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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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