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**FOCUS ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN:
A STUDY OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S NEEDS
AND PROGRAMS IN THE OCASI NETWORK**

*With funding support from the
Ontario Women's Directorate*

Prepared by
Marion Maceda-Villanueva

ONTARIO COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING IMMIGRANTS (OCASI)

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ABSTRACT

This research centres on an examination of the community-based agencies within the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) network and how they serve immigrant women. In order to describe the programs available to immigrant women throughout the province, the agency respondents are arranged according to **type**, (i.e. women-focused or those agencies serving 70% or more women, and general immigrant service agencies or those serving less than 70% women), and according to **region** (Metro Toronto, and Outside of Metro Toronto). In so doing, the study is able to compare and contrast what exists in both groups.

The report examines agency problems and concerns and is able to identify gaps that exist in settlement and orientation programs and services for immigrant and refugee women throughout Ontario. It puts forward recommendations with regards to responsive programming for immigrant and refugee women.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) would like to acknowledge the following as essential to the successful completion of this study:

the agency respondents, interviewees, and focus group discussion participants, for their personal and professional experiences in the field of immigrant service which provided the essence of this study;

Pushpa Seevaratnam, for her work in developing the questionnaire, conduct of interviews and focus groups, and initial analysis of the data;

Fatima Filippi, Saddeiq Holder, Judy McKinley, Jeanne Eddington and Daniela Szado of the Immigrant Women's Issues Committee who conceptualized the study, and provided assistance at various stages of the research.

the OCASI staff, for their invaluable assistance in providing feedback throughout the analysis and report writing stages, and in editing the final report;

the Ontario Women's Directorate, which provided the generous support for the undertaking of this research; and

the immigrant and refugee women of Ontario who struggle to find and make their place in Canada.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

PROFILE OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN BEING SERVED *

The majority of immigrant and refugee women served by OCASI member agencies throughout Ontario are served by general immigrant service agencies. This is because of the large numbers of people that receive services from these agencies compared to the numbers served by the women-focused agencies.

The main body of the OCASI network is comprised of general immigrant service agencies (those serving less than 70% women clients). A quarter of the member agency respondents are women-focused (those which serve more than 70% women clients). Most of the general immigrant service agencies are based in Metro Toronto with 42% located across the province. Even less women-focused agencies (15%) are based in regions outside of Metro Toronto.

The main age range of clients served by member agency respondents is 25 to 49. Probably because of the types of services offered by these agencies, more women-focused agencies seem to provide services predominantly to women in this highly employable age range. Few women-focused agencies provide services for youth, older or senior clients.

Among the general immigrant service agencies, services are more evenly distributed although still weighted towards the 25 to 49 age group. Services provided by these agencies are broader in scope and therefore include a wider age mix of target clientele.

General immigrant service agencies tend to serve those who have been in Canada for a shorter time period than women-focused agencies. Again, when looked at in terms of kinds of services offered, one will notice that women-focused agencies providing employment-related training are constrained to serving those who have been in Canada

***Analytical Framework:**

Findings of this study were analyzed in two ways; by type of agency and by geographical location. Agency respondents were divided into groups using a cut-off point of 70%, all those reporting 70% more of their clients as women became one group: Women-focused groups. All those serving less than 70% women composed the other group: General immigrant service organizations. With regards to the second factor, that of location, because of the large majority of respondents from Metropolitan Toronto, it seemed more feasible to place the agencies located outside of Metropolitan Toronto in one separate group. This is further discussed in the "Methodology" section.

longer, thus suggesting these clients have "adapted" more to Canadian life, know their way around, have better language skills, have been able to access some social services and are ready for job orientation/search assistance or skills training.

Similarly, the level of language ability of the clients that women-focused agencies tend to serve is more advanced than those to whom general immigrant service agencies provide services. Those with no knowledge of the language or very basic knowledge, are served by the general immigrant service agencies precisely because of the larger range of services they offer.

In the same way, although a third of the clients that agency respondents serve are landed immigrants and another third are Canadian citizens, it is the general immigrant service agencies that tend to serve more refugee claimants. This is probably due to the nature of the programs offered by women-focused agencies for which refugees are not eligible due to the Employment and Immigration Commission's eligibility restrictions.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Although still not widely available, employment-related services seem to be the most frequently provided service (42%) targeted to women (about 50% of the agencies provide employment-related services). This indicates that the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women lie in the general area of employment whether in career counselling, life skills, job search skills, academic upgrading, work placements, etc. More than half of these services are provided by women-focused agencies.

Social support services, provided by the bulk of the member agencies, are only offered specially for women by a quarter of the agencies. These services include crisis intervention, individual counselling, referrals to family/child services, etc.

Language training which is offered by 45% of agencies, is targeted to women by a third of the agencies. This too, suggests another main concern of immigrant women and would indicate the need for increased services that would allow more participation from women.

Settlement services are generally not targeted to women. A few specific activities such as individual client advocacy, orientation and referrals are aimed at women. Most of the agencies that provide these services for women are women-focused agencies.

Programs for Specific Groups of Disadvantaged Immigrant Women

Most of the special programs offered to specific groups of disadvantaged immigrant women are found in the Toronto area. More than one third of the agency respondents provide services specifically geared to serve **visible minority women**, 87.5% of the agencies are located in Metro Toronto. Another third of the respondents offer services to **isolated women**. Two thirds of these agencies are Toronto-based groups. Less than a quarter of the member agency respondents provide services for **elderly immigrant women**, 73% of which are based in Toronto. Only two agencies reported providing services to **disabled immigrant women** and both of these are located in Toronto.

These findings can be attributed to the large numbers of immigrants, more than half of whom are women, that because of economic and social reasons have continued to settle in Toronto. Perceived levels of needs have reached a more complex nature thus necessitating a wider variety of services. Also, perhaps because of the long history of feminist consciousness in Toronto, including a growing awareness of immigrant and visible minority issues, immigrant women have become more vocal in expressing their needs and problems and advocating for special programs.

The findings indicate a distinct gap in services for seniors and disabled immigrant women throughout all the 5 regions. The overall number of programs for disadvantaged immigrant women being extremely low, it is evident that there is a definite need for increased services for visible minority and isolated women in the Toronto area and an even greater need for programs which target these women in other regions of the province.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES

The responses offered by immigrant serving agency workers provide a different perspective to barriers that immigrant and refugee women face. The leading barrier recognized by the bulk of the agencies was that of a lack of language skills. This was considered key to successful adaptation and settlement in Canada.

Regionally, a lack of interest and motivation was ranked slightly higher. When further probed, it was found that this lack of interest and motivation could be due to a number of issues related to women's isolation and cultural barriers that exist among the women, and because of government policies that are gender-blind in principle. The inter-relatedness of these problems were confirmed in the subsequent barriers agreed on by more than half of

the agency respondents. These were a lack of child care support services, lack of self-confidence/assertiveness, a lack of information of services available and a lack of monies to access transportation.

AGENCY PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS

It is interesting that most of the major agency problems and concerns stated were related to funding. Foremost among the agency concerns is a *lack of core funding* which led to the inability to hire required staff, or much needed equipment. *Overall funding levels being too low* was a second difficulty, i.e. funding levels for immigrant serving organizations are already low, so that funds for women-specific projects are pushed to the bottom of the priority list. A third concern mentioned and related to overall funding levels was that of *annual funding increases being too low*. Next, were the difficulties experienced in obtaining funding for projects; the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funding criteria being too limited; a lack of resources (i.e. staff, time, skills) to prepare and submit funding proposals; and finally a lack of knowledge of or access to appropriate funding bodies and sources. An interesting comment made was the tendency of some funders to want to become involved in the operations of the agency as a condition for funding. Agencies felt that this showed a lack of understanding on the part of government officials of the nature of work/services carried out by community agencies, and a lack of confidence in the capabilities and skills that community workers have. Related to this tendency is an inconsistency in funding criteria. These change from year to year creating gaps in services and compelling the agency to meet funders expectations rather than clients' needs.

Another consequence of the lack of funds was an expressed tendency for agencies to become competitive and secretive in their application for support and proposal development rather than open and cooperative, because of a perception that they are contending for the same limited money.

Expectedly, most of the agencies that reported having received funding for immigrant women's programs are based in Toronto. However, it is interesting to find that there is a difference in nature of the projects depending on the type of agency. Most of the women-specific projects are educational, while the general immigrant service agencies provide outreach and general women's programs. One must view these findings in relation to the funding source criteria as well which tend to be restrictive and "trendy". If sources specify their funding for educational projects directed towards women, it is quite likely that these

are the kinds of programs to which the agencies will gear their proposals whether or not these may have an inappropriate focus. The community-based agencies are constrained to design their project proposals to comply with the conditions of the funders because of poor financial situations.

It is important therefore, that funding sources are more knowledgeable about the issues that are most appropriate and of most concern to the target populations.

When asked about difficulties with funders, the main problem agencies reported was the *lack of recognition of the roles community-based organizations play in social service planning and delivery*. This seems to be at the root of many of the problems around funding. Because there is very little understanding of the inaccessibility of services to immigrants and refugees, especially women, funders are unable to comprehend what possible role immigrant serving agencies might have other than basic referral work, translation and interpretation services. This perpetuates the myth about settlement assistance being only necessary during the first year or so in Canada. There is a strong belief that as a first step, those in power must understand that community-based immigrant service agencies are key players in the planning and development of services. They must comprehend the special link that community-based agencies have with the target population. The role of immigrant serving agencies in making settlement and social services more appropriate and accessible to newcomers, must become clear to policy makers before meaningful programming for immigrant women can begin to take place.

General immigrant service agencies reported the *difficulty of obtaining funding support for women-targeted programs*. This can be attributed to policy makers' lack of understanding of the specific needs of immigrant women as different from other target groups. There is an expressed need for a raising of awareness on the part of government officials about the double disadvantage that immigrant women face in settling in a new country and the special needs they have.

A lack of information on "isolated women" was considered another key concern to the agencies. How to reach these women and the development of new skills for involving isolated women, were considered important to the provision of effective and responsive programs for these women.

The tendency of some agencies to put the needs of immigrant women as a last priority was seen as another important barrier to providing effective services. Because of a lack of awareness regarding the needs specific to immigrant women, many agencies do not see

women as a separate target group or the needs of immigrant women as distinct and are inclined to lump them together with family programs.

SERVICE AND PROGRAM GAPS

Language training was a principal program need as perceived by the agency respondents. This was true for agencies based across the province. *Of most concern in this program are eligibility requirements and access to subsidized language training by all women regardless of immigration status, present or future employment, marital status and length of residency in Canada.*

A need for immigrant women's support groups was another major concern of the agencies. Older women, assaulted or battered women and (refugee) women torture victims were specific groups mentioned as needing special support.

Regionally, there was a higher frequency of responses expressing the need for support groups from Toronto than from the other regions. This is probably due to the larger number of women immigrants in Toronto contrasted with the low numbers actually reached by immigrant serving agencies.

Employment orientation/job search/placement specifically for women was another expressed need. The need for child care and transportation allowances were repeatedly mentioned as pre-requisites to successful programs.

Regionally however, there were slight differences regarding employment program needs. This program need was mentioned by a larger number of out-of-Toronto agencies. When considered in relation to the services predominant in those regions, it is evident that employment-related programs targeted to women are more frequent in Toronto, thereby demonstrating a larger gap in this service in other areas across the province.

Job training programs were perceived as another important program for immigrant women. Greater emphasis of concern was shown by those within Metro Toronto (30%) than by those in other regions (5%). This too, demonstrates the kinds of skills required by the Toronto job market, and the need for upgrading skills that exist among immigrant and refugee women in Toronto. For other regions, the need for employment orientation/job search skills training was slightly higher.

The need for child care allowances was stressed by all groups who did mention this priority. This would enable women to access agency programs. Concern was also expressed around eligibility criteria, specifically the need for such programs being available to women refugees without landed status.

Educational workshops were another priority program mentioned by survey respondents and reiterated by focus group and interview participants. These workshops centred around the need for raising immigrant women's awareness of their rights and the need for empowering immigrant women. Topics specified were assertiveness training, life skills training, awareness of wife abuse problems, parenting skills, workshops for women with emotional or mental problems, race relations in the workplace, etc.

Needs and Service Gaps of Isolated Women

"Isolated women" have been mentioned repeatedly as a severely disadvantaged target group. Causes of isolation may be due to a variety of reasons such as cultural differences, no language knowledge, lack of family and community support. Methods to reach this target clientele have been cited as a definite training need on the part of the agencies. Mentioned as a main priority for isolated women were support groups. This shows the realization that support groups are an established method of reaching these women and beginning to effectively respond to their specific needs.

Provision of information on community programs was another priority, particularly by those agencies from within the Toronto area. With the many different backgrounds of the clientele in Toronto, and because of the large number and varied range of immigrant services existing, front-line workers are not always able to find a specific program that would match up well with the needs of their clients. It becomes increasingly necessary that adequate information on these community programs be made available.

ESL Training was ranked next in importance, with a slightly higher count in the outside Metro Toronto area. This confirms the previous study finding made around the need for ESL training being a main priority need for immigrant and refugee women.

A third priority program, again differing on a regional level was life skills training. A little less than half of the Metro Toronto agencies considered this important for isolated women. In contrast to Metro Toronto, this issue was slightly less important to other groups. This further affirms earlier findings with respect to priority programs for immigrant women. It seems that especially in Toronto, regardless of the immigrant

women's degree of isolation, life skills training is a determining factor in her adaptation to life in Canada.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING NEEDS

Professional development is an essential element to improved and more effective immigrant service delivery. Training workshops, conferences and consultation meetings are all integral aspects of community development and networking. This is the venue where experiences, problems, new programs, difficulties are shared and learning takes place. Two thirds of the respondents felt that there was professional development available although on a limited basis. A third of the agencies believe that this basic requirement in the field of settlement and social service does not exist for immigrant service agencies.

As was manifested in previous needs assessments, there was a perception that a greater lack of professional development existed among the regions outside of Metro Toronto. Mention was made of Toronto being the centre of immigrant settlement and therefore, services and professional development training tended to be more accessible, although limited, to those based in Toronto. Toronto-based groups stated that it was only recently that professional development training became available. Availability to agencies however, became dependent on the cost of the training, the appropriateness of the course and whether the timing was convenient. Professional development then became limited. There was concern expressed that the smaller community agencies based outside of Toronto should not be overlooked. This was specified as neglect not only in terms of location of professional development activities but also in terms of their needs and problems which differ from Toronto based agencies.

The main training need consistently expressed by immigrant serving agency respondents throughout Ontario was counselling skills for immigrant women. This was felt more strongly however, in the agencies located in non-Metro regions where the bulk of the agencies stated this. The lack of training opportunities that exist on this topic seem to be a clear gap.

Cultural awareness/sensitivity, cross cultural communications and public education were reported as almost equal professional development needs by the agency respondents (approximately 40% in each case). Race relations skills was identified by a few agencies regardless of region. Participants in the focus groups, interviews and workshop also mentioned the need for an awareness of racism and systemic discrimination as an integral

factor that is necessary in the analysis of immigrant and refugee settlement problems.

Other related concerns mentioned in the focus groups/interviews and workshop consisted of: a better understanding of global women's issues as being an essential framework to appreciate "where immigrant women are coming from", what body of experiences and cultural values they possess; and the recognition of the special needs of immigrant women as being distinct from those of other settlement service target groups. Also mentioned by a smaller number of people were the needs for more skills in mobilizing immigrant women and community organizing methods.

CONCLUSIONS

1. All immigrant serving agencies should include as a priority in their professional development, planning and programming, the raising of awareness of Boards and staff around the distinct needs of immigrant and refugee women. Because the great majority of immigrant women are served by general immigrant service agencies, emphasis should be placed on raising the awareness of these agencies.
2. It is evident that the programs and services available to immigrant women in Toronto greatly outweigh those available to women in other regions of the province. Special emphasis should be placed on programming for immigrant women's services on an equitable basis throughout the province.
3. Because of the explicit gap in services for specific groups of disadvantaged immigrant women i.e. senior, visible minority, isolated and disabled women, there is a need for increased services in the Toronto area and an even greater need for programs that target these women from other provincial areas.
4. Stated program needs and gaps in services vary somewhat on a regional basis. Metro Toronto groups see the areas of employment skills training, and social support groups as the two main program needs for immigrant women. Specific groups that should be targeted are older women, battered women, and (refugee) women torture survivors. For groups in other regional areas, employment orientation/job search/placement and support groups are the main program gaps.
5. There is a need for educational programs. This was another program gap strongly expressed by agencies throughout Ontario. These educational programs centred

around the importance of raising immigrant women's awareness of their rights, and tools for empowering immigrant women.

6. Integrated and wholistic programs must be designed with the aim of more effective and accessible programs. Repeatedly emphasized in almost any program for immigrant women is the necessity for child care and transportation allowances as a principle determinant for the success and true accessibility of the program for these women.
7. The priority needs of "isolated women" are support groups, provision of accessible information on community programs, language training and life skills training. ESL training may be more of a need for other provincial areas while skills training seems to be a more urgent need in the Toronto area.
8. Increased funding support for programs which target immigrant women, including the development of new agencies that focus on services for immigrant women, is a key element to improved and more effective outreach to this target group. An initial step proposed is the need for government to understand the role community-based agencies play in making settlement and social services more appropriate and accessible to newcomers-- the special link they have with the community. They must recognize that community-based agencies are key players in the planning and development of services before meaningful programming for immigrant women can begin to take place.
9. Funding sources must also become more knowledgeable about the complex issues that are of most concern to target populations, particularly immigrant women. Training around an understanding of global women's issues and the recognition of the special needs of immigrant women, as well as cultural awareness and sensitivity are essential elements in the development of an informed and effective policy making body. They are imperative when formulating criteria that are realistic and responsive to the needs of immigrant women.
10. Professional Development:
 - a. Professional development needs of agencies also vary slightly on a regional basis. However, although considered to be generally limited, training was perceived to be more accessible to agencies in Toronto. There is a need for additional training to be directed towards agencies based in non-Metro areas, not only in terms of training

sites but also in terms of programming to address their specific needs and problems.

- b. Skills for counselling of immigrant women was a main training need consistently expressed by agencies throughout Ontario. Cultural awareness and sensitivity, cross cultural communication and public education were reported as other professional development needs. It is imperative that an awareness and understanding of racism, systemic discrimination and skills in promoting positive race relations be an integral part of any analysis of immigrant and refugee settlement problems.
 - c. Another recommended training need arises from the belief that an understanding of global women's issues is essential to appreciate "where immigrant women are coming from", what body of experiences and cultural values they possess, and to recognize the special needs of immigrant women as being distinct from those of other settlement service target groups.
 - d. With regards to isolated women, there is a need for professional development programs to develop skills in reaching and involving this constituency.
 - e. Other professional development needs required are in methods of mobilizing immigrant women and community organizing methods.
 - f. There is a need to recognize the experiences of immigrant serving agencies, particularly women-specific groups, and the wealth of knowledge and skill they have developed in their work. These experiences and program models developed should be shared with other organizations throughout Ontario. This sharing should be recognized as a valuable professional development tool and as such should be supported financially by the government.
11. The development of any specific program initiatives should be done in close consultation with community groups, especially on such important points as criteria for funding and creating/monitoring/evaluating immigrant women's programs. These should be presented to the community for feedback prior to implementation in order to ensure true participation in program development.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Since OCASI is conducting ongoing research on services offered by the OCASI network, it would be useful from the women's issues perspective, to include certain questions specific in this regard. These could include identification of any programs particularly targeted to women, especially for disadvantaged immigrant women, and percentage of funding that is set aside for women's projects. Concrete and specific (clearly defined) terminology should be used, with language that is easily understood by both the respondents and the researchers.
2. A further in-depth study of several of the women-focused agencies should be conducted and used as reference when seeking to identify or design effective and competent models to provide services to immigrant women, particularly disadvantaged immigrant women's groups. Such a study would include intensive interviews and participant observation in a number of key agencies.
3. Another important area of research is the degree to which women, specifically immigrant and visible minority women are represented in the management structure of immigrant serving agencies. Are Boards representative of the clients agencies serve? Information on any employment equity policy and practices that the agencies might have would be useful models to study as well.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) is a coordinating body representing immigrant services agencies throughout Ontario. Formed in 1978 to act as a collective voice for immigrant services and to coordinate response to shared needs and concerns, OCASI has as its mission, the achievement for immigrants of equality of access and participation in every aspect of Canadian life.

OCASI acts as an advisory and resource body for both its member agencies and other community service agencies in regard to matters of immigrant services. It facilitates the exchange of information and training among its member agencies, reinforcing their common goals. Membership in OCASI is open to any non-profit, community-based agency in Ontario whose primary objectives include the provision of social and community services to immigrants. Member agencies provide a wide range of programs and services which help new immigrants adapt to life in Ontario. The essential settlement and integration services provided by members may focus on specific needs providing programs for women, seniors, young people or refugees in areas which include:

- language and orientation classes
- individual and family counselling
- interpretation and translation
- information and referral
- advocacy work
- legal assistance
- employment counselling and job training
- health care services

With the increase in numbers of immigrants settling in Ontario and the subsequent expansion of the needs of this group, comes a growth in immigrant-serving, community-based agencies. Consequently, the OCASI membership over the past ten years has grown rapidly. OCASI is now composed of over one hundred community-based agencies from all regions of Ontario. This represents more than half of the immigrant service agencies throughout Canada.

Concurrent with the growth in membership, is the increase in the scope of OCASI's work. A large portion of activities is in the area of outreach and organizational development, working with the membership to develop strong and effective community agencies. The planning and implementation of professional development activities is a vital aspect of OCASI's outreach and organizational development work. Skills training needs at the agency level are continually assessed and appropriate workshops developed. The continuing exchange of information and ideas is also facilitated by a bi-monthly newsletter.

OCASI actively promotes government policies that have a positive impact on the lives of immigrants and refugees. Areas of concern include: immigration levels, settlement services, services to refugees, employment services, immigrant women's programs, race relations and funding levels for immigrant service organizations. With the growing complexity of issues facing immigrant service agencies, there is a need to collect, organize and analyze the information necessary to affect policy decisions.

In early 1986, the strengthening of OCASI's research capacity was identified as essential to the success of its fundamental goals. Subsequently a four-year research project was begun in 1988 which involves the creation of a statistical database inventory of immigrant services in Ontario. This inventory would be a practical tool for immigrant service organizations and other concerned interest groups. It could be used to identify further necessary research initiatives, including both in-depth empirical analysis as well as a study of selected policy issues.

2. THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE

Ontario has remained the leading destination for new immigrants to Canada, over half of whom are women. But what has changed considerably are the source countries of immigrants. Because of changes in immigration policy, immigration patterns are very different today. With the priority now given to the admission of immigrants in the family and in the refugee classes and labour recruitment, immigrants are now coming from non-European countries. These shifts in country of origin mean that the resident population of immigrant women in Canada is increasingly becoming more diverse. This heterogeneity with respect to country of origin implies a diversity in socio-economic and cultural characteristics between immigrants and Canadian-born women, and among immigrant women. With regard to the most recent arrivals who are mainly from Third World countries, they would be the most disadvantaged of immigrant women because of the many cultural differences, language problems and the political and economic hardships that exist in these countries.

It is in this context and with a realization of the distinct needs of immigrant and refugee women, that a recommendation was made to the Board of Directors at the OCASI May 1987 Policy Conference to establish an immigrant women's committee.

It was also with the intention to reinforce the already existing immigrant women's organizations and facilitate networking that the recommendation to establish the committee was put forward. The mandate of the committee is three fold:

- to collect information on the immigrant women's programs offered by OCASI member agencies,
- to monitor issues of concern to immigrant women, provide input on policy and strategy development to the OCASI Board, and ensure that an immigrant women's perspective is incorporated into all OCASI briefs and presentations, and
- to utilize the OCASI newsletter as an informational tool to report on initiatives and programs that respond to the needs of immigrant women.

3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The diversity of immigrant women has not gone unnoticed, particularly by immigrant and visible minority women themselves. Monitoring of these differences in needs and concerns has been carried out by a number of groups. OCASI being part of the movement for promoting immigrant's rights, acknowledges its role in advocating for immigrant's equality of access and participation in Canadian life. A vital phase in the compilation of information on the programs for immigrant women and identification of gaps that may exist among the OCASI member agencies, is the conduct of this study.

Although there are some resource materials available on the needs of immigrant women and describing general conditions and policy issues, of concern in this project are specific questions regarding the status of women's programs within the OCASI network and on a regional basis. Furthermore, because OCASI's large number of member agencies represents the vast majority of immigrant serving agencies present in Ontario, and more than half of these agencies throughout Canada, the value of this study therefore increases.

The long-term goal of this project is to improve services to immigrant women within OCASI's membership through program planning and organizational development in the area of women's programs. The results of this study will enable OCASI to identify guidelines and future directions for formulating policies and planning activities to serve immigrant women.

Funding support was sought and received from the Ontario Women's Directorate in the summer of 1988. An advisory committee, the OCASI Immigrant Women's Issues Committee provided guidance to the researchers.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to bear in mind a number of limitations that exist in the conduct of this study and which have led to a delay in the production of this report. Initially, a restrictive time constraint for data gathering was imposed, requiring preliminary results to be completed in a 4 month time period. This adversely affected the instrument development and pre-testing phase. As a result, a number of the questions were misunderstood by the respondents thus gathering several unusable responses. There was an inconsistent agency response regarding information on agency programs targeted to women. Some agencies provided information on women's programs only. Percentages of funding for immigrant women's programs, for example, was answered in a mixed manner. Some answered in terms of a percentage of the whole agency budget, others answering in terms of a budget already specific to women's programs of the agencies. Results were therefore not possible to compare.

Again, because of the time constraint and lack of thorough pre-testing, possible replies included in the checklist of answers did not contain other possibilities that some respondents did take time to mention elsewhere. Such important realities as racial and sexual discrimination were discussed during the focus groups and interviews but very seldom included in the written survey responses. Respondents generally tended to limit their answers to those already listed for them, usually only ticked off the ones they thought were appropriate and did not in general add to the list.

Another limitation is based on the reality of the member agencies themselves - that of not having a detailed quantitative record of their services and clientele in many cases. Many agencies do not have resources (i.e. office data systems, staff, core support) to allow for adequate administrative organization and structure. Because many of the questions required numbers and percentages, agency respondents had a difficult time answering with exact numbers and instead used estimates. In order to deal with some of these limitations, it was decided to supplement the results of the study with data from OCASI's general Immigrant Services Database, collected during the first half of 1989. The inter-relationship between these two sets of data is described in the Methodology Section which follows.

B. METHODOLOGY

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were:

- 1.1 to identify the programs and services that exist within the OCASI membership, specifically for immigrant women,
- 1.2 to identify the settlement and orientation needs of immigrant and refugee women
- 1.3 to determine the gaps in services that are available to immigrant and refugee women
- 1.4 to develop recommendations for submission to the OCASI Board of Directors.

The results of this study will enable the OCASI membership to increase its awareness of issues that are specific to immigrant and refugee women and facilitate the OCASI Board in its endeavour to identify guidelines and future directions for formulating policies and planning activities around issues affecting immigrant women.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

This study focuses on immigrant women. Only within the past ten years, has information on immigrant women been found in data routinely collected by Statistics Canada and Employment and Immigration Canada.

It has been mainly through the work of these immigrant women themselves, and that of community-based immigrant service agencies that more in depth and complex inter-related information about immigrant and refugee women (such as the implications of race, culture, religion, and gender on settling in Canadian society) have more recently become available.

In order to further understand the various needs and problems of these women, this study uses various terms.

Immigrant Women

In 1988, one in six Canadians is foreign-born, slightly more than half of whom are women. (Boyd, M., Migrant Women in Canada, Profile and Policies, 1987). With the changing source countries from which newcomers migrate, the heterogeneity of immigrant women

has increased. No longer are immigrants coming primarily from the traditionally preferred European and U.S. countries. The 1981 census statistics have shown that eight out of the ten major birthplace countries are in the Third World. (Statistics Canada. Census 1981) These differences mean changes in the characteristics of immigrant women coming to Canada. Data from numerous sources and reiterated by immigrant serving agencies indicate the existence of substantial socioeconomic inequalities such as language (English/French) knowledge and access to language training, participation in the labour force, unemployment rates, occupational mobility, working conditions, income and earnings and access to social services. It is these inequalities that community-based organizations seek to address. Although many are oriented toward the general immigrant population, a growing number exist which centre their concerns around the needs and problems of immigrant and refugee women.

Visible Minorities

According to the Employment Equity Act and Regulations, the term visible minority includes those groups of people who are, because of their race, or colour, in a visible minority in Canada. It is a term which applies to all peoples who are not seen as white by the dominant culture. This would include Blacks, Chinese, Indo-Pakistanis, Japanese, Southeast Asians, Filipinos, Koreans, West Asians, Arabs, and others (e.g. Latin Americans, Pacific Islanders, etc. who fit the description of visible minorities).

In the context of this study, this term is used in the analysis of barriers that exist to the full and effective participation of women in Canadian society. Discrimination, which is the cause of many of the inequalities experienced by immigrant women, results from individual prejudices or from barriers intrinsic in the system. Discrimination is especially difficult for immigrant women who face personal prejudices and systemic barriers as women, as immigrants and or as a visible minority.

Specially Disadvantaged Women

This term similarly refers to those immigrant women who are *doubly disadvantaged or doubly burdened (or triply)* - those who are discriminated against based on multiple reasons: being a woman, being an immigrant, being a member of a racial minority, being handicapped, being a senior citizen.

Isolated Women

This refers to those women who are isolated from mainstream society or even from the rest of their own ethnic community due to a variety of possible reasons. These include the lack of communication/language skills, cultural values which may confine the woman to the home, a lack of skills that will help her adapt to society, a lack of support systems or cultural differences that are difficult to disregard in her attempt to adapt to Canadian life.

Community-Based Organizations

These non-governmental organizations are non-profit groups comprised of professional staff and volunteers representing a range of expertise and experience. Based at the grassroots level, community-based agencies serve a significant proportion of the population who are either unable to access social services, or for whom appropriate social services are not available outside the community-based network.

Within OCASI, member organizations are community-based, and their primary objectives include the provision of social and community services to immigrants and refugees. These agencies provide a wide range of programs and services which help new immigrants adapt to life in Canada. The essential settlement and integration services provided by member agencies focus on specific needs and offer programs which target women, seniors, youth, or refugees in areas which include language and orientation classes, individual and family counselling, interpretation and translation, information and referral, advocacy work, legal assistance, employment counselling and job training, and health care services.

With their focus and experience, community-based organizations give input and respond to policy, procedural and operational plans and changes providing a grassroots perspective. Because of their experiences with the target populations, they are called upon to represent the interests and needs of these specific groups.

Settlement Services

Upon arrival in Canada, newcomers need assistance in order to begin a new life. Those who do not know English or French need help in learning the new language. An orientation to the new ways of doing things, job search skills, office procedures, accurate information on Canadian laws, services available to newcomers are all some of the basic assistance included in the term settlement services. Psychological support is another

important area that this term covers. Often times, this is provided by relatives, friends or members of that specific ethno-cultural community.

Settlement services are not restricted to the initial period of arrival in Canada. They consist of numerous activities which range from initial orientation work, to outreach activities and integration programs. Settlement, integration, participation and citizenship are overlapping and inter-connected processes, that start at the moment of arrival in Canada and continue for a lifetime.

3. SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

With the dearth of information and knowledge of services that are available to immigrant and refugee women, several sources of data were necessary for this research study. A *survey questionnaire* was developed to provide the researchers with a baseline of services for immigrant women among community-based agencies throughout Ontario. As a secondary source of information, a series of *focus group discussions* were conducted to supplement the survey data collected. A *workshop* was held at the annual OCASI Conference which also provided additional information. And finally, initial findings from the *OCASI Immigrant Services Database* provided a wealth of more detailed information on the clientele profile of the women seeking assistance at the agency level and the specific services that target women.

3.1 Survey

A structured questionnaire was developed based on input from the OCASI Immigrant Women's Issues Committee. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on the services that are provided by the different agencies, barriers to providing the services, perceived program needs of immigrant women, barriers to accessing the services, perceived services appropriate to the needs of "isolated women", professional development agency needs, funding sources for immigrant women's programs and services for disadvantaged immigrant women's groups. The survey provides the main source of data upon which this report is based.

Questionnaires were sent to the 93 OCASI member agencies (as of August, 1988) with accompanying cover letters. Follow up phone calls were made two weeks later to clarify any questions the agencies might have and to urge them to complete the questionnaires. Two other series of calls were made at intervals of one week to remind them.

By the end of September, 42 or 45% of the agencies had returned their questionnaires. Preliminary results were collated and presented to the OCASI membership at the Annual Conference in October, 1988.

At the end of November 1988, 28 more completed questionnaires had been returned bringing the total number of respondents to 70 or a 75% rate of participation.

3.2 Focus Group Discussions/Interviews

It was considered essential to elicit more detailed information from key agencies in five general regions of Ontario from which OCASI has representation. A total of 23 agencies were included in this process of data collection. Special attention was paid to geographical location to ensure that groups from outside of Metro Toronto were included in the sample. Eleven were chosen from Metro Toronto, 6 from the southwest (see appendix for list of agencies), 4 from Eastern Ontario, and two from Northern Ontario. Telephone interviews were conducted with the two agencies from Northern Ontario (Thunder Bay) because of the distance and limited funds available.

3.3 Annual Conference Workshop

The interim findings of the survey, the focus group discussions and interviews were presented at the OCASI Annual Conference in Geneva Park in October, 1988. Participants were given an opportunity to discuss some basic points about the research, the questionnaire, and preliminary findings. Responses, comments and observations made during this workshop were documented and are included in this final report.

3.4 OCASI Immigrant Services Database

Following shortly after the Immigrant Women's Programs and Needs Survey data collection was the development and administration of the OCASI Immigrant Services Inventory questionnaire. This survey consisted of a more detailed series of questions aimed at providing a statistical program profile of immigrant services in Ontario. As part of a four-year project, Phase I included the development, administration, collection and inputting of a questionnaire which focused on four main areas. These are:

- a. a profile of services provided by the agencies (types of programs, numbers and hours of client contacts);
- b. client profile (client population and characteristics);

- c. staffing requirements and characteristics, including full-time, part-time and temporary staff and volunteers;
- d. funding patterns from both government and other sources.

The questionnaire underwent rigorous pre-testing and revisions before finalization and administration. They were sent out to the OCASI member agencies in early January, 1989. Numerous follow-up phone calls and agency visits were conducted to assist respondents in completing the questionnaires. By July, 1989, at the time of initial preparation of the report on Immigrant Women's Programs and Needs, a total of 63 member agencies had sent in the completed 20 page questionnaire. Upon review of the responses, it became apparent that some of the data collected would be important information for the report on Immigrant Women Programs and Needs. Hence, its inclusion in the sources of data for this study.

4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The responses to the survey questionnaire were collated and frequency counts done. Findings were then compared and contrasted in two ways: by **type of agency** and by **geographical location**.

For purposes of this study on immigrant women's needs and programs, agency respondents were divided into two separate groupings. These groups were formed according to the reported percentage of women served. Using a cut-off point of 70%, all those agencies which reported 70% or more of their clients as women became one group. These agencies were then called **women-focused**.

The second group of respondents, called **general immigrant service agencies**, were made up of those agencies serving less than 70% women. Responses were thus viewed in terms of the type of agency - whether women-focused or general immigrant service agencies.

The second factor that was looked at was agency responses by geographical location. Of the 70 member agencies that participated in the survey, a little less than a quarter are based within the various regions of Ontario, excluding Metro Toronto. The first section under Findings describes this distribution of the agency respondents by region. Because of the bulk of the respondents coming from Metro Toronto, it seemed more feasible to place those agencies located outside of Metro Toronto together in one separate group.

Responses were then examined according to these two variables. When found to be significant, differences or similarities were pointed out in the report.

Also important to consider are the different sources of information for this report. Certain sections of the Findings and Analysis correspond to an examination of the Immigrant Women's Needs and Programs Survey, the Immigrant Services Database, and the focus group discussions/workshops as described in the previous section. Conclusions were then drawn from the observations and analysis made.

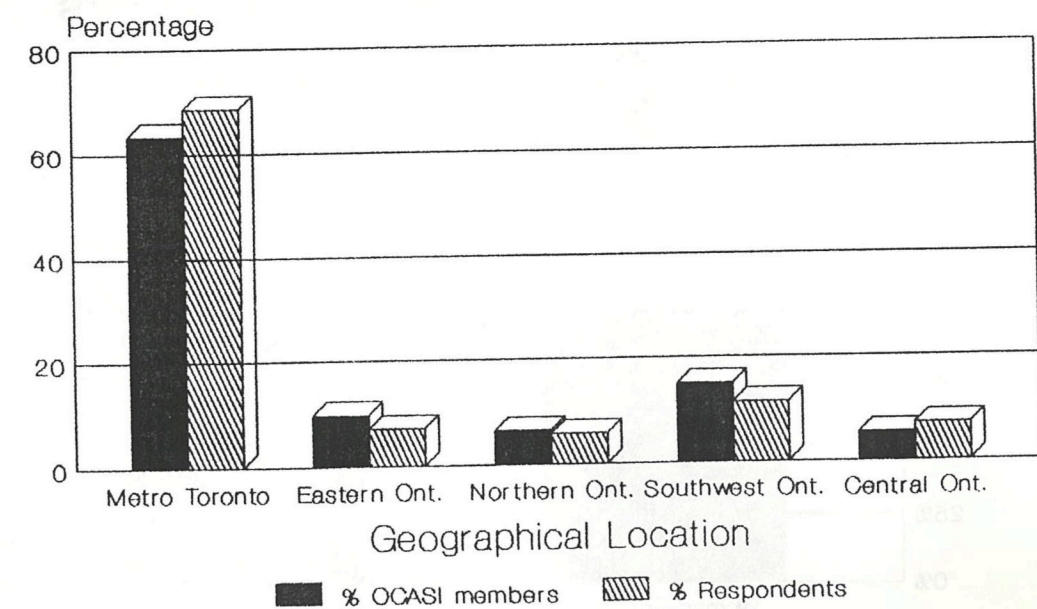
C. FINDINGS

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Seventy of the 93 member agencies of OCASI (as of August, 1988), responded to the questionnaire showing a high rate of participation (75%) in the study. A large majority (48 or 68.6%) of the agencies that responded are located in Metro Toronto with the rest (22 or 31.4%) from the four remaining areas. Participation from Metro Toronto member agencies was higher than in other regions except for those in Central Ontario where there was a slightly higher response rate.

FIGURE 1

Member Agency Participation by Geographical Location



Total OCASI Members = 93
Total Respondents = 70
(Metro Toronto=48 /Other Regions of Ont)

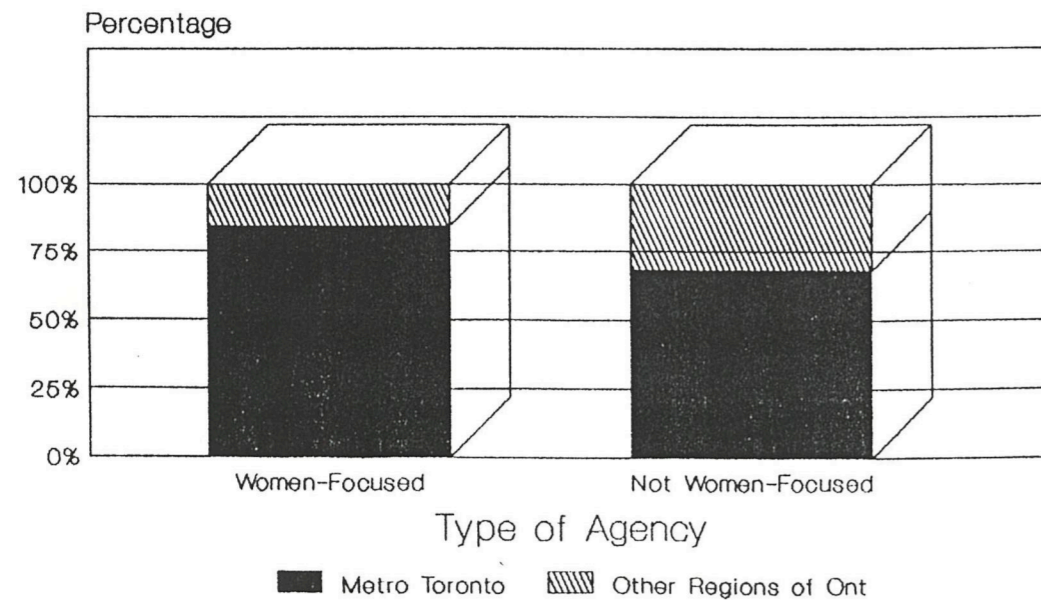
Of these 70 respondents, only 20 or 28.5% are women-focused agencies, i.e. those agencies serving more than 70% women. The average percentage of women served by these types of agencies is a high 88%. Most of these women focused agencies are based in Metro Toronto while 15% are based in the remaining four regions.

The majority of the OCASI member agencies which responded (50 or 71.4%) are non women-focused, i.e. those agencies whose women clients number less than 70%. As with the OCASI membership in general, most of these agencies come from within the Metro Toronto area (58%). The average percentage of women served by this group is slightly less than 50%.

Interestingly, the bulk (74.5%) of the women served by OCASI member agencies are provided services by general immigrant service agencies.

FIGURE 2

Type of Agency Respondents By Geographical Location

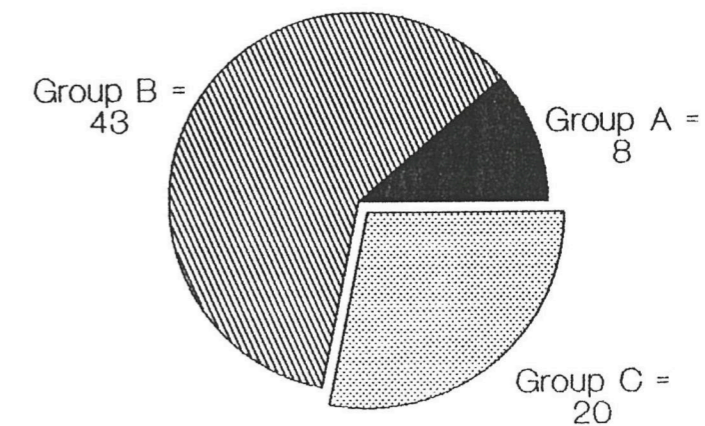


Women Specific (serving > 70% women = 20
 Non-Women Specific (serving < 69% women = 50)

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of OCASI member agencies that provide services to women. Interestingly, more women are served by general immigrant service agencies than by women-focused groups. As can be seen here, for the majority (60%) of the respondents, 40 to 69% of their clients are women, whereas for only 28% or a little more than a quarter of the respondents, 70 to 100% of their clients are women. Women-focused agencies also include some agencies not established specifically to provide services to women.

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Women Served By Number of Agencies



Group A: 1% - 39% women served
 Group B: 40% - 69% women served
 Group C: 70% - 100% women served

2. PROFILE OF CLIENTS SERVED

The following summary (Table 1) is drawn from client profile statistics in the OCASI Immigrant Services Database, and shows the distribution of clients by type of agency, according to age, length of time in Canada, language ability and immigrant status.

Age

Table 1 shows that the main age range of women served by women-focused agencies is from 25 to 49 years. Even among the general immigrant service agencies, many of the clients served are within this same age group. There are slightly less services that are available to youth (12.4%), and older clients (11.3%) among women-focused groups than among general immigrant service groups, but slightly more programs available to seniors among the women-focused groups (14.5%).

Length of Time in Canada

It is interesting to note that more than a third of the women-focused agencies offer most of their services to clients who have been here for more than 1 year but less than 3 years, and less than a quarter of their programs to the new arrivals. A third of the general immigrant service agencies similarly provide services to clients who have been in Canada from 1 to 3 years but also provide more services (31%) to the very recent newcomers.

Language Ability

The level of language (English) ability among the clients served by both types of agencies varies markedly. One striking difference is in the number of clients with no English language knowledge served by type of agency. Very few women-focused agencies (19%) serve those who do not speak English whereas more than a third (38.6%) of the general immigrant service agencies offer services to this particular group.

For those clients with a basic knowledge of English, almost the same percentage (30%) of agencies (both women-focused and general immigrant service) provide services for this group. Women-focused agencies however, seem to target more of their services to those with a conversational (25.2%) and fluent (21.1%) knowledge of English than do the general immigrant service agencies (16.3% and 15.4%).

Immigrant Status

Expectedly, the immigrant status of the clients served by the two types of agencies does not differ greatly. Approximately one third of all those served are landed immigrants - family class or independent. Another third are Canadian citizens. It is only for the refugee claimants group where the disparity between clients served by the two types of agencies becomes evident. About a quarter of the people served by general immigrant service agencies belong to this category while only 18% of those served by women-focused agencies are in this group.

Table 1. Age, Length of Time in Canada, Language Ability and Immigrant Status of Clients by Type of Agency

| | Women-Focused Agencies | | | General Immigrant Service Agencies | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Total No. Clients Served | Ave. # of Clients Served Per Agency | % of Total Clients Served | Total # of Clients Served | Ave.# of Clients Served Per Agency | % of Total Clients Served |
| Age | | | | | | |
| < 16 | 373 | 19 | 1.0 | 13577 | 308 | 9.0 |
| 17-24 | 4403 | 232 | 12.4 | 31096 | 706 | 20.9 |
| 25-49 | 21599 | 1137 | 60.8 | 62999 | 1431 | 42.2 |
| 50-64 | 4010 | 211 | 11.3 | 24423 | 555 | 16.4 |
| > 64 | 5157 | 271 | 14.5 | 17174 | 390 | 11.5 |
| | N = 19 | | | N = 44 | | |
| Length of Time in Canada | | | | | | |
| < 1 yr | 5339 | 356 | 20.9 | 46765 | 1169 | 31.0 |
| 1-3 yrs | 8837 | 589 | 34.7 | 46466 | 1162 | 30.8 |
| >3 but <10 | 7230 | 482 | 28.4 | 36882 | 922 | 24.4 |
| > 10 | 4080 | 272 | 16.0 | 20938 | 523 | 13.8 |
| | N = 15 | | | N = 40 | | |
| ESL/FSL Language Ability | | | | | | |
| None | 6165 | 363 | 19.0 | 59485 | 1383 | 38.6 |
| Basic | 11301 | 665 | 34.7 | 45801 | 1065 | 29.7 |
| Conversational | 8197 | 482 | 25.2 | 25109 | 584 | 16.3 |
| Fluent | 6873 | 404 | 21.1 | 23714 | 551 | 15.4 |
| | N = 17 | | | N = 43 | | |
| Immigrant Status | | | | | | |
| Cdn Citizen | 9319 | 548 | 30 | 43061 | 1104 | 29.3 |
| Landed Immig./ Refugee | 5640 | 332 | 18 | 35916 | 921 | 24.5 |
| Family Class | 6810 | 400 | 22 | 32448 | 832 | 22.1 |
| Independent | 3028 | 178 | 10 | 12856 | 329 | 8.8 |
| Ministers Permit | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Status Pending/ Refugee Claimant | 3662 | 215 | 12 | 17401 | 446 | 12.0 |
| Others | 2501 | 147 | 8 | 4876 | 125 | 3.3 |
| | N = 17 | | | N = 39 | | |

Source: OCASI Immigrant Service Database, August 1989

3. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES PROVIDED

The information for this section on types of programs offered is compiled from the OCASI Immigrant Services Database. The questionnaire focuses on six main program areas. These are Settlement, Language Training, Employment and Social Support, Legal Assistance and Community Participation.

List of Service Areas

Settlement Services
 Sponsorship, refugees, other
 Reception services
 Orientation
 Escort/Interpretation
 Translation
 Referrals
 Individual Client Advocacy
 Form filling/Documentation
 Long-term Adjustment
 Temporary Shelter

Language Training
 ESL/FSL Instruction in English or French
 ESL/FSL Instruction, Bilingual
 ESL/FSL One-to-one Tutoring
 English in the Workplace
 Heritage Language
 Mother Tongue Literacy
 Citizenship Classes
 Curriculum Development
 Coordination of Language Training

Employment Services
 Vocational or Career Counselling
 Life Skills/Bridging Programs
 One-to-me Resume Preparation
 Academic Upgrading
 Skill Training
 Job Search Skills
 Job Referrals
 Job Interview Escort/Interpretation
 work Placements
 Individual On-site Job Orientation

Social Support Services
 Counselling: Family
 Counselling: Individual
 Counselling: Finances (budget, taxes, etc)
 Income Tax Assistance/Clinic
 Crisis Intervention
 Referrals to Family/Child Services
 Child Care/Daycare

Legal Assistance
 Immigration
 Income Maintenance/UIC
 Workers Compensation Board
 Landlord and Tenant
 Family
 Consumer
 Criminal
 Commissioning of Documents

Community Participation
 Newsletter or Newspaper
 Educational Materials: Books, Pamphlets,
 Community Forums, Conferences
 Library or Resource Collection
 Community Education/Outreach
 Community Needs/Access Advocacy
 Cultural Events or Festivals
 Community Research/Needs Assessments
 Economic Development Projects

3.1 Settlement Services

Of the various settlement services that OCASI member agencies provide, *referral services* (53 or 88.3%) are offered by the largest number of agencies by far, followed closely by *settlement orientation, individual client advocacy, form-filling/documentation services* (each 45 or 75%), *escort/interpreting aid* (45 or 71.7%) and *translation services* (42 or 70%). About half provide *long-term adjustment services*.

Although most of these settlement services target all groups (whether women, men, youth, or seniors), 15% have targeted women in the areas of **orientation, individual client advocacy and referrals**.

3.2 Language Training

Fewer than expected of the 63 OCASI member agency respondents provide language training services. The most frequently offered program is *ESL/FSL Instruction in English or French* receiving 45% of the responses. A third of the agencies offer *Citizenship Classes*, a quarter *coordinate Language Training Courses*. Thirty three percent of the *ESL/FSL instruction courses* are targeted toward women. Many of the agencies refer their clients needing ESL training to those agencies that provide this service.

3.3 Employment Services

Most of the agency respondents provide *job referral services* (42 or 70%). About half offer *job search skills training and vocational or career counselling*. A little less than half (28 or 46.7%) provide *life skills bridging programs*.

This service area seems to provide the most women-targeted programs. A quarter of the survey respondents offer **job search skills training** that is targeted toward women. Of those agencies that offer this program (55% of total respondents), a little less than half target women.

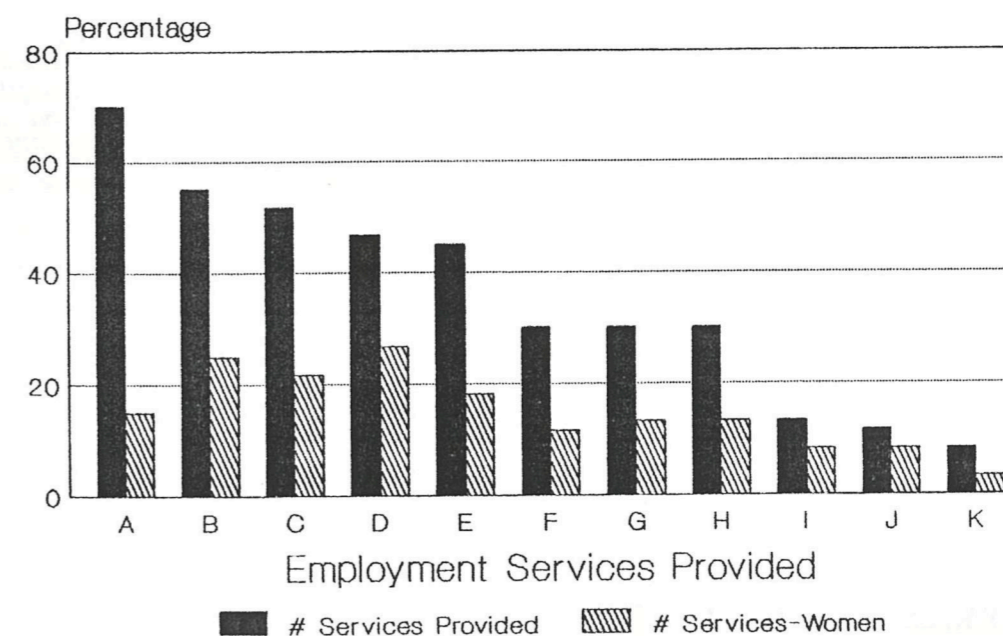
Another half of the 28 **life skills bridging programs** offered by the agency respondents target women. Thirteen or 41.9% of the agencies that offer **vocational or career counselling** specialize in services for women. Twenty one percent of the **job referrals assistance** that most of the agencies provide also target women. The chart which follows further describes the specific employment services targeted towards women.

3.4 Social Support Services

The bulk of agency respondents provide social support services, particularly *referrals to family/child service agencies*. Of the agencies which provide these services, 12 or 24.5% are targeted toward women. Of the *individual counselling* service offered by 42 or 70% of the respondents, 11 or one fourth are especially for women. Another quarter of the *crisis intervention* service offered by 35 or 58.3% of the survey participants, targets women.

FIGURE 4

Types of Employment Services Provided & % of Services Targetted to Women



n = 63 Source: Immigrant Services DBase August, 1989

Legend:

- A - Job Referrals
- B - Job Search Skills
- C - Career Counselling
- D - Life Skills
- E - One-to-one Resume Prep.
- F - Job Interview Escort
- G - Work Placements
- H - Skill Training
- I - On-site Job Orientation
- J - Academic Upgrading
- K - Others

4. SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO WOMEN

Of the 63 agencies that reported in the Immigrant Services Database, about forty percent do not provide any services especially targeted toward women. A third provide a few programs (1 to 5) especially for women. Only 7 of them or 11% provide more than 21 services and activities that are targeted to women. Ten percent provide from 11 to 20 services and activities for women, 3 or 5% provide from 6 to 10 services.

As anticipated, most of the services targeted to women are provided by women-focused agencies, two of which are located outside of Metro Toronto. Interestingly, the highest number of services for women lie in the fields of Employment-related Services, Settlement, Community Participation and Social Services.

Table 2. Services and Activities Targeted to Women
By Type of Agency

| Type of Agency Providing the Service | No. of Settlement Services | No. of Lang.Trng Services | No. of Employmt Services | No. of Social Services | No. of Legal Services | No. of Community Participation Services |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Provided by Women-focused Agencies | 48 | 23 | 54 | 39 | 23 | 41 |
| Provided by General Agencies | 6 | 13 | 44 | 23 | 1 | 11 |
| Total | 54 | 36 | 98 | 62 | 24 | 52 |

5. BARRIERS TO PROVIDING SERVICES

The bulk (63 or 90%) of the respondents to the Immigrant Women's Programs & Services Study felt that there are barriers to providing services while only 4 or 5% felt there were no barriers. Most of the agencies (68%) agreed that *insufficient funding* was the major barrier to their ability to provide services targeted to immigrant women. This was true for groups both within Toronto (77%) and from other provincial regions (50%).

Ranked second in importance (47%) was a *lack of staff*. This however, was expressed as being a function of the lack of funding.

Three barriers were ranked third. These were a *lack of information on "isolated women" in the community* (42.8%), a *lack of time* (40%), and a *lack of physical space* (40%). This last item though, was also mentioned as related to a lack of funding, that is being dependent on funding.

Other barriers next in rank were a *lack of language capacity* on the part of the agencies (12.8%), a *lack of group methods/skills to reach women* who may benefit from programs (7%), and *agencies having a tendency to discriminate against the needs of immigrant women* (4%).

Other barriers mentioned were a lack of policies around immigrant women, a lack of common interests at the agency level, women's isolation, and government funding mandates being too broad with women as only part of the target population.

6. AGENCY'S PERCEIVED PROGRAM NEEDS FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The information which follows is based on two main sources of data: the Immigrant Women's Needs and Services Survey, and the Immigrant Services Database. The bulk (78.5%) of the agencies responding to the Immigrant Women's Survey said that they did want to provide services especially targeted to immigrant women, while only 18.5% said they did not want to provide services especially for women.

It is interesting to note that in the Immigrant Services Database, when a similar question was asked, in terms of new services they would like to offer in the coming year (although not necessarily for women), 13 or 21% of the respondents mentioned projects especially targeted for immigrant women.

Kinds of Programs

When asked what particular programs they would like to provide for immigrant women, less than a quarter of the agencies responded. The agencies that did respond however, had similar responses indicating similarity in their experiences and concerns in serving the immigrant women population. *Language training* was mentioned as a foremost concern among a third of the agencies (33.3%) and as a program targeted to women that they would like to begin. This was the number one choice irrespective of the geographic location of the agency.

The general category of *support groups* was a second program that an overall 31.5% of all the agencies considered important. This was further specified to include support groups for older women, assaulted or battered women, for women torture victims or those separated from husbands or relatives, for youth, etc. Support group programs were also mentioned by 6 or 46% of the groups who responded to the question from the Immigrant Services Database survey regarding activities they would like to have in the coming year and whose responses included women as part of the planned activities. When looked at on a regional basis, responses differed. More than one third of Metro Toronto agencies preferred *support groups* (35.9%) as another priority program. In contrast, approximately a quarter of other regional groups preferred this program.

Employment orientation/job search/placement for women was a third program considered important by the agencies (29.8%). This was confirmed by four groups in the Immigrant Services Database which also stipulated child care allowance as a pre-requisite to the program's success. However, a significant distinction between regional responses is evident. Half of the groups located outside of Metro Toronto mentioned this category as more important than other programs while only 20% of Metro Toronto agencies mentioned it as more important.

Educational workshops were another program mentioned by the respondents in both surveys (22.8%). Topics specified included assertiveness training, life skills training, awareness of wife assault, parenting skills, workshops for women with emotional or mental problems, etc.

Referred to by an equal number of agencies was the need for *job training* programs. Again, the need for child care allowance was emphasized as necessary to enable women to access this program. Also mentioned, was a concern around the need for such a program to be made available to women refugees without landed immigrant status. Again, when looked at regionally, a large disparity can be seen with 30% of Metro agencies mentioning this as a priority program as compared to only 5% of outside of Metro agencies.

Other interesting programs suggested by the agencies are counselling services for individuals - family, long-term and multi-lingual; a crisis service for abused women; day care search service; programs for elderly women (e.g. language, skills, counselling, etc.); health care which includes family planning, pre-natal care, mental health care; orientation and translation service on settlement and citizenship; and housing. Following is a more detailed breakdown of the responses to this question.

Table 3. Agency's Identified Program Needs by Geographical Location

| Program* | Total No. of Agencies | | Metro Toronto Agencies | | Agencies in Eastern, Northern, Southwestern & Central Ontario | |
|--|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|---|------|
| | No. n=57 | % | No. n=39 | % | No. n=18 | % |
| <i>*Multiple Responses</i> | | | | | | |
| Language Training | 19 | 33 | 13 | 33 | 6 | 33.3 |
| Support Groups | 18 | 31.5 | 14 | 35.9 | 4 | 22.2 |
| Employment Orientation/Job Search/placement | 17 | 29.8 | 8 | 20.5 | 9 | 50.0 |
| Educational Workshops | 13 | 22.8 | 8 | 20.5 | 5 | 27.7 |
| Job Training | 13 | 22.8 | 12 | 30.7 | 1 | 5.5 |
| Counselling | 10 | 17.5 | 5 | 12.8 | 5 | 27.7 |
| Crisis Service for abused women | 8 | 14 | 6 | 15.3 | 2 | 11.0 |
| Day Care Search | 9 | 15.7 | 4 | 10.2 | 5 | 27.7 |
| Health Care | 7 | 12.2 | 6 | 15.3 | 1 | 5.5 |
| Programs for Elderly Women | 5 | 8.7 | 4 | 10.1 | 1 | 5.5 |
| Orientation/Translation Service: Settlement/Citizenship | 5 | 8.7 | 3 | 7.6 | 2 | 11.0 |
| Housing | 5 | 8.7 | 3 | 7.6 | 2 | 11.0 |
| Others: Literacy, community development, programs/activities for women | 4 | 7 | 3 | 7.6 | 1 | 5.5 |

7. BARRIERS TO ACCESSING PROGRAMS & SERVICES

A large majority (55 or 78.6%) of the agency respondents believe that there are barriers to immigrant women's access to services. Ten agencies or 14.3% do not feel there are any barriers, three or 4.3% did not answer and two or 2.8% did not know.

The following table illustrates that the bulk of the respondents (49 or 84.4%) stated that women's lack of *language skills* is a leading barrier to accessing services or even information about those services. On a regional level, however, there was a significant difference in responses. For those agency respondents located in non-Metro regions, the most frequently expressed barrier is that of women's *lack of interest and motivation* (13 or 65%). This barrier was also mentioned by 9 or 15.7% of agencies from within the Metro Toronto area. When further probed, this point was expounded on and was found to be closely related to the women's isolation, different cultural values as well as a lack of responsiveness on the part of mainstream agencies.

Lack of child care support services was a second barrier mentioned most frequently (38 or 65%), *lack of self confidence/assertiveness* following with 35 or 60.3, and a *lack of information on services available* (32 or 55.2%). Almost half of the agency respondents (26 or 44.8%) said that a *lack of monies to access transportation* was another barrier.

Less frequently mentioned barriers included *cultural barriers among the different ethnic groups* and *racial discrimination*.

Other barriers (1.7%) expressed by respondents were a lack of funds for more trainees, lack of referrals by workers, isolation coupled with language barriers, that no training is allowed by government for sponsored relatives, and women's isolation.

Table 4. Perceived Barriers to Immigrant Women Accessing Services by Geographical Location

| Barrier* | Total No. Agencies | | Metro Toronto Agencies | | Agencies in Eastern, Northern, Southwestern & Central Ontario | |
|---|--------------------|------|------------------------|------|---|----|
| | No. n = 58 | % | No. n=38 | % | No. n=20 | % |
| <i>*Multiple Responses</i> | | | | | | |
| Lack of Language Skills | 49 | 84.4 | 37 | 97.3 | 12 | 60 |
| Lack of child care services | 38 | 65.4 | 26 | 68.4 | 12 | 60 |
| Lack of self confidence/assertiveness | 35 | 60.3 | 24 | 63.1 | 11 | 55 |
| Lack of info. on services available | 32 | 55.2 | 20 | 52.6 | 12 | 60 |
| Lack of monies to access transportation | 26 | 44.8 | 15 | 39.4 | 11 | 55 |
| Lack of interest/motivation | 22 | 37.9 | 9 | 15.7 | 13 | 65 |

Note: As mentioned previously, due to the time constraints and lack of more thorough pre-testing, responses such as the following, were not included in the checklist of possible answers. This limited the kinds of replies ticked off by the agency respondents to what was included in the checklist rather than opening up other possibilities that may have been equally or more appropriate. During the interviews and focus group discussions, these barriers were raised more heavily as further discussed in the Analysis section of this report.

Cultural barriers among different ethnic groups - 3

Racial Discrimination - 2

8. ANY PARTICULAR IMMIGRANT/ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUP EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING SERVICES

Information reported on these next four items are based on the Immigrant Services Database survey.

Of the 63 agencies that sent in their completed questionnaires, 8 or 12.3% indicated that women in particular were a group that had special difficulties. Perhaps expectedly, these agencies are women focused and therefore concentrate most of their efforts on issues that affect women. What is interesting however, are the specific difficulties expressed by these groups. They include the following comments:

- . Health services required in own language/culture: Filipino, African, Iranian women.
- . African and Portuguese women are unable to access ESL
- . Inability of women refugee claimants with small children to enter the labour market despite many attempts on the part of the women.
- . Difficulties in accessing services: Sri Lankan and Guyanese elderly women and Latin American women refugee claimants
- . Need to access training and upgrading opportunities: Iranians, Sri Lankan, and Indian women .
- . Visible minority women are becoming more vocal in expressing their difficulties.
- . Immigrant women who do not speak English are the most disadvantaged group. (mentioned by 2 groups)
- . Refugee claimants receive no services, immigrant women face increasing disincentives to employment training (day care).
- . Latin American women refugees need group programs

9. MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AGENCY

Those responses from the 63 member agencies which participated in the survey and mentioned women as part of important accomplishments in the past year have been compiled. Twelve or 19% of the survey participants responded to this question with the inclusion of women. Six or 50% of these responses are from women-focused agencies and the other half are from non women-specific groups. Most of the responses were on the introduction or continuance of programs for women despite funding support problems.

Some of the responses are recorded below:

- . Was able to form ESL classes for special groups of women.
- . Expanded services in women's placement services, new bridging program for immigrant women on social assistance.
- . Large numbers of immigrant women reached (through Clinics, & educational presentations)
- . Started immigrant women's outreach program/ establishment of a women's support group (3 groups reported this)
- . Able to maintain women's support centre despite serious financial hardships
- . Produced video tapes of women working in different occupations for use as resource materials.
- . Being creative with training programs to meet needs of immigrant women / Adjusted programs to satisfy more clients' needs.
- . Expanded seniors group activities, production of women's group newsletter.
- . Developed a housing project for women and children.

10. MOST IMPORTANT DIFFICULTY OF AGENCY

Three or 4.7% of the 63 respondents referred to the inability to provide an appropriate program for women as the most important difficulty of the agency. These pointed to the need for increased financial support to be able to provide additional services for women such as increased outreach health services, ESL/Dialect classes and special sessions for particular ethnic groups.

11. SERVICES APPROPRIATE FOR "ISOLATED WOMEN"

Table 5. Identified Service Needs for "Isolated Women" by Geographical Location

| Services* | Total No. Agencies | | Metro Toronto Agencies | | Agencies in Eastern, Northern, Southwestern & Central Ontario | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------|------------------------|------|---|------|
| | No. n=70 | % | No. n=48 | % | No. n = 22 | % |
| *Multiple Responses | | | | | | |
| Special Support Groups | 35 | 50 | 22 | 45.8 | 12 | 54.5 |
| Info on Community programs | 31 | 44.3 | 24 | 50 | 7 | 31.8 |
| Life Skills Training | 30 | 42.8 | 23 | 47.9 | 7 | 31.8 |
| ESL Training | 29 | 41.5 | 21 | 43.7 | 8 | 36.3 |
| Other Programs | 4 | 5.7 | 2 | 4.1 | 2 | 9.0 |

It is clear from the previous table that *special support groups* are a priority in perceived services that should exist for "isolated women". This was true on a regional basis as well. A second priority program, that of *the provision of information on community programs*, was considered high ranking in importance by half of the agency respondents in Metro Toronto. This was not true however, for agencies located in the other regions (7 or 31%). This is probably because of the numerous agencies, programs and services that abound in Toronto but do not exist in other places. It therefore becomes important to know about these services so as to be able to access them. Interestingly, the program that was ranked as second in importance by non-Metro Toronto agencies was *ESL Training* (8 or 36.3%) but was ranked last by Metro Toronto groups.

A third program, again differing on a regional basis was *life skills training*. This program was considered more important by Metro Toronto agencies (21 or 43.7%) than in the four other regional areas (7 or 31.8%).

12. AVAILABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A majority (48 or 68.6%) of the respondents agreed that there was professional development available to immigrant service agencies. Twenty two or 31.4% believed there was no such training available.

A regional comparison of answers is important because of the significant differences that exist. Belief in the availability of professional development among Metro Toronto groups is higher (34 or 70.8%) than among agencies in other provincial areas (14 or 63.6%).

13. FURTHER AGENCY TRAINING NEEDS

Counselling immigrant women emerged as a training gap identified by a majority of participants (43 or 61.4%) in this study. It is an even more significant need in organizations from Eastern, Northern, Southwestern and Central Ontario where an overwhelming majority (18 or 81.8%) stated this was a priority need. *Cultural awareness/sensitivity*, *cross-cultural communication* and *public education* received almost equal numbers of responses although public education was considered a more important training gap by the outside of Metro Toronto grouping (10 or 45.4%). Race Relations skills was identified as a need by 8 or 11.4% of all agencies. Regional responses were similar.

Six of the agency respondents mentioned other interesting training needs such as culturally appropriate professional skills, how to mobilize immigrant women/community organizing, a better understanding of global women's issues, and an awareness of current programs and resources.

Table 6. Perceived Further Agency Training Needs by Geographical Location

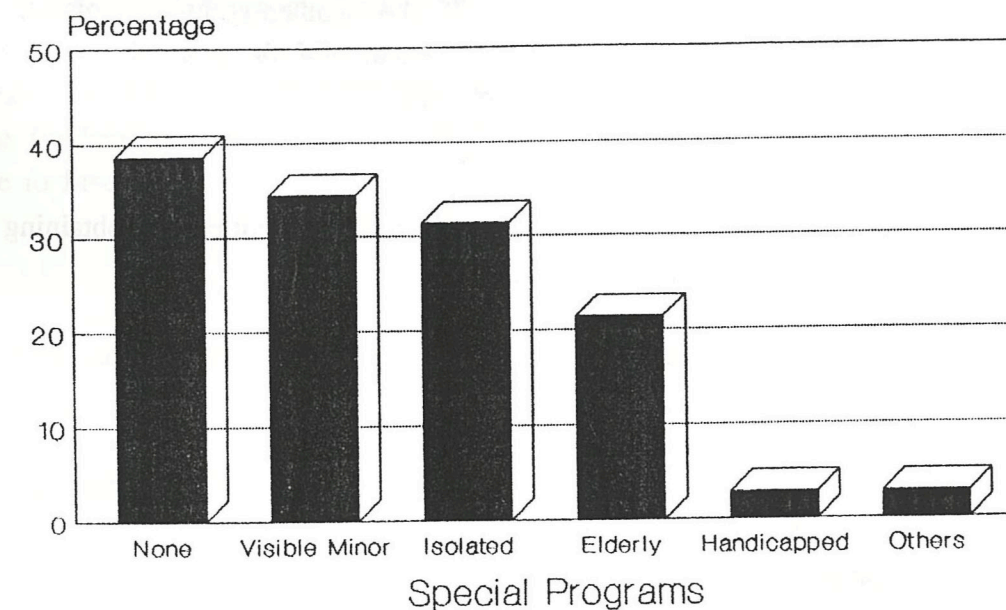
| Needs* | Total No. Agencies | | Metro Toronto Agencies | | Agencies in Eastern, Northern, Southwestern, and Central Ontario | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------|------------------------|------|--|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| *Multiple Responses | | | | | | |
| Counselling immigrant women | 43 | 61.4 | 25 | 52 | 18 | 81.8 |
| Cultural awareness/sensitivity | 31 | 44.3 | 23 | 47.9 | 9 | 40.9 |
| Cross-cultural communication | 31 | 42.8 | 21 | 43.7 | 9 | 40.9 |
| Public Education | 29 | 41.4 | 19 | 39.5 | 10 | 45.4 |
| Race Relations Skills | 8 | 11.4 | 7 | 14.6 | 3 | 13.6 |
| Others | 6 | 8.5 | 4 | 8.3 | 2 | 9.0 |

14. SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S GROUPS

Slightly more than one third of member agency respondents provide services which are specifically targeted for visible minority women, 21 or 87.5% of which are from within Metro Toronto. Another third provide services for isolated women, 14 or 63% from agencies located in Toronto and 8 or 36% from agencies outside of Toronto. Only 15 or 21.4% of member agency respondents provide services for elderly women, 11 or 73.9% of which are from within Metro Toronto. Two agencies, both from Metro Toronto, target their services to handicapped women.

FIGURE 5

Special Programs for Disadvantaged Immigrant Women's Groups



Multiple Responses

15. FUNDING

This next section is based on information compiled from the OCASI Immigrant Services Database. The information is somewhat limited because of the brief answers received from the agency participants. Only those agency responses who reported having successfully tapped sources for funding of women's programs, and any difficulties encountered in obtaining funds for women's programs, are documented in this section.

There are three main sources of funding reported by the agencies. These are federal funding through the Secretary of State, Women's Program; Secretary of State, Citizenship and Community Participation Program (CCPP) and provincial funding, primarily the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Thirty percent of the agencies reported having requested and received support for projects which target women from these sources. Slightly more than half of these agencies are non women-specific, 42% are women-specific. Of the women-specific projects, 75% are educational in nature, mainly on women and violence. Of the general immigrant service agencies, only one third are educational, the majority being outreach and general women's programs.

When asked about any activities which experienced difficulties in obtaining funding, women-focused agencies reported the following:

- . funders are not fully aware of what roles community organizations play in social service delivery
- . projects/activities for which funding support is difficult to obtain are:
 - support groups for unemployed women
 - programs that would make health services more accessible
 - office furniture, additional staff
 - increased cost-of-living funding increases (4.5%)
 - settlement counselling services
 - child care programs
 - training for refugee claimants
 - community outreach
 - vocational planning workshop

A few general immigrant service agencies reported similar difficulties, particularly obtaining funding for women-targeted programs.

When asked to rate the different funding problems in terms of importance to their agency, women-focused agencies overwhelmingly reported a *lack of core funding* as the most serious problem facing these agencies. Related to this was the difficulty they had in obtaining funds to increase their staff and procure needed equipment. Second in rank was that *over-all funding levels being too low* thereby pushing women's programs to one of the last priorities. A related comment heard during the focus groups and interviews was

concern around a tendency for community-based agencies to have adversarial positions due to the lack of funding and the perception that they are all applying for the same funding. Instead of sharing each other's experiences in applying for funding support, there is a sense of secrecy and competition.

Ranked third was that *annual funding increases are similarly too low*, again giving cause to women's program being placed at the end of the funding line. Ranked next were the *difficulties in obtaining project funding*, followed by *a lack of resources (staff, time, skills) to prepare and submit funding proposals*, and finally *a lack of knowledge of or access to appropriate funding bodies and sources*. One interesting comment made was the tendency of some funders to want to become involved in the operations of the agency as a pre-requisite to funding.

D. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Participation in the Study

- 1.1 The high rate of participation in the research study illustrates the keen interest OCASI member agencies have in the area of immigrant women's issues. Although more agencies are located in Metro Toronto, regional response rates were equally high.
- 1.2 Of the 70 respondents, a little more than one fourth are agencies that serve 70% or more women clients (**women-focused agencies**). The bulk of these agencies are based in Metro Toronto. In the 1986 Census, it was found that 50% of all immigrants to Canada settled in Ontario. Seventy percent of these settled in the greater Toronto region. Slightly more than 50% of these are women immigrants. It is understandable then that more women-focused agencies exist in Toronto. This may also be attributed to a strong experience of the immigrant and visible minority women's movement in Toronto.

The average percentage of women served by this type of agency is 88%, much higher than other agencies (**general immigrant service agencies**) which serve an average of less than 50% women. General immigrant service agencies make up the main body of the OCASI network and similarly comprise most (71%) of the member agency respondents. Although these agencies are found mostly in Metro Toronto, many are located outside of Toronto (42%). Interestingly, the majority of immigrant and refugee women served by OCASI member agencies throughout Ontario, are served by these general immigrant service agencies.

2. Profile of Clients Served

- 2.1 The main age range of clients served by all agency respondents is from 25 to 49 years. More women-focused agencies seem to serve a clientele that is predominantly in that range. When looked at in terms of the kinds of services offered, this can be explained by the large quantity of employment training that these agencies provide and which necessarily target women in the more employable

age brackets.

~~2.1~~ Few women-focused agency services are targeted toward youth or toward older, and senior clients. Among the general immigrant service agencies, however, services are more evenly distributed although still quite heavily concentrated on the 25 to 49 years age group. More programs are offered to youth and to older groups. Again, when viewed in the context of services provided, these agencies focus much of their work on the "family" and therefore a wider mix of ages are included in this target group.

2.2 A difference is also evident between types of agencies in the **length of time** that clients have been in **Canada**. Women-focused agencies tend to serve those who have been in Canada longer than general immigrant service agencies. When analyzed in the context of kinds of services offered by these agencies, this tendency is probably because the women who avail themselves of employment/skills training are those who have been in the country for a longer period of time.

General immigrant service agencies on the other hand, seem to target their services to clients who have been in Canada for a shorter length of time. This is perhaps due to some of the services they provide being primarily for recent arrivals, orientation and settlement services and language training. These programs are usually the first that are approached by new arrivals because they are better known in the community, highly accessible to the target population, provide a broad range of programs and serve the clients in their own language and in the context of their own culture.

Also, some of these services are necessary before employment or skills training can be accessed such as language training, day care referrals, general information regarding housing, health, welfare, and particularly for refugees - legal counsel.

2.3 **Level of language ability** among the clients also varies markedly. More than a third of the general immigrant service agencies provide services to those with no knowledge of English. This means that services are necessarily offered in their own tongue from staff/volunteers within the agencies or through translation services from other agencies or from the community itself. Less than a quarter of these clients are served by women-focused agencies.

Clients with a basic knowledge of English are served almost equally by both types of agencies. Those at a conversational or fluent level are served more by women-focused agencies rather than other agencies.

When examined more closely and taking into consideration the services offered by women-focused agencies (primarily employment/ skills training and social support services - see list of these specific service areas on page 31), their clients in general require a better knowledge of the language. In contrast, services offered by the general immigrant service groups, are of a wider scope and of a nature that deals with the more recent arrivals, such that English language ability cannot be a pre-requisite for access to these services.

2.4 Perhaps expectedly, the **immigrant status** of clients served by both types of agencies is quite similar. Approximately one third of the clients served by agency respondents are landed immigrants (either family class or independent). Another third are Canadian citizens. Refugees however, are found to be targeted more by general immigrant service agencies. Again when related to the services offered by women-focused organizations, refugees are not eligible for many of the programs because of Canada Employment and Immigration Commission criteria and so are precluded from being targeted by these agencies.

It is important to examine this profile of clients served by the different agencies in relation to the kinds of services offered and to the needs of the clients themselves. Younger women for example have different needs to those of senior women. Newer arrivals to Canada have distinct needs to those who have been here for 5 years and still do not have steady employment or who cannot speak English or French. Refugees who have escaped to Canada with nothing but the clothes they wear have separate needs from independent immigrants who have had time to prepare for their move to a new country. The problems of immigrant and refugee clients, particularly women, vary greatly. In response to these needs, OCASI member agencies provide a wide variety of services. These are described in more detail in this next section.

3. Description of Services Provided

~~2.5~~ Activities under the broad heading of **settlement services** received the **largest numbers** indicating the mass of services offered by member agencies included in this field. Referral services, settlement orientation, individual client advocacy, form-filling/documentation

services, escort/interpreting aid, translation services and long term adjustment services are some of the concrete activities that take place at most of the member agencies.

Employment services follow closely as a number of specific employment-related activities that are provided by most member agencies. Included in this category are job referral services, job search skills training, career counselling, academic upgrading, job interview escort services, work placements and life skills bridging programs. Common to the large majority of OCASI member agencies are job referral services. At half of the agencies, job search skills/life skills training and career counselling is conducted. A little less than 50% of this training and counselling is aimed at immigrant women.

Social Support Services is another main area of activity among member agencies. Referrals to family/child service agencies, and individual and family counselling, crisis intervention, income tax assistance and child care services are among the services common to most agencies. One fourth of the member agencies target women in their referrals to family/child services. Another quarter of the agencies provide crisis intervention services especially for women.

Interestingly, **language training** accounts for a service offered by less than half of the member agency respondents. Citizenship classes make up activities of a third of the agencies and coordination of language training courses are provided by less than a quarter of the agencies. About a third of the language instruction courses are directed toward women.

4. Services and Activities Targeted To Women

In the overall picture of services and activities that are aimed at women, **employment-related services** are indicated as a primary service. Approximately forty-five per cent of the employment services provided by the respondents are targeted to women. This seems to indicate that the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women lie in the area of employment, whether it be in career counselling, life skills, job search skills, academic upgrading, work placements, etc. More than half of these services are offered by women-focused agencies.

Social Support Services are another group of services that the bulk of the agency respondents provide. However, only a quarter of these agencies target women in their crisis intervention, individual counselling, and referrals to family/child services.

Language Training is also another focus of assistance aimed at women. More than a quarter of the Language training services offered by member agencies are availed of by women. In particular, 33% of the instruction courses in English or French are utilized by women. This suggests language ability as a concern of immigrant women and would indicate the need for increased services that would allow more participation from women.

The other services included in this heading are one-to-one tutoring, English in the workplace, curriculum development and citizenship classes which receive low participation levels from women.

When examined in the light of eligibility criteria for inclusion in subsidized language programs, it is easily understandable why women have not been able to utilize and often cannot avail themselves of this service. Subsidized language training is not open to sponsored immigrants, that is, assisted relatives or family class immigrants (usually women); to those not "destined for the labour market" (usually women); and to those whose lack of fluency in one of the official languages is not preventing them from securing employment (usually women). Although the policy does not distinguish (discriminate) between men and women, the conditions of women's lives force them into a category of people who are not eligible for subsidized language training.

By and large, **settlement services** (i.e. referrals, orientation, individual client advocacy, form-filling/documentation services, escort/interpretation, translation and long-term adjustment services) although offered by the bulk of member agencies, are not targeted towards women. A few specific activities such as individual client advocacy, orientation and referrals, are particular activities aimed at women by some of the agencies. Of those agencies that provide settlement services to women, most of them are women-focused.

5. Agency Barriers to Providing Services

An overwhelming majority of the member agencies agreed that there are barriers to providing services for immigrants and refugees. Foremost in their concerns is a lack of funding. This was echoed during both the focus group discussions/interviews and workshop. It was considered the basic cause of an inability to hire staff and develop new programs, and the reason for a lack of time and space. Related to the lack of funding is the inconsistency in funding criteria. These change from year to year creating gaps in services and compelling the agency to meet the funder's expectations rather than the client's needs. Also mentioned during the interviews was the concern that government

funding mandates were too broad, with women as only part of the target population rather than a target in itself.

A lack of information on "isolated women" in the community was also seen as a high ranking barrier to providing effective services. A lack of group methods/skills to reach women who may benefit from these programs was considered important as an impediment to offering quality services. Less in rank but also mentioned by some agencies was the lack of language capacity, and the tendency of some of the agencies to put the needs of immigrant women as a last priority.

6. Agency's Perceived Immigrant Women's Program Needs

About a quarter of the agency participants in both surveys responded to this question. Interestingly, most of those who did respond had similar answers, illustrating similarity of experiences and concerns in serving immigrant women. **Language training** was a foremost program need perceived by a third of the agencies which responded to this item. This perception did not change, regardless of the geographical location of the agency, and this was corroborated by participants of the focus groups/ interviews and workshop held.

When reviewed in the context of the language training programs already in place, one must consider the program eligibility requirements which discriminate against women. It is easy to discern why language training is a priority concern to women who realize language ability is the key to jobs, to information, to participation and life in Canada and yet cannot avail themselves of the programs that do exist, or do not know where to access ESL Training.

Support Groups is a program that another third of the Immigrant Women's Survey respondents mentioned. This was higher among the respondents to the Immigrant Services Database where almost half of them mentioned this. These support groups specified older women, assaulted or battered women, and women torture victims as target groups. The need for support groups was also mentioned during the focus groups/ interviews, particularly in relation to the perceived need for counselling of battered women.

Regionally, this category received a higher response rate from the Metro Toronto agencies (more than a third) than the agencies in the four other regions (less than a quarter). When response rates are studied in association with the types of agencies (i.e. women-focused and non women-specific) and the kinds and numbers of services found in the region, one can

assume that they are closely related. The more numerous calls for support groups which came from Metro Toronto agencies can partially be explained by the location of women-focused agencies being predominantly in Toronto, and with the longer experience immigrant serving agencies based in Toronto have had in working with immigrant and visible minority women. High numbers and differing origins of immigrant women that arrive and settle in Metro Toronto contrasted with low numbers actually reached by the immigrant serving agencies are also possible reasons for more concern around not being able to effectively involve more of these women.

Employment orientation/ job search/ placement for women was a third program mentioned by the agency respondents. This was reiterated by respondents to the Immigrant Services Database. The need for child care and transportation allowances were stipulated as pre-requisites to a more accessible program.

Differences in regions were apparent. This concern was more of a priority for agencies outside of Toronto than for those within the Toronto area. Again, this should be considered in relation to the services predominant in these regions. Employment-related programs targeted to women are more frequent in Toronto and more scarce in other regions, thereby demonstrating a larger gap in this service for the non-Metro Toronto agencies.

Educational Workshops were another priority program mentioned by respondents in both surveys and reiterated by the participants in the focus groups/ interviews. These workshops centred around the need to empower immigrant women, the need to raise immigrant women's awareness of their rights. Topics specified were assertiveness training, life skills training, awareness of wife abuse problems, parenting skills, workshops for women with emotional or mental problems, etc.

Job Training Programs were mentioned as an important program need by participants in the focus groups/interviews and workshop, and confirmed by the Immigrant Services Database. Child care allowances were again emphasized as necessary to enable women to access these programs. Related to this was a concern around eligibility criteria, specifically the need for such programs to be made available to women refugees without landed status. Again, differences were shown on a regional basis. Interestingly, this was considered a priority by 30% of respondents in the Metro Toronto area and only by 5% in the outside of Toronto region. The need for employment orientation/job search programs was of greater importance to agencies situated outside the Metro Toronto region.

7. Barriers to Accessing Programs & Services

Interesting in this section is that responses carry a different slant, that of immigrants' barriers as perceived by the settlement/immigrant serving agency workers. It is interesting because of the internal or self evaluation that was necessary to assess if women had difficulties accessing agency services, and answer this question.

The large majority of agency workers agreed that there were definite barriers to accessing programs and services. The leading barrier recognized by the bulk of the agencies was that of a **lack of language skills**. A good level of language ability was considered a pre-requisite to adapt to and settle adequately in Canadian life.

On a regional level it is interesting to note that a **lack of interest and motivation** was ranked slightly higher than the lack of language skills. When further probed, it was found that the lack of interest and motivation could be due to a number of issues related to women's isolation and to cultural barriers that exist among the women, and also because of government policies that are gender-blind in principle. Women, having the burden of taking care of the children and the home, and often-times with no English or French language ability, are unable to participate in activities outside the home.

Women are not always eligible for subsidized language and skills training programs, of paramount importance to women's involvement in the community. Other programs that may be available to her are not accessible because of the unavailability of child care and transportation allowances.

The inter-relatedness of these problems were confirmed in the subsequent barriers agreed on by more than half of the agency respondents. These were a **lack of child care support services, a lack of self confidence/assertiveness, a lack of information on services available and a lack of monies to access transportation.**

8. Any particular immigrant/ethnic/racial group experiencing difficulties in accessing services

Responses to these next two questions are taken from the Immigrant Services Database.

Although only 12.3% responded to this question with the mention of women as a particular

group facing difficulties, all the responses reiterated previously mentioned concerns. Inability of women to access programs due to a lack of child care support; a lack of language knowledge, women's isolation, cultural differences; the need for training and upgrading opportunities ineligibility of refugee to services are all examples of some of the responses given.

9. Most Important Agency Accomplishment and Difficulty

Less than a quarter of the member agency respondents specifically mentioned women in response to the question on important accomplishments during the year. Most of these responses referred to the introduction or continuance of programs for women despite funding support problems. About 5% of the agency respondents referred to their inability to provide an appropriate program for women as their most important difficulty in the past year. Additional services specific to women included increased outreach health services, ESL/Dialect classes and special sessions for particular ethnic groups.

10. Services Appropriate for "Isolated Women"

"Isolated Women" have been mentioned repeatedly as a severely disadvantaged target group. Causes of isolation may be due to a variety of reasons. These include cultural differences, language barriers, a lack of information, and a lack of family/community support that the women may have been used to in their country of origin. Methods to reach this target clientele have been cited as a definite training need on the part of the agency. When agency respondents were asked to name services and programs appropriate and necessary for this target group, **special support groups** were agreed to be a priority. This shows the realization that support groups are an established method to reach these women and begin to effectively respond to their specific needs.

Provision of information on community programs was considered another priority, particularly by those agencies from within the Toronto area. Often-times, front-line workers faced with clientele from different countries and with different needs and problems, are unable to refer their clientele to appropriate agencies. This seems to show that because of the large number of immigrants who settle in greater Toronto, and the variety of immigrant services existing in Toronto, it is necessary that more information on these community programs be made available. Agencies from regions outside of Metro Toronto, having fewer programs, do not feel this need as urgently.

ESL Training was ranked as next in importance, with a slightly higher count in the outside Metro Toronto region. This confirms the previous findings made around the need for ESL training being a main priority need for immigrant and refugee women.

A third priority program, again differing on a regional level, was **life skills training**. A little less than half of the Metro Toronto agencies considered this important for isolated women. A third believed it to be as important among the outside Metro Toronto groups. Understandably, other programs were perceived as more crucial to "isolated women" than life skills training. This also further affirms earlier results with respect to priority programs for immigrant women. It seems that especially in Toronto, regardless of the immigrant woman's degree of isolation, life skills training is a determining factor in her adaptation to life in Canada.

11. Availability of Professional Development

Professional development is an essential element to improved and more effective immigrant service delivery. Training workshops, conferences and consultation meetings are all integral aspects of community development and networking. This is the venue where experiences, problems, new programs, difficulties are shared and learning takes place. A third of the agencies believe that this basic requirement in the field of settlement and social service does not exist for immigrant service agencies. Two thirds felt that there was professional development available to these agencies although on a limited basis.

As was manifested in previous needs assessments, there was a perception that professional development was less prevalent among non-Metro Toronto groups. This was also reiterated in the focus groups/interviews. Mention was made about Toronto being the centre of immigrant settlement and therefore, services and professional development training tended to be more accessible, although limited, to those based in Toronto. There was concern expressed that the smaller community agencies based outside of Toronto should not be overlooked. This was specified as neglect not only in terms of location of professional development activities but also in terms of their needs and problems which differ from Toronto based agencies.

12. Further Agency Professional Development/Training Needs

The main training need consistently expressed by immigrant serving agency respondents throughout Ontario was **counselling skills for immigrant women**. This was felt more strongly however, in the agencies outside of Metro Toronto where the bulk of the agencies stated this. The lack of training opportunities that exist on this topic seem to be a clear gap.

Cultural awareness/sensitivity, cross cultural communication and public education were reported as almost equal (40%) professional development needs by the agency respondents. **Race relations skills** were identified by a few agencies regardless of region. Participants in the focus groups, interviews and workshop also mentioned the need for an awareness of *racism and systemic discrimination* as an integral component for accurate analysis of immigrant and refugee settlement problems.

Other related concerns mentioned in the focus groups/interviews and workshop consisted of: a better *understanding of global women's issues* as being an essential framework to appreciate "where immigrant women are coming from", what body of experiences and cultural values they possess; and the *recognition of the special needs of immigrant women* as being distinct from those of other settlement service target groups. Also mentioned by a smaller number of people were the needs for more skills in mobilizing immigrant women and community organizing methods.

13. Special Programs for Disadvantaged Immigrant Women's Groups

It is evident that most of the special programs specifically offered to disadvantaged immigrant women's groups are found in the Toronto area. More than one third of the agency respondents serve **visible minority women**, 87.5% coming from the Metro Toronto area. Another third offer services to **isolated women**, two thirds of which are Toronto-based groups, one third from outside of Toronto. Less than a quarter of the member agency respondents provide services for **elderly immigrant women**, 73% of which are based in Toronto. Only two agencies reported providing services to disabled immigrant women, both of these being located in Toronto.

These findings can be attributed to the large numbers of immigrants, more than half of whom are women, that have continued to settle in Toronto. Perceived levels of needs have

reached a more complex nature thus necessitating a variety of services. Also, perhaps because of an increasing awareness of immigrant and visible minority issues and the larger numbers of immigrant women, immigrant women have become more vocal in expressing their needs and problems and advocating for special programs.

This does ascertain however, a distinct gap in services for seniors and disabled immigrant women throughout the 5 regions. The overall number of programs for disadvantaged immigrant women being extremely low, it is evident that there is a definite need for increased services for visible minority and isolated women in the Toronto area and an even greater need for programs which target these women in the outside of Toronto area.

14. Funding

Three main sources of funding for women's programs are reported by the member agencies. These are federal funding: *Secretary of State, Women's Program*; and *Citizenship and Community Participation program (CCP)* and provincial funding: the *Ontario Women's Directorate*. About half of the agency respondents said that they received funding for immigrant women's programs, mainly from these sources. Slightly more than half of these agencies are women-specific, therefore mostly based in Metro Toronto. Of these women-specific agency projects, 75% of those reported are educational in nature, particularly focused on women and violence. Of the general immigrant service agency projects, only one third are educational, the majority being outreach and general women's programs.

Expectedly, most of the agencies that reported having received funding for immigrant women's programs are based in Toronto. However, it is interesting to find that there is a difference in nature of the projects depending on the type of agency. Most of the women-focused projects are educational, while the general immigrant service agencies provided outreach and general women's programs. One must view these findings in relation to the funding source criteria as well which tend to be restrictive and "trendy". For example, if the Ontario Women's Directorate specified their funding for educational projects on women and violence, it is quite likely that these are the kinds of programs to which the agencies will gear their proposals whether or not these may have an inappropriate focus. The community-based agencies are constrained to design their project proposals to comply with the conditions of the funders because of poor financial situations.

It is important therefore, that funding sources become more knowledgeable about the issues that are most appropriate and of most concern to the target populations.

When asked about difficulties with funders, the main problem agencies reported was the **lack of recognition of the role community-based organizations play in social service planning and delivery**. This seems to be at the root of many of the problems around funding. This point was further expounded on during the focus groups/interviews and during the workshop. Because there is very little understanding of the inaccessibility of services to immigrants and refugees, especially women, funders are unable to comprehend what possible role immigrant serving agencies might have other than menial referral work, translation and interpretation services. This perpetuates the myth about settlement assistance being only necessary during the first year or so in Canada. There is a strong belief that as a first step, those in power must understand that community-based immigrant service agencies are key players in the planning and development of services. They must comprehend the special link that community-based agencies have with the target population. The role of immigrant serving agencies in making settlement and social services more appropriate and accessible to newcomers must become clear to policy makers before meaningful programming for immigrant women can begin to take place.

Other difficulties reported by women-focused agencies were problems in acquiring funding support for such activities as support groups for unemployed women, settlement counselling services, child care support, training for refugee claimants, community outreach, and internal organizational needs such as office furniture, and cost-of-living budget increases.

General immigrant service agencies reported the **difficulty of obtaining specific funding support for women-targeted programs**. This can be attributed to policy makers' lack of understanding of the specific needs of immigrant women as distinct from other target groups. There is an expressed need for a raising of awareness on the part of government bureaucrats about the double disadvantage that immigrant women face in settling in a new country.

Related funding problems were a **lack of core funding** which led to the inability to hire seriously needed staff, or much needed equipment. **Overall funding levels being too low** was a second difficulty, i.e. funding levels for immigrant serving organizations are already low, so that funds for women-focused projects are pushed to the bottom of the priority list. A third concern mentioned and related to overall funding levels was **annual funding increases being too low** in relation to the growing needs and inadequate basic support. Next, were the difficulties experienced in obtaining funding for projects, ISAP funding criteria being too limited, a lack of resources (i.e. staff, time, skills) to prepare and submit funding proposals, and finally a lack of knowledge of or access to appropriate funding

bodies and sources. An interesting comment made was the tendency of some funders to want to become involved in the operations of the agency as a condition for funding.

E. CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

CONCLUSIONS

1. All immigrant serving agencies should include as a priority in their professional development, planning and programming, the raising of awareness of Boards and staff around the distinct needs of immigrant and refugee women. Because the great majority of immigrant women are served by general immigrant service agencies, emphasis should be placed on raising the awareness of these agencies.
2. It is evident that the programs and services available to immigrant women in Toronto greatly outweigh those available to women in other regions of the province. Special emphasis should be placed on programming for immigrant women's services on an equitable basis throughout the province.
3. Because of the explicit gap in services for specific groups of disadvantaged immigrant women i.e. senior, visible minority, isolated and disabled women, there is a need for increased services in the Toronto area and an even greater need for programs that target these women from other provincial areas.
4. Stated program needs and gaps in services vary somewhat on a regional basis. Metro Toronto groups see the areas of employment skills training, and social support groups as the two main program needs for immigrant women. Specific groups that should be targeted are older women, battered women, and (refugee) women torture survivors. For groups in other regional areas, employment orientation/job search/placement and support groups are the main program gaps.
5. There is a need for educational programs. This was another program gap strongly expressed by agencies throughout Ontario. These educational programs centred around the importance of raising immigrant women's awareness of their rights, and tools for empowering immigrant women.
6. Integrated and wholistic programs must be designed with the aim of more effective and accessible programs. Repeatedly emphasized in almost any program for immigrant women is the necessity for child care and transportation allowances as a

principle determinant for the success and true accessibility of the program for these women.

7. The priority needs of "isolated women" are support groups, provision of accessible information on community programs, language training and life skills training. ESL training may be more of a need for other provincial areas while skills training seems to be a more urgent need in the Toronto area.
8. Increased funding support for programs which target immigrant women, including the development of new agencies that focus on services for immigrant women, is a key element to improved and more effective outreach to this target group. An initial step proposed is the need for government to understand the role community-based agencies play in making settlement and social services more appropriate and accessible to newcomers-- the special link they have with the community. They must recognize that community-based agencies are key players in the planning and development of services before meaningful programming for immigrant women can begin to take place.
9. Funding sources must also become more knowledgeable about the complex issues that are of most concern to target populations, particularly immigrant women. Training around an understanding of global women's issues and the recognition of the special needs of immigrant women, as well as cultural awareness and sensitivity are essential elements in the development of an informed and effective policy making body. They are imperative when formulating criteria that are realistic and responsive to the needs of immigrant women.
10. Professional Development:
 - a. Professional development needs of agencies also vary slightly on a regional basis. However, although considered to be generally limited, training was perceived to be more accessible to agencies in Toronto. There is a need for additional training to be directed towards agencies based outside of Toronto, not only in terms of training sites but also in terms of programming to address their specific needs and problems.
 - b. Skills for counselling of immigrant women was a main training need consistently expressed by agencies throughout Ontario. Cultural awareness and sensitivity, cross cultural communication and public education were reported as other professional

development needs. It is imperative that an awareness and understanding of racism, systemic discrimination and skills in promoting positive race relations be an integral part of any analysis of immigrant and refugee settlement problems.

- c. Another training need arises from the belief that an understanding of global women's issues is essential to appreciate "where immigrant women are coming from", what body of experiences and cultural values they possess, and to recognize the special needs of immigrant women as being distinct from those of other settlement service target groups.
 - d. With regards to isolated women, there is a need for professional development programs to develop skills in reaching and involving this constituency.
 - e. Other professional development needs required are in methods of mobilizing immigrant women and community organizing methods.
 - f. There is a need to recognize the experiences of immigrant serving agencies, particularly women-specific groups, and the wealth of knowledge and skill they have developed in their work. These experiences and programs models developed should be shared with other organizations throughout Ontario. This sharing should be recognized as a valuable professional development tool and as such should be supported financially by the government.
11. The development of any specific program initiatives should be done in close consultation with community groups, especially on such important points as criteria for funding and creating/monitoring/evaluating immigrant women's programs. These should be presented to the community for feedback prior to implementation in order to ensure true participation in program development.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Since OCASI is conducting ongoing research on services offered by the OCASI network, it would be useful from the women's issues perspective, to include a few questions on immigrant women. These could include any programs particularly targeted to women, especially for disadvantaged immigrant women, and percentage of funding that is set aside for women's projects. Concrete and specific terminology should be used, with language that is easily understood by both the respondents and the researchers.
2. The further in-depth study of several of the women-focused agencies would be important to look at when seeking to identify or design effective and competent models to provide services to immigrant women, particularly disadvantaged immigrant women's groups. This would include intensive interviews and participant observation in a number of key agencies.
3. Another important collection of information is how women, specifically immigrant and visible minority women are represented in the management structure of immigrant serving agencies. Are Boards representative of the clients agencies serve? Information on any employment equity policy and practices that the agencies might have would be useful models to study as well.

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- Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto. A Social Report for Metropolitan Toronto, No. 2, May 1989.
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APPENDICES

1. Attendance List at Workshop on Immigrant Women's Settlement Needs and Programs, Geneva Park, October 1988
2. Focus Group Discussion and Interviews:
List of Agency Participants

APPENDIX 1.

ATTENDANCE AT WORKSHOP ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S
SETTLEMENT NEEDS & PROGRAMS
Geneva Park, October 5, 1988

Name

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Kay Blair | Rexdale Micro Skills |
| Myriam Cabrera | Rexdale Micro Skills |
| Claire Twose | Kingston & District Immigrant Services |
| Magdalene Mloszewski | Kingston & District Immigrant Services |
| Vasco Cabral | Portuguese Social Services Centre |
| Margarida Costa | Portuguese Social Services Centre |
| Benita Coelho | St. Stephens Community House |
| Madalena Silva | St. Stephens Community House |
| Peg Deaton | Ottawa Carleton Immigrant Services |
| Fasika G. Cherinet | CANACT |
| Sophie Nsiah-Yeboah | CANACT |
| Gina Filippi | Costi-Iias Immigrant Services |
| Mike O'Kane | St. Christopher House Toronto |
| Maria Engracia Matias | St. Christopher House Toronto |
| Nancy Henson | Quinte United Immigrant Services |
| Karla Hartl | Czechoslovak Association of Canada |
| Nadine Doucette | Thunder Bay Multicultural Association |
| Mary Tuomisto | Thunder Bay Multicultural Association |
| Madge Chan | MANWO |
| Coco Diaz | INTERCEDE |
| Helena Pine | Working Women Community Centre |
| Anabela Cardoso | Working Women Community Centre |
| Anne Kan | University Settlement House |
| Janet Wong | University Settlement House |
| Camila Reimers | CAPRI |
| Margaret Hulagrocki | Multicultural Association of Kenora |
| Penelope Cummine | Multicultural Association of Kenora |
| Lillian Makara | Multicultural Association of Kenora |
| Dorothy Wicks | Multicultural Association of Kenora & MANWO |
| Rob Shropshire | Working Group on Refugee Resettlement |
| Ellen Turley | Working Group on Refugee Resettlement |
| Sheeba Sibal | Connect Information Post |
| Naini Cloutier | Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre |
| Alison Kemper | Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre |
| Teresa Dremetsikas | Canadian Centre For Victims of Torture |
| Ted Richmond | OCASI |
| Robert Dungey | Consultant (OCASI) |
| Maria Williams | Cross Cultural Communication Centre |
| Jojo Geronimo | Cross Cultural Communication Centre |
| Judy Vashti Persad | Cross Cultural Communication Centre |
| Fernanda Da Silva | Cross Cultural Communication Centre |
| Jyotsna Inamdar | India Rainbow Community Services Mississauga |
| Janice Fine | Jewish Social Services Agency (Ottawa) |

Susan Kadray
Gisele Verillas
Hanan Amer
Ann Wirsig
Wendy Miller
Blanca Allende
Howard Sinclair-Jones
Jo Campbell
Heather Jessome
Elias Morales
Yew W. Lee
Judith Brooks
Sharon Kan
May Chan
Mike Bay
Nhan Vo
Si Transken
Bob Filart
Tammy Adamson
Lynda M'Kern
Bettie Flynn

Cross Cultural Learner Centre (London)
London Cross Cultural Centre
The Arab Community Centre
Northwood Neighbourhood Services
New Experiences for Refugee Women
New Experience for Refugee Women
OCASI
Red Door Shelter
Red Door Shelter
Red Door Family Shelter
Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization
The Black Secretariat
Ottawa Chinese Community Services Centre
Ottawa Chinese Community Services Centre
Woodgreen Red Door Family Shelter
Cambridge Multicultural Centre
Sudbury Multicultural Association
Catholic Immigration Bureau Toronto
Peterborough NLOC
Peterborough NLOC
Peterborough NLOC

APPENDIX 2.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS & INTERVIEWS: LIST OF OCASI AGENCY PARTICIPANTS

Metro Toronto & Vicinity

1. Arab Community Centre
2. Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
3. Costi-IIAS
4. Jamaican Canadian Association
5. Immigrant Women's Health Centre
6. Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre
7. Malton Community Council
8. New Experiences for Refugee Women
9. Northwood Neighbourhood Services
10. Shirley Samaroo House
11. Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

Southwest Ontario

1. Windsor-Essex Multicultural Council
2. South Essex Community Council
3. Windsor Essex County Family YMCA
4. Hamilton Multicultural Centre
5. YMCA of Kitchener-Waterloo
6. Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre

Eastern Ontario

1. Dalhousie Health and Social Services
2. New Canadians Centre
3. Ottawa Chinese Community Services Centre
4. Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services

Northern Ontario

1. Thunderbay Multicultural Association
2. Multicultural Association of Northwest Ontario

