging to either the mainstream Australian culture or to the Ghanaian culture. This sense of not belonging can lead to identity crises in the young people and needs to be addressed by both the project and the community.

Most of the young people surveyed expressed the desire to learn more about their Ghanaian heritage and culture.

Things the respondents like about Australia

Young people gave multiple reasons for liking Australia. Their responses fall under the following headings: opportunities, multiculturalism, technological advancements and environment.

Things the respondents dislike about Australia

The respondents gave racism/discrimination, attitude of their peers and being nostalgic about extended family back in Ghana as the things they dislike about Australia.

Educational attainment of respondents

The stage of education of respondents still at school are as listed below:

Year 7	2
Year 8	2
Year 9	6
Year 10	7

Most of the respondents are still at school and are interested in acquiring tertiary qualifications.

Highest qualification attained by respondents are listed as follows:

Masters Degree	1
Diploma	3
Certificate	2
Year 12	2
Not answered	4

Youth Survey

Respondents studying and working

Paid part time work and studying	4
Paid full time work	3
Not answered	3
TAFE studying	1

Desired careers of respondents still studying

The most popular careers identified by young people in descending order were doctor, lawyer, IT professional and travel & tourism. Most respondents identified a professional career as their desired option for the future.

Opinion on difficulty in finding work

50% of the respondents believe that competition would make it difficult for them to get a job in their chosen field. Some cited discrimination as a barrier to getting a job.

Discrimination

85% of respondents have experienced discrimination either at work or at school. Some have experienced discrimination in more than one way such as name-calling, not being given an equal opportunity, being left out, bullied and patronised.

Some of them attributed the discrimination to the colour of their skin. Most of them reported the incident to teachers and family but little was done by way of redress.

Most young people experience racism ranging from being treated differently to verbal and physical abuse. Many felt that this created a barrier in becoming fully integrated in the school system. Inaction has led to some of these young people taking matters into their own hands, which could lead to problems with the law in some instances.

Young people still at school - Homework Assistance

50% wanted assistance with their homework and would attend such classes if organised in areas close to where they live. This is something the project can look at in the next nine months.

Religion

95% of respondents attend Church regularly. 70% of respondents belong to the youth group at the Church they attend. It is therefore important for the project and service providers to work with the youth leaders in the various Ghanaian Churches when appropriate as a lot of young people could be reached this way.

Relationships

Interesting and varied answers were given in responses to questions on relationships. 28% thought 16 years is appropriate for a young person to have a relationship.

Relationships tend to be another area of contention in Ghanaian households, as the social values of the community do not allow young people to enter into relationships with the opposite sex. The respondents were equally divided on the subject of sex before marriage. 48% of respondents believe in sex before marriage whilst 47% of respondents do not believe in it.

As in all migrant families young Ghanaians are torn between the two cultures, that of their parents and the new culture. It is therefore important that these young people are encouraged to be themselves. Seminars are needed in how to handle peer and parental pressures.

Choice of partner

In Ghana the parents and in fact the extended family have a say in the choice of one's partner as marriages are arranged between families and not individuals. Parents have to give their approval to one's choice of a partner before the necessary rites are performed.

80% of respondents would not accept a partner chosen by their parents. 53% would prefer being married to a Ghanaian rather than a non-Ghanaian whilst 13% did not care whom they married.

73% of respondents would not travel home to Ghana to choose a bride or groom. Various responses were given as to why they would not go back to choose a bride as listed below:

"Too much hassle"
"Doesn't matter who you marry"
"Partners can be found anywhere"

The responses above show the extent to which the young people have accepted aspects of their new culture, which lead to conflict in families.

Drugs & alcohol

Majority of the respondents 93% do not consider it cool to either smoke or take drugs. 85% of respondents do not consider it cool to drink. Only 40% of respondents attend discos and nightclubs for entertainment.

Opinion on what they consider fun

The respondents consider parties, spending time with family and friends, sports, attending dances and excursions as fun.

Family

55% of the young people rated their relationship with their parents as fine or okay. Improvement in family relationships can be attributed to the Family Harmony Project undertaken by Blacktown MRC where parents and young people are encouraged to talk about issues. 30% have a fabulous relationship with their parents whilst 13% considered their relationship with their parents as poor.

25% of respondents have at times considered leaving home. Various responses were given as to their reasons for considering leaving home:

"No freedom"
"Don't get along"
"Family tension"
"Pressure"
"Independence"

The quest for independence seems to be the main reason for young peoples desire to leave home. It is not in the Ghanaian culture for young people to leave home except for study or marriage. The adoption of this trait is a big problem in the community. Youth accommodation providers need to be aware of the cultural context when dealing with Ghanaian young people.

Ways of resolving conflict

Of the number of respondents who have conflict with their parents only 27% have ever tried mediation when they cannot agree with their parents. 18% would like to try mediation next time they have conflict with their parents.

The young people need to be taught conflict resolution principles to be able to work through problems when they arise.

Youth Survey

Future



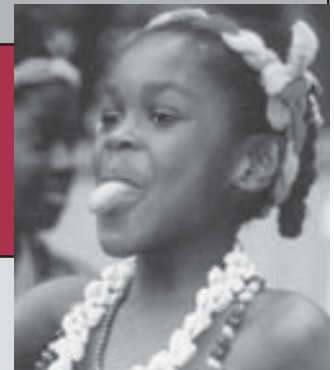
85% of respondents would like to know more about their Ghanaian culture and would attend seminars on Ghanaian values and culture during the school and university holidays if available.

Asked as to what sort of activities they would like organised for the youth various responses were given as listed below:

- Parties, BBQs and outings such as camping and hiking
- Sports activities
- Evangelism/Bible Study
- Educational Tours
- Cultural dancing and learning Twi
- Musical explosions and discos
- Debates
- Talks about life and educational talks
- "Anything that will help us in future"

These Ghanaian young people do not use mainstream youth services due to the perception that only young people with problems use these services. Parents are not comfortable with young people attending around youth centres in the company of people they do not approve of and programs not sanctioned by them. Family involvement in activities run by these centres may make parents more accepting of their programs.

The respondents stated there were not enough activities targeting young people in the community. There is the need for more youth programs and activities in the community. Activities undertaken by the Small & Emerging Communities project have helped the young people in establishing links with each other. It has provided them with the



Outcomes of Ghanaian Youth Camp 2002

A two-day youth camp was held at the Grose Vale Conference Centre - *Today's Youth, Tomorrow's Leaders*. The aim was to train young people in effective leadership.

Seminars, workshops, videos and teambuilding activities were used to enable the participants to explore various leadership issues and topics such as time management, effective study techniques and choice of careers. Focus groups were used to assess their use and knowledge of the Australian health system.

Challenges in living in Australia

Young people spoke about the dual identity they are pressured into through parents wanting them to keep their culture and their peers wanting them to adopt "western" culture in order to be accepted by them.

Intergenerational conflict is common at home. This is often the result of the rate at which the young people adopt the Australian culture or lifestyle and the difficulties they have in being open about it and being accepted at home.

Discrimination and racism is the other main challenge faced by Ghanaian young people in Australia. These young people feel they are judged by the colour of their skin and are not given equal opportunity with their peers. They also reported that they are not given equal opportunity in sports activities.

Knowledge and experiences of the health services

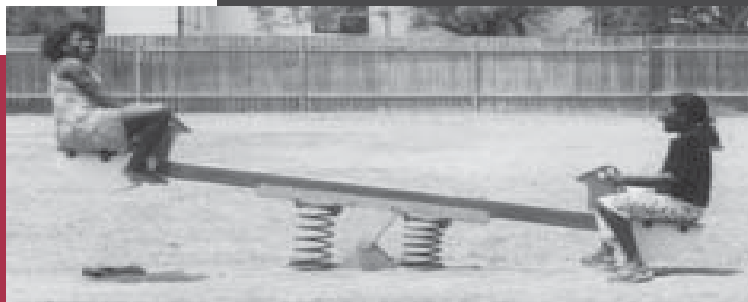
The young people reported that emotional and environmental pressures could have a negative impact on their health. The participants had adequate knowledge of curative services but did not have much knowledge about preventative services like counseling offered by the Australian health system. Some of their experiences with the health system have not been pleasant as some of them complained about carelessness and wrong diagnosis by nurses and doctors.

The young people cited stereotypes, embarrassment and males and females being treated by doctors of the opposite gender as difficulties in dealing with health services.

Information needs

Participants asked for more information and seminars to be organised on the following topics:

- Dating and relationships
- Choice of careers and parents interference
- Communication in the family
- Issues for adolescents.



Strategic Directions

The main issues identified by young people in both the questionnaires and the camp were:

- Discrimination & Racism
- Intergenerational Conflict
- Access to youth services and activities.

Discrimination & Racism

More talks and educational seminars are needed in the community to raise awareness about the role counsellors and anti-discrimination officers so young people will seek help when necessary. The project should continue with talks and workshops on this issue in conjunction with the NSW Department of Education.

The NSW Department of Education should sensitise anti-discrimination officers to the needs of young people from small & emerging communities in schools. Action should be taken against racism and discrimination in schools to prevent young people taking the law into their hands and also to help improve their self-esteem. The Blacktown MRC Small & Emerging Communities - Ghanaian Project has developed workshops on youth leadership to address issues of self-esteem and confidence and develop strategies to cope with discrimination. Using this experience this project could provide training and consultancy to the Department of School Education to

assist them in dealing more effectively with this sensitive issue.

Intergenerational Conflict

A mentoring program should be set up for Ghanaian young people to provide support for families which is usually provided by the extended family system in Ghana. The project could support the community in initially establishing such a program.

On the issue of intergenerational conflict, the project should seek funding to provide a more comprehensive program in the community to deal with issues of intergenerational conflict. Such a project could target a number of small & emerging communities to make it more economically viable.

Access to youth services and activities

Youth Service providers should tailor their programs to the needs of young people from emerging communities. Programs can be developed in consultation with community leaders and the young people themselves to meet parental expectations.

More youth programs and activities should be run by the project in partnership with the Ghanaian community to address the inadequacy of activities for young people in the community.

Most of the young people surveyed expressed the desire to learn more about their Ghanaian heritage and culture. The project in partnership with the Ghanaian community should set this in motion. This will help the young people overcome the sense of not belonging which could lead to identity crises in the young people in future and need to be addressed by both the project and the community.

Guide to the Ghanaian

Background information about Ghana

Ghana is situated on the west coast of Africa. It is bordered on the east by the Republic of Togo, on the west by Ivory Coast, on the north by Burkina Faso and on the south by the Gulf of Guinea.

It is the second largest populated nation in West Africa with about 18 million people at the 2000 Census.

Religion is central to the lives of the people of Ghana. Major religions are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion.

Main languages are **Akan (Twi), Ewe, Ga and Dagbani.**

Ghana has a lot of natural resources. Gold, precious minerals, cocoa, timber and tourism are the main foreign exchange earners for the country. Ghana has a floating currency and a liberalised economy.

The country has communication facilities as well as seaports and a modern international airport in the capital, Accra. Ghana is fast becoming a tourist and convention destination with the development of hotels, convention centres and theatres for Europe and America.

Ghana has a rich culture. Tradition and custom still form part of the life of its people. One of the most important centres of culture and tradition is Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region.

The people of Ghana are well known for their warmth, cheerfulness and hospitality.

Education

Ghana has a well-developed educational system with 3 levels - the elementary consisting of pre-primary, primary, primary and middle; secondary- consisting of technical and teacher training and the university level.

Pre-primary level usually starts at the age of 2- 3 years. Primary level of education takes 6 years. Entry into the Secondary level is by a nationwide competitive examination organised by the West African Examination Council. Students have a choice to either continue to the Senior Secondary School after an entry exam or enter a Technical or Vocational Institute. After passing the Senior Secondary School Certificate students may choose to enter University, Polytechnic or Teacher Training College.

The government is currently undertaking an extensive review of the educational system in Ghana with a view to radically improving it.



Community in Sydney

Migration History

Ghanaians love to travel abroad for further study and for residence but until recently Europe and the USA were the preferred destinations for Ghanaians. The first Ghanaian migrant to Australia came in the 1960s, followed by a trickle of students from time to time until about ten to fifteen years ago when Australia became a destination for Ghanaians.

The main centre of migration in Australia has been Sydney particularly the areas of Canterbury-Bankstown, Blacktown and Liverpool local government areas.

Demographic Data

Ghana born in NSW and main areas of residence in NSW Comparison between 1996 and 2001 Census

Area	1996	2001	%change
NSW	872	1215	39%
Main areas of residence in NSW			
Canterbury	145	185	28%
Liverpool	63	137	117%
Blacktown	72	107	49%
Bankstown	46	107	132%
Marrickville	84	53	-59%
Ashfield	30	26	- 15%
Campbelltown	13	26	100%
Parramatta	55	20	-64%

Contacts for the Ghanaian Community

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