

# 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: CEC: 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.