

# Comments on the First Report

by C. Michael Lanphier

The First Report focuses upon two distinct and major outcomes of the host group adaptation pilot project: cost and social adaptation. In light of the stated objectives, it was predicted that refugees who were assisted by host groups would depend less upon formal cash assistance from governmental sources, especially the Adjustment Assistance Programme (AAP). Rather, they would be assisted by host groups to obtain goods and services in the community through informal and personal networks available to host-group members. As in the case of private sponsorship, it was expected that donations would supplement and reduce the number of goods which would be purchased in the early stages of settlement. Yet the Report indicates that refugees with host-group experience received about the same (and in certain cases slightly more) assistance from AAP than did host-group refugees. The comparison may not be exact, as the family size of refugees under the host-group programme is larger. Higher AAP expenditures may thereby be attributable.<sup>1</sup> In any event, under the conditions in the pilot programme, no cost savings in governmental assistance are evident.

As the evaluation occurred after the first six months' administration of the programme, very few effects on rates of labour force participation could be evident. As most refugees were enrolled in language training, only a scant number was available for work. If anything, the greater retention of host-group refugees in language programmes indicates that entry to the labour force may be thereby retarded. Doubtless host groups were encouraging refugees to take advantage of language training in order to *improve their chances of gaining a level of employment more closely keyed to their respective interests and abilities*. Host-group members were sought out by refugees as sources of information about the job market among other things. Consequently refugees did not need to consult Canada Employment Commission (CEC) counsellors, as indicated by lower frequency of visits to CEC counsellors in London and Regina. Yet the CEC remains important to all refugees as the main source of information about job availability. If host-group counselling is

<sup>1</sup> The relation between family size and amount of AAP payments cannot be detailed from the data presented in the Report. Payments are lowest of all three cities in London, where larger families are more frequently found among host-group refugees.

Social Adaptation: Host Group and "Control" Refugee Groups		
(mean percent showing adaptation)		
Type of Adaptation	Host group	"Control" group
Knowledge		
Community services <sup>a</sup>	11	4
Community services plus health	15	5
Use		
Community services <sup>a</sup>	4	2
Community services plus health	8	4
Consumer behaviour <sup>b</sup>	40	20
Interpersonal <sup>c</sup>	41	15
Number cases	88	99

Source: CEIC: First Report on the Host Programme, Tables 17-20.

<sup>a</sup> Legal aid, human rights commission, rent review, social agencies, ombudsman, day care.  
<sup>b</sup> Knowing how to shop for food, for clothes, for appliances, for furniture, for household goods.  
<sup>c</sup> Happy with settlement rate, Canadian friends, Canadian acquaintances, neighbours from former country.

effective, however, successive evaluations should find larger numbers of host-group refugees employed, particularly in jobs which require higher skill levels and mastery of written and spoken English or French.

The most notable effect of the host-group programme on initial adaptation should be a higher degree of social adaptation to everyday life in Canada: the acquisition of knowledge about the local community, use of some community services and the development of a pattern of acquaintanceship with Canadians. Host-group intervention, after all, is a *social*, not an economic, agent of adaptation in the first instance. Some economic effects inevitably occur as a result of social arrangements -- no less in the case of the host-group programme than other forms of social networking. The type of activities in which host groups assist refugees points to a smoother introduction to Canadian life, including economic life, over a protracted period of time.

From that standpoint of the larger Canadian community, the programme may be a unique catalyst for increased awareness of refugees in the community: community members must become involved with newcomers. Host-group co-ordinators have reported that involvement extends not only to host-group members but to their friends, neighbours and associates.<sup>2</sup> The recruitment process (of prospective host-group members) alone may sensitize members of the community to the need for involvement. Agencies (through recruiting, etc.) become sensitive to the importance of continuing community participation. Agency personnel

<sup>2</sup> Presentation to Standing Conference workshop, Winnipeg, November 29, 1986.

feel that recruitment contacts may have some effect in reducing resistance to refugees.

Overall, twice as many refugees who have experienced host-group assistance show signs of adaptation than do "control" group refugees, despite the generally low level of use of community services during the first six months after arrival. As the accompanying table indicates, knowledge of community services is somewhat wider than use of them, but in either case host-group experience appears to provide refugees with information which may lead to earlier use of these services. The effects of host-group assistance are most evident with respect to developing familiarity with the market place. Two-fifths of the host-group refugees, compared with one-fifth of the "control" group refugees, on average, indicated experience in shopping for a wide variety of goods. The most striking differences occur in the interpersonal sphere, again with two-fifths of the host-group refugees, in contrast with fewer than one-fifth of the "control" group refugees, establishing social ties with Canadians. With regard to several areas of social adaptation, therefore, host group arrangements have a marked initial effect on the rate of settlement into Canadian society.

Technically, the evaluation exercise is an important first step which may be improved in the following respects.

1. Reconciliation of goals. At present, the two goals -- a higher level of accomplishment in language classes and early entry into the job market -- cannot be simultaneously satisfied. It might have been more prudent to expect that the entry of the host-group refugees into the labour force would be somewhat delayed, compared with the "control" group refugees, with a higher language retention rate and at a somewhat higher skill level.

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# Host Programme for Refugee Settlement

by Gordon Barnett

2. The list of indicators was somewhat heterogeneous. It combined cost-efficiency, employment, language training and several measures of acculturation. While all of these are features of refugee adaptation, they could be ordered in terms of priority and sequence.
3. The matching of the host-group refugee sample with "control" groups resulted in heterogeneous sample groups, despite attempts to make them similar. As the host-group sample contained more families of larger size, especially in London, two effects may not have been given adequate consideration. Families with a larger number of dependants may require higher subsidies and have more elaborate material and social requirements. The process of adaptation to Canadian life would take longer. Secondly, some of these larger families will have two or more breadwinners. Their adaptation needs would be more squarely oriented to the job market. Once employed, their needs for material assistance would be less. In future sample-matching exercises, more emphasis should fall upon the quality of family life, with closer comparisons of families with different age compositions.
4. Effects of an accidental difference of late matching of refugees with host groups in Winnipeg were unmeasured. Doubtless the greater role of Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) personnel in finding housing and other matters immediately after arrival made these refugees more reliant upon government assistance, despite their being matched with host groups. Effects of "late matching" should be explored further.
5. More attention should have been awarded to comments of refugees themselves. Initial refugee adaptation should be seen minimally as a tripartite process: the roles of government, private and refugees are distinct and require separate attention. While the first two were amply described, the third, reactions of refugees, was overshadowed by attention to provision of services for refugees, rather than with refugees.

In sum, the host group programme represents an innovative approach to assistance in settlement of refugees in Canada. It depends upon concerted activity on the part of many small groups of concerned volunteers to assist individuals and families who have just arrived in Canada as refugees. The strongest feature of the programme is the collaborative undertaking between governmental and private-group efforts in a complementary fashion. The kind of assistance which host groups offer varies from time to time, group to group and individual to individual. It is of necessity somewhat difficult to detect. Nonetheless, the First Report succeeded in detailing important initial effects in social adaptation. Other effects of cost savings and increased labour force participation were not evident. It remains for successive evaluations to trace these longer-term outcomes.

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The Host Programme was implemented in the Spring of 1985 following lengthy consultations with immigrant-serving organizations and church groups, with the intent of joining the best elements of the private sponsorship programme and the government sponsorship programme.

The objective is not only to enhance the settlement process of government-assisted refugees, but to improve community support services to all refugees by increasing community awareness of the refugee movement.

To implement the Host Programme, funds were borrowed from the Adjustment Assistance Programme, which provides income support for indigent refugees during their first year in Canada. It was proposed that refugees receiving the assistance of a host group would require less income support, and the savings would pay for the cost of the Host Programme.

It was expected that host groups might find permanent accommodation for the refugees thus reducing their stay in hotels, might provide furniture and clothing, again saving funds, and might assist refugees to find employment, thus reducing their need for income support.

Host programmes have now been implemented in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Windsor, London, Quebec City, Moncton and Halifax. The cost of each individual project ranges between \$20,000 and \$45,000.

The benefits of the Host Programme, while far from being fully assessed, are already evident and are examined in some detail in C. Michael Lanphier's comments on the First Report. Positive tendencies are emerging in the areas of language acquisition and social adaptation. These positive trends are all the more impressive when one realizes that in most of the communities the refugees referred to the host groups are cases which are most likely to encounter settlement difficulties.

Other positive effects of the Host Programme came to light during group interviews (focus groups) of both hosted and non-hosted refugees, carried out in Regina, Winnipeg and London.

Reports from Host Programme co-ordinators indicate that the programme has had a positive impact on community awareness. Co-ordina-

ordinators have appeared at church meetings and other public gatherings and have sponsored discussion groups and conferences. Radio, television and newspaper coverage has followed.

The objectives of the programme are being met: the settlement process has been enhanced and community awareness has been increased. But what of the savings to the Adjustment Assistance Programme -- the funds which were borrowed to implement the Host Programme? The initial evaluation material received does not show these savings. The most obvious reason is that it is too early to draw distinctions in terms of income support needs. Perhaps no savings will be realized as the 12-month Adjustment Assistance Programme period may be too short to demonstrate the difference between a hosted and non-hosted refugee. Perhaps savings will be realized later in terms of social services not being required by the better adapted hosted refugees.

On the other hand, the expectation of savings may not have been well-founded or well-understood. For instance, while many host groups are prepared to assist the refugees with both clothing and furniture, they do not feel that these items should be provided in lieu of the government's contribution, but rather whatever they provide should enhance the refugee's situation.

Looking to the future, we have yet to face the difficulty of sustaining community support over the long-term. This will likely be the main challenge of the pilot projects over the next two years. In addition, we should return to the discussion of cost and savings before we seek to expand the programme. Unless a new process is instituted which will provide the savings foreseen during the early development stage of the Host Programme, expansion will have to be based on a new deal. According to Heather MacDonald, Host Programme Co-ordinator in Winnipeg, "We have made mistakes, but we must have learned something -- because daily I receive calls from new arrivals asking ever so politely to be included (in the Host Programme)."

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