

**A Research Project
Into The Settlement Needs of Adult Immigrants with Limited
Literacy Skills in their First Language
Who Have Settled in the Greater Toronto Area**

May 2001

Submitted to:
The Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre

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Acknowledgments

Much appreciation and thanks to all the focus group participants for sharing their stories, insights and recommendations for the future. Thanks to the following agencies for sponsoring the focus groups:

- Somali Immigrant Women's Organization
- Tamil Elam Society (Lawrence and Warden)
- Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre
- Tropicana Community Services
- Self-Directed Literacy Centre, Muslim Education Network

Many thanks to the individuals from the following organizations that participated in interviews for this project:

- Access and Equity Centre, City of Toronto
- The Catalyst Centre
- Joint Centre of Excellence in Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS, Toronto)
- Muslim Education Network
- The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- Roma Advocacy Group
- Somali Immigrant Women's Organization
- Sussman Human Services Research and Consulting
- Tamil Elam Society
- York University

Thanks to the staff and board members of the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre for original inspiration and support for the project. Thanks also to staff from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and the City of Toronto for their feedback on the initial draft of this report. Our appreciation to resource people from various communities and settlement agencies who contributed ideas and provided support.

This project was funded by the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services, Citizenship Immigration Canada.

Executive Summary

I. Key Findings

“Literacy is not just about being able to read and write. It is about having power in society.”

Consultation on Literacy, City of Toronto
(November, 1998)

A. Findings from the literature review/environmental scan:

1. There is very little research data on the settlement needs of this target population (adult newcomers in Canada five years or less with limited literacy skills in their first language – less than grade 9 education); at the same time there is a recognition by practitioners and academics of this existing research gap.
2. There are few settlement services or programs that are specifically geared to the needs of the target population (i.e., adult immigrants with low literacy skills), other than literacy and ESL training programs. However, according to the review of the literature, even these programs do not adequately address the needs of the target group. For example, there are LINC programs that focus on ESL literacy but they do not necessarily meet the *literacy needs* of adult immigrants with low levels of literacy in their own language. More specifically, there are no funding programs and no established settlement and integration services or agencies that are specifically aimed, as a priority, at the *settlement needs* of this target population.
3. There is no policy framework or systematic approach that integrates literacy training for the target population into the other settlement services or programs. Essentially, there is lack of common agreement on the scope of settlement services and an

absence of an integrated policy framework within which literacy training for adult immigrants would be clearly defined. In practice, the needs of the target population are usually pushed into a low priority status, especially in the current stringent funding situation.

4. Literacy skills are largely equated with English language skills, thus ignoring the need for basic literacy in one's primary language. This confusion leads to several problems: one, it stigmatizes those who are literate in languages other than English; it fails to provide important information about those who are not literate in any language; and it assumes erroneously that the ability to speak English is the same as being literate in English. It is recommended that a distinction between first language literacy and second, or supplemental, language literacy be made.
5. There are few first language literacy programs that bridge from the first language to the second. This method has proved effective for members of the target group. A bridging program begins with literacy in the first language--learning the structure of the first language and cross-referencing the content of what is being learned to the second language.
6. The dominant discourse on the subject of literacy skills training for newcomers is characterized as follows:
 - The literacy issue is intrinsically intertwined with the target group's daily struggle for survival and dignity in their new land. However, literacy skills training is seldom situated in the social context of the learner's lived experiences, thus divorcing reading and writing from a fundamental understanding of social realities. These social realities must be integrated into the program of learning to enable it to be relevant and effective.

“Language is the door to a culture. Deprived of language skills, one is denied access/entry to society and its opportunities for participation, decision-making, and services. It has economic, social, and political ramifications as well.

The need for language training is important for a whole range of needs from the most basic, survival needs (e.g., information) to the more sophisticated levels (e.g., citizenship, articulation of policy, or advocacy.” (ISPR, p. 59)

- Literacy skills training is heavily labour market oriented (skills needed to find a job), negating or at least minimizing other social development objectives like cultural preservation/celebration and citizenship development. Though employment-related literacy training is important for the target group, other objectives such as cultural preservation/celebration and citizenship development are equally important for adult newcomers to strengthen their sense of identity and historical continuity. Job training can only be successful if it is built on a strong foundation of the self-esteem of learners.

B. Findings from the focus group and interview data:

1. The most basic issue for the initial settlement of the target group is that settlement services as currently structured are not accessible to these newcomers. Generally, the current settlement delivery system does not account for the first language literacy difficulties of the target group.
 - The need to be literate in English (understand forms required by welfare, documents related to employment, rental agreements, school notices, or a map) is intrinsically woven into the daily lives of newcomers and is embedded in a host of larger issues that the target group faces, such as discrimination in housing and employment, low self-esteem, harassment on the job, and the inability to do basic things like using the public transit system. Given the fragmented characteristic of current settlement service programs, service agencies are not equipped to provide an immigrant-centred, continuous, and holistic service approach.

- Settlement services or programs which fail to account for the literacy difficulties of the target population are especially pronounced in the areas of housing, employment/job training, public education system, family counseling, and immigration/ sponsorship.
 - Basic survival needs take precedence over the need to develop literacy skills, and as a result, the cycle of poverty, isolation, and lack of literacy skills becomes a common pattern if the basic survival needs of newcomers are not met.
2. The service gap between felt by newcomers, in general, is magnified for the target population, given these newcomers' basic inability to function in a society and a service delivery system that is largely print oriented.

Within the target population, there are differentiated needs for refugees, immigrants, women, racialized groups, seniors, people with disabilities, and youths. Thus, the marginalization of historically disadvantaged groups within the target population is further heightened by the service gap.

3. The most accessible and frequented resource for the target population is their immediate family, friends, and the network of volunteers that are organized around community based settlement service agencies.

In this respect, ethno-specific agencies are highly preferred by the target group as more welcoming and accessible in terms of cultural appropriateness, and ability to compensate for members of the target group's literacy difficulties by providing translation and interpretation. These services are, therefore, seen as relevant and effective. However, the resources of these ethno-specific settlement services and their volunteer corps are stretched out too far to meet the settlement needs of the target population in a consistent and adequate manner. Given limited resources (funding, staffing, and overall organizational capacity), there is a very wide

gap between the service capability of these agencies and the settlement needs of the target population.

4. Once newcomers acquire citizenship status they are barred from accessing various services, including those provided by LINC. Thus, newly arrived immigrants who become Canadian citizens are denied a valuable service. As well, participation in LINC programs is limited to a 5-year period, by the end of which the newcomer is expected to have completed the course. This is a barrier for some newcomers who need a longer time to learn the language, going beyond the 5-year cap.

II. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the environmental scan, focus groups, and interviews with key informants..

The recommendations have implications for policy formulation, program development and implementation, governance structure, and immediate next steps. They are therefore directed to policy makers at different levels of government, relevant agencies and institutions; program managers and direct service workers, both in the mainstream as well as ethno-specific agencies; as well as the members of the target population themselves, and the general public.

A. Policy

1. Literacy as a right in one's first language should be incorporated into the settlement service policy framework of all levels of government, and at the service agency level, which is the immediate point of program delivery. The Provincial Government's policy on literacy should target the literacy and basic skills needs of newcomers who are eligible for literacy training,-- i.e. they are at Levels 1 or 2 according to the International Adult Literacy Survey. Funding cut from special education should be restored, e.g., reading tutorials and adult education, which help young people who leave school early.

CIC should strengthen its LINC sponsored ESL literacy programs to include first language bridging programs. This practice should extend to literacy programs funded by all levels of government.

2. A policy on clear and accessible language should govern how the service agencies write, disseminate materials about their services, and conduct outreach. A field assessment should be carried out to test materials and their effectiveness. As well, outreach should be strengthened so that people with literacy issues may be reached through more appropriate strategies that consider other ways of reaching people than just through print.
3. Ensure the active participation of the target group in all phases of policy development and program implementation. Effective consultation mechanisms should be developed to ensure the active participation of the target population in decision-making, especially on issues that directly affect their lives, but also on other issues in general, given their right to civic participation. One example of this consultation mechanism would be a series of discussions in different forums, with representation from various immigrant and refugee communities and settlement agencies that would explore issues and solutions (e.g. City of Toronto is currently organizing Working Groups on literacy issues).
4. There is a need to conduct further research into specific settlement programs and services to evaluate their effectiveness, adequacy, and relevance to the settlement needs of this target population. While basic needs such as access to housing, skills training, job preparation, social assistance and health care are a primary concern, other needs such as learning Canadian systems of banking, formal education, available services, police support, etc. should also be addressed to facilitate healthy adjustment. Such research will help inform the development of a settlement service policy framework and strategy that incorporates, as an essential dimension, the literacy needs of newcomers in their primary language, distinct from the need to develop second language skills.

5. The settlement services sector should have a well-defined policy and strategy on how to integrate a literacy perspective into settlement services. This means they should not assume that clients are literate.
6. Ensure that the survival needs of the target population are met, such as housing, food, seasonal clothing, childcare and transportation costs, as an essential pre-requisite to the creation of a conducive learning environment for literacy education. Such support mechanisms are absolutely essential for the target population to learn and to function in their new environment.
7. In the school system, strengthen the role of personnel, such as the School Community Liaison Officer, who are in direct contact with newcomers who are parents or guardians.

The roles and functions of this position should also address the literacy needs of parents and access appropriate language and cultural interpreter services for the students.

As well, there should be a re-examination of the school system as a whole, to see how it could respond to the question of parent/guardian – child relations, when the former has problems in reading and writing.

The current school system assumes that, at home, the student can approach an adult or guardian who could assist and encourage the student in homework and other learning tasks. Where this assumption does not hold true, an alternative support system for the student should be worked out, such as a tutor who can communicate orally and in writing in the language of the student.

8. In the light of the recent amalgamation of municipalities, the issues of who does what should be clarified, so that responsibility and accountability for settlement services to the target population are clearly defined and gaps may be identified and addressed.

9. Accessible information, in the forms of posters with visual images, audio visual messages, brochures, etc. should be made available in the first language(s) of newcomers in such places where they would naturally congregate, i.e. airports, malls, supermarkets, places of worship, community centers, etc.
10. Government policy at various levels should address the basic service gaps in the settlement service area, specifically as it relates to affordable housing, health care, childcare, family reunification and access to quality jobs.
11. The settlement services sector and the literacy field should promote and strengthen their anti-racism/anti-discrimination policy, complete with the corresponding mechanisms and guidelines, from program planning and design to implementation and evaluation. Such a policy should be properly resourced, (i.e., through proper staffing support and by making available adequate funds for staff and board training), and properly monitored for effective compliance.
12. At present the Settlement Policy is seen as an adjunct of Canada's Immigration Policy. There should be a distinct and well-articulated Settlement Policy, with its own legislative framework, strategic goals, and governance structure, which are linked but not subservient to Canada's Immigration Policy.

Specifically, settlement should not simply be a "program", but should have its own separate Act. "A distinct and properly articulated immigrant settlement policy should (therefore) be defined, removed from the shadows of an immigration policy framework (that) is driven primarily by labour supply and demand considerations, and by a pre-occupation with enforcement and internal security issues." (Geronimo, p. 12)

13. There should be a common definition or vision of what "settlement services" involve. Such a common vision should inform a coherent policy framework that integrates "horizontally" the various policy goals of population planning, immigration, settlement, labour

market adjustment, job creation and training, and broader social services and development such as health, housing, and welfare. From this policy framework, it is possible to achieve the “horizontal integration” of roles across various levels of government, from the federal, to the provincial, and municipal levels; it is felt that while the federal government is responsible for policy, the provincial and municipal governments have to face the challenges of implementation, but without a well defined role in planning and priority setting.

14. Specifically, the City of Toronto as well as community based organizations should have a more active role in defining settlement priorities, goals, and strategies, including those that relate to literacy skills training.

B. Programs Geared to this Target Population

1. Literacy training in the learner’s first language should be a distinct discipline or program separate from ESL programs. The bridging programs such as the one offered by the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre (CMLC) should be promoted and expanded. At CMLC (Bogdan, 1995) a bridging program begins with literacy in the first language--learning the structure of the first language and cross-referencing the content of what is being learned to English. Promotion and expansion of bridging programs should include the development of curriculum and learning materials geared to this target group, as well as the training of literacy instructors who speak the first language of the target population and who will facilitate these programs.
2. Mainstream and ethno-specific settlement agencies, given adequate funding support, should integrate literacy into their programs and services to ensure that the needs of the target population are addressed. As well, the planning and programming, monitoring, and implementation activities of these organizations should incorporate a literacy perspective. Without such a perspective, the organization and its staff operate from the dominant assumption that all their clients can read and write (especially if they speak

English); or that the client cannot read and write at all, if he or she happens not to speak English.

3. Mainstream and ethno-specific organizations should train their volunteers, staff, and board members on issues of literacy, and provide certain basic tools that will help them respond to the target population's needs. While filling important service delivery gaps, volunteering also provides these volunteers – who are often immigrants themselves - with valuable experience for employment.
4. Employment is one of the primary concerns of new immigrants. Services to facilitate their access to employment are essential. However, literacy for members of the target population should provide both labour market training as well as citizenship/social development to promote both their integration and that of their children into Canadian society. For example, if these newcomers are better able to help their children with their homework and deal with the school system, they will be better able to assist their children in their integration process.
5. Ensure the principle of “ethno-racial match” so that the service provider and the learner/participant belong to the same language/ethno cultural group. However, staff from an ethno-specific group should be able to work with all clients regardless of ethnicity. In the hiring of staff for settlement services, those who speak the language of immigrants and refugees should be positively considered over other applicants. These staff should be made available to assist in settlement and enable larger numbers of immigrants to be served. Importantly, these staff can assist clients with the paperwork. While this is the ideal, organizations are usually fiscally constrained to achieve this ethnic match. Thus, short of having an ethnic or language match, language translators/cultural interpreters should be made available to this target population, especially in the critical areas of health, education, job training, and legal aid. To this end, appropriate policies, training programs, and funding support should be put in place to ensure the employment and/or availability of translation/cultural interpretation services.

6. The settlement service sector should have a viable program and action plan on how they will integrate a literacy perspective into their services, i.e. appropriate communication alternatives to print in the form of television messages (for example, audio and video materials), posters, brochures with culturally sensitive and relevant visual material incorporated.

C. Next Steps

1. Following the practice and principles involved in participatory research, it is important to disseminate and share the findings and recommendations of the research project, in particular with the research participants/respondents. In line with this principle, the research team asked the various focus groups and interview respondents what follow up activities or next-steps they might find useful. This section describes ideas for possible next steps.
 - Ensure that representatives from community groups and agencies that participated in the research (e.g., those who helped organize and facilitate the focus groups) meet to discuss the research findings and recommendations. At this meeting, the research team will do a brief presentation of the report, ask for feedback from the group, and then map out an action plan.
 - Ensure that after this initial feedback session, each service agency meets with the members of their original focus groups and repeat the same process; this time it will be the service agency staff who will brief the focus group participants and elicit their feedback. Each agency can then plan with their respective communities, how they want to use the research report.
 - Finally, the service agency representatives will meet again with the research team to pull together the different feedback

data/plans from the five community groups. Collectively, a joint action plan of the five agencies/communities can be developed from this meeting. Also at this stage, interview respondents can be invited to be part of the feedback and planning process.

- Subsequently, community forums/workshops can be held as training sessions with literacy practitioners (e.g., tutors in LINK/ESL and literacy classes) and settlement service providers.
 - This set of activities can be pursued and implemented as one pilot project.
2. Various service agencies and community groups which were initially invited to participate but had to decline (i.e., due to time constraints) might be interested in finding out the results of the research project. These groups can be invited to educational workshops to discuss the research findings and to plan on how the data can be used. As well, the settlement service sector through coalition groups like OCASI or research institutions like CERIS can sponsor seminars and workshops to discuss the research findings. Literacy organizations and other groups dealing with literacy (such like the Metro Labour Education Centre) can also be invited for a discussion of the research findings to help elicit follow through activities.
 3. Follow up research activities can be planned focusing on the research gaps identified in the research. Various funding agencies can be approached to pursue the research further. Specifically, the follow up research could focus on the information gap about the extent and scope of the problem in terms of first-language literacy.

Another specific recommendation from the report pertains to the research and development of settlement and literacy education programs specifically aimed at the target population (i.e., those with low literacy skills in their first language). Such a research and

development activity can be undertaken, in coordination with any of the literacy/education or groups as mentioned above.

I. Introduction/ Project Description

A. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to report on the findings related to the research project: *Settlement Needs of Adults with Low Level Literacy Skills Learning English*. This report includes: 1) the goals and objectives of the project; 2) research methodology used; 3) findings from the literature review, focus groups with participants from the target population, and interviews with knowledgeable informants; and 4) recommendations.

B. Goals and Scope of the Project

The purpose of the research project is to improve access to settlement information and services for adult immigrants with low literacy skills in their own language in the Greater Toronto Area. It came to the attention of the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre that the target population-- those with low literacy skills in their first language were having difficulty accessing settlement services. The Centre felt that research was needed to document the particular settlement and integration needs of these newcomers.

The objectives of the project were to:

- document the initial settlement and integration issues faced by the target population
- gain greater insight into the settlement needs of the target population
- gather data using scientific methodology that will assist the CMLC and other settlement agencies to better serve the target population
- generate recommendations that will facilitate the target population into Canadian society

C. Basic Assumptions

The research was premised on the following assumptions:

- A definition of literacy which refers to the many ways people use and understand print communication. The definition of literacy used in this research is based on a socio-cultural perspective where literacy is embedded in, not separate from other settlement and integration needs and issues. This way of conceptualizing literacy is different from an approach that sees literacy as an individual skill or a thread that stands alone. In this research, less than Grade 9 was taken as an indicator of first language literacy needs for the purpose of this study.
- Five focus groups were to be conducted in collaboration with community organizations already working with the target population.
- Focus groups were to sample diverse ethno-racial and immigrant communities across the GTA.
- Newcomers were defined as having resided in Canada for five years or less.
- Several knowledgeable individuals from settlement services, ethno-specific agencies, academia, government, literacy organizations would also be interviewed.

II. Research Methodology

A. Overview of Methodology

The research team used interviews and focus groups as part of a qualitative research methodology (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994) in keeping with understanding meaning from the point of view of the research participants or subjects. We paid close attention to the words and actions of participants and the meanings behind these words and actions. We sought to discover patterns which emerged from our data rather than having a pre-determined hypothesis.

Qualitative research allowed us to "put a face" on the issues and the particular circumstances of our research participants rather than minimize or deny these issues (Richmond., 1995). In addition to conducting interviews and focus groups, we also surveyed the literature with respect to literacy issues and settlement and integration needs of the target population.

The research analysis drew from three sources of information in our data collection as outlined in our research plan and Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Schedule 1: Description of Services. These three sources were:

- a literature review of existing research and information on our research topic
- focus groups with members of the target population
- interviews with service providers and others working with, and knowledgeable about the needs of the target population.

In keeping with responsible and ethical research, the research team promised both focus group and interview participants confidentiality and anonymity in that their names would not be used in the research and that their contribution would remain anonymous. In addition, we sent our focus group notes back to the facilitators/translators of focus groups to ensure that they were accurate and complete in terms of our notes from those meetings.

B. Data Collection Methods

1. Literature Review and Environmental Scan

We conducted a literature review and environmental scan on our research topic from two different angles with respect to our target group.

We examined the literature from the point of view of settlement and integration needs of and services for newcomers including the target group, and from the view of the literacy needs and services for newcomers including the target group. Relevant web sites, libraries, knowledgeable

contacts and our own personal collections provided the basis for the literature review. For example, we reviewed the publications of organizations like CERIS and OCASI. We also consulted the AlphaPlus Centre staff for relevant literacy research.

2. Focus Groups

a. Planning stage

The three-member research team (Jojo Geronimo, Sue Folinsbee, Jacinta Goveas) spent a considerable amount of time consulting with community groups to determine five appropriate focus groups required by the project. Bev Burke was part of this project specifically during the project definition and organization stage. A short list was developed after an initial assessment of potential communities/agencies, using the project criteria. The final 5 agencies were chosen from a longer list of 15. These agencies were interviewed as part of the recruitment and selection process. The others declined because they couldn't meet our project selection criteria. There were four factors that were considered when selecting the five focus groups. These factors were:

- eligibility of the community in terms of conforming with the selection criteria (recent immigrants who had been in Canada for 5 years or less and who had low literacy skills in their first language--people with less than grade 9 education or its Canadian equivalent)
- agency willingness and ability to participate in the research (i.e., assist in the recruitment of participants, provide a facilitator who spoke the language, and carry out assigned roles).
- availability of the required number of participants for the focus group within the time frame of the project
- enough mix in terms of country of origin/ethnicity, age, gender, and geography within and among groups within the Greater Toronto Area

Using these four factors, the research team conducted five focus groups on an agency “first come first served” basis to meet the time constraints of this project. A total of 48 people participated in the focus groups overall. These participants self-selected on the basis of the selection criteria with the assistance of the sponsoring agency. For a breakdown of participant participation, please see the chart on page 7. These focus groups were conducted with the following five organizations:

- Somali Immigrant Women Organization
- Tamil Elam Society:
- Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre
- Tropicana Community Services (African/Caribbean Community)
- Self-Directed Literacy Centre (Muslim community)

The research team developed focus group questions¹ to be used in a culturally appropriate way across the groups. That is, we wanted to ensure that we were conducting each focus group in the most comfortable way for focus group participants. Most often, this meant conducting the focus group in a large group but sometimes it meant doing some of the work in small groups. For example, in one organization there were three language groups and three facilitators. An introduction to the project was given in the large group and then participants worked in their own language group with a facilitator, to answer the focus group questions. Recommendations were shared in the large group with the help of the facilitators.

b. Focus Group Process

Before each focus group, at least one member of the research team met with the facilitator/translator, to go over the process for the focus group. In each case, we determined with this agency representative what would be the most appropriate way to conduct the focus group.

For example, we had initially planned that participants would work in small groups and pairs and share their responses in the large group. In all cases but one, participants wished to work in the large group and did not break off into small groups.

For all focus groups but one, two members of the research team attended. During the focus group process, the facilitator/translator provided simultaneous translation while members of the research team took notes. The research team members provided guidance to the facilitator during the focus group process and asked questions related to participants' responses that were relevant to the goals of the research. In the group with multiple languages, facilitators provided notes for the research team based on their small group work.

The research team wrote up the notes from each focus group and sent them back to the facilitator/translator to ensure accuracy and completeness from what had been understood from the session.

c. Interviews

The research team conducted a total of seven interviews with informants who were knowledgeable about the settlement and integration needs of, and /or literacy issues faced by the target group. We developed a series of questions² for this group based on the goals of the project. We conducted in-person or telephone interviews with informants as follows:

- ethno-specific settlement agencies (3)
- other settlement agencies and organizations (2)
- literacy experts or organizations (1)
- academics with a background in the settlement and integration needs of the target population (1)

¹ Please see Appendix 1 for focus group format.

² See Appendix 2 for interview questions.

Focus Group Participation: Description of Participants

Organization	Breakdown of Participants	Years in Canada	Countries of Origin
Somali Immigrant Women Organization	11 females	8 under five years 3 over five years	Somalia
Tamil Elam Society	9 females 5 males	all under five years	Sri Lanka
Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre	7 females 3 males	4 under five years 6 over five years	Angola (2 under five years) Brazil (1 person under five years) Portugal (4 over five years) El Salvador (1 over five years) Honduras (1 under five years) Vietnam (I over five years)
Self-Directed Literacy Centre	2 females 4 males	all under five years	Sierra Leone (4) Jamaica (1)
Tropicana Community Services	5 females 2 males	6 under five years 1 over five years	Sierra Leone (2) Jamaica (3) Grenada (1) St. Vincent (1)

C. Strengths and Limitations of the Research

1. Strengths

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of the research was the willingness of focus group participants to share their intimate experiences of life in Canada-- their settlement and integration experiences; their hardships, their desires, their resilience, and their hopes for a better future. This willingness was possible due to the close relationship that participants had to the facilitator/translator in each case, and the effort and commitment of the facilitators and agencies we worked with.

Another strength was that we were able to canvass a broad spectrum of newcomers through the focus group process. Participants presented diversity in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and geographical region within the GTA.

A third strength of the project was the diversity of the research team. This diversity was reflected in at least two ways. First, the team itself was racially diverse (one man of colour, one woman of colour, and one white woman) which provided a broader and more complete understanding of the issues at hand within the research. Second, the team members brought broad and diverse local and international experience from their work in literacy and settlement and integration issues. All three members were experienced researchers who worked well together and shared a similar vision for the research, even though one member of the team had not worked with the other two before.

A fourth strength of the project stemmed from what might be considered a limitation. Although we clearly spelled out the criteria for focus group participation to participating agencies, we agreed that it would be insensitive and inappropriate to turn anyone away from the groups that did not meet the criteria of five years or less of Canadian residency. This turned out to provide some new insights and learnings with respect to the needs of newcomers with low literacy skills who had been in Canada more than five years.

2. Limitations

The project had several limitations. The greatest limitation was the very tight timeframe in which the project had to operate. Deciding on protocols for the project and focus group process also took an inordinate amount of time and slowed the project down. Arriving at a common interpretation of the terms of reference for the project also took time.

Negotiating access with communities was a process that also took a considerable amount of time as agencies decided whether or not they were an appropriate group or they could spare the time to get involved within the timeframe of the project. The fact that ESL teachers were on strike in some of the agencies we contacted was also a factor in slowing things down.

III. Findings and Conclusions

A. Literature Review: Settlement and Integration

1. Demographic Profile and Trends

This first section of the literature review or environmental scan presents basic statistical data on immigration trends, and sketches a profile of the immigrant population of Canada in general and Toronto in particular. Statistical data presented here are those that have direct relevance to the goals of the project, and are based on the 1996 Census, as cited and analyzed in the research report, “Revisioning the Newcomer Settlement Support System”, from the Integrated Settlement Planning Research Project (June 2000), which was conducted by the ISPR Consortium consisting of the Chinese Canadian National Council (Toronto Chapter), The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, The Hispanic Development Council, and The Multicultural Coalition for Access to Family Services.

Specifically, under this section the research team makes reference to the ISPR report and related documents which are seen to have immediate implications on the target population. (Figures cited here are from the ISPR report, unless otherwise indicated.)

1a. Immigrant population and settlement patterns: Canada and Ontario

In 1996, there were 4,971,000 immigrants in Canada, representing 17.4% of the total population. More than half of all immigrants to Canada arrive or settle in the Province of Ontario. Recent immigrants (arriving after 1990) make up 3.6% of the total population in Canada. Of the total immigrant population in Canada, 20% of immigrants arrived between 1991 and 1996.

More than one in every ten Canadians is a visible minority and almost half of them live in the Toronto area. 52.6 % of Ontarians are members of

visible minority groups. The visible minority population of Canada is expected to rise to 25% of the total by 2015 (Galabuzi, 2001).

White immigrants do better than racialised (i.e., racial minority) immigrants. During the post- 1986 period when racialised group immigration has been most intense, immigrants from racialized communities earned 28 to 31 per cent less than white immigrants. (Galabuzi)

1b. Toronto statistics

Toronto had the largest immigrant population of all 25 census metropolitan areas; about one in three immigrants resides in Toronto. About half of Toronto's total population (2,363,870) are immigrants. Thirty two percent (32%) of the City's population are recent immigrants to Canada. The projection for 2001 is that foreign-born residents may constitute over 50% of the City's population.

According to an article in the Toronto Star on February 18, 1998, four out of five of the visible minority population in Ontario live in Toronto. 60% of all recent immigrants (1991-1996) in Toronto came from Asia. 93% of all recent immigrants came from the top 56 immigrant producing countries, with the remaining 7% coming from 114 other countries. In the 1990's nine of the top ten countries were found in three distinct regions:

- West Asia (Hong Kong, Philippines, Vietnam)
- South Asia (Sri Lanka, India)
- West Indies (Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago).

In Toronto, 32.9% of all immigrants are poor compared to 21.5% of the Canadian born population; but 52.8% of the City's recent immigrants fall below the poverty level. Although immigrants make up 47.6% of Toronto's population, immigrants make up 56.7% of the population that lives below the poverty line.

Over 40% of families in most racial minority communities in Toronto live below the poverty line. Over 50% of some racial minority groups are unemployed, compared to 7% for those of European-descent. (Ornstein). These demographic profiles and patterns are relevant to cite since, as the research findings show, members of the target group exhibit the following characteristics:

- they reside in Toronto and many are recent immigrants
- they are unemployed or underemployed and would probably fall below the poverty line
- they are members of the visible minority.

1c. Demographic trends and their implications

There are changing demographic patterns in the immigrant community, with an increasing proportion in the 45-64 age group. This points to growing needs among the elderly which can lead to more serious problems for communities with fewer resources or with greater linguistic and cultural barriers to access and participation.

New immigrant communities (e.g., Roma community) have been emerging in the last 5 to 6 years. Even within well-established communities (e.g., Chinese and Hispanic), there are different migration cohorts which reflect a set of migration circumstances, employment skill, language, and education levels different from that of earlier migration periods.

English language proficiency is directly related to economic and social integration of newcomers. Inability to speak English (which is also common among those with low literacy skills in their first language) is a significant barrier to access to services and civic participation.

Parents with little formal education are disadvantaged in dealing with the schools and are unable to provide assistance or advice to their children.

2. Immigration and settlement services in general and those specific to the target group

Under the *Immigration Act*, the government of Canada has a mandate to help newcomers achieve successful settlement, through such services as: general orientation, language training, information and referral services, and employment training. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funds settlement services through Immigrant and Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC), and the HOST Program. Various community and voluntary organizations also fund community services that immigrants use as well as settlement programs specific to newcomers.

In *Consultations on Settlement Renewal*, CIC defines settlement in the following way:

“Settlement means the process by which a newcomer, during his or her first few years in Canada, acquires basic information, knowledge and skills to become self sufficient, e.g., find a home, communicate in one of Canada’s official languages, access health services, interact with schools, etc. (CIC, 1995).

OCASI, Mwarigha (1998), The Canadian Council for Refugees, and OCASI-COSTI (1999) have each developed a more detailed formulation of the goals, standards, and approaches to settlement and integration. (ISPR, p. 46-49).

Administration of these programs involves a number of players, from mainstream service agencies, to multi-ethnic and ethno-specific agencies; and from federal, to provincial and municipal departments and agencies.

“The fragmentation of service programming has effectively excluded reflective discussions around the principles, direction, the form and definition of ‘settlement’, and the settlement process in Canada. In addition, public services and institutions such as schools, government offices, hospitals, child-welfare agencies and

so on are supposed to serve all the people in Canada, including immigrants.” (ISPR, p. 35).

At the national level, the federal Multiculturalism Program/Canadian Heritage has been restructured into project grants, doing away with essential core funding that used to be provided to community settlement agencies. The federal LINC program is the major source of funding for official language training, a source that school boards also access. The Government of Ontario funds the ESL Program and the Heritage Language program, both implemented through the District School Boards. Heritage language training is intended for students.

Directly related to the issue of settlement services for the target population, there is a virtual absence in the literature of any examples of settlement and integration service programs, policies, or structure that have been specifically developed or are directed at meeting the *settlement needs of adult immigrants with low literacy skills in their first language*. (As will be discussed further down in this report, there are ESL and literacy skills training programs, but even these are not tailored to meet the needs of adult immigrants with low literacy level in their first language. Interview data will reveal, however, that there are some – extremely rare – ethno-specific agencies that offer fairly unsophisticated and volunteer-based settlement services to members of this group.)

3. Current Funding Problems and Issues

The new funding structure for settlement services and its impact on newcomers from five target communities have been analyzed in the report of the Integrated Settlement Planning Project referred to earlier. Though the ISPR research did not focus on the target group of this research, nevertheless, some of its major conclusions are pertinent to this investigation. Specifically, the ISPR report describes some of the fundamental and structural gaps and inconsistencies in the settlement service sector, which are magnified and compounded when applied to the target population of this research. Essentially, the ISPR study forms the core analysis and recommendations that need to be addressed first if the gaps and weaknesses of settlement services for the target group will be remedied.

The key findings from the ISPR report are summarized as follows:

Most federal funding for employment training targeted for newcomers has been eliminated. The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training ended an apprenticeship program for racial minorities. The federal Labour Market Language Training Program (LMLT), which offered specialized or advanced language skills to immigrants, also was terminated.

Budget cuts to immigrant settlement services, both at the provincial and federal levels, have had the most adverse impact on immigrants and refugees. “People who have lost the most in terms of access to services over the last two years of cuts have been immigrants and refugees” (Richmond, p. 46). Major provincial funding cuts to the broad community service sector began in 1995.

The shift from core funding to project funding has weakened the capacity of settlement service sector to provide adequate and consistent service. LINC, HOST, and ISAP funding programs from CIC “have been plagued by rigid and restrictive criteria and the practice of providing annually renewed contracts that lack adequate administrative and program costs. (ISPR, p. 35)

There has been a significant shift of the new funding programs from ethno-specific linguistic and culturally sensitive services to large generic institutions (e.g., school boards). For instance, the Settlement Education Partnership of Toronto Programs (SEPT) for school board-based service in partnership with community agencies favours multicultural generic agencies, to the detriment of smaller ethno-specific agencies which lack the administrative capacity to sustain such partnerships. This shift undermines the language and cultural expertise of smaller ethno-cultural agencies whose strength lies in offering ethno-specific services.

The re-structuring of the provincial settlement services have also affected the settlement sector negatively. Funds for the restructured Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) had been reduced from \$6.1 million in 1995-96 to \$3.9 million in 1997-1998. Also, the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, the Community and Neighbourhood Support Services Program (CNNSP)

and Access to Professions and Trades grants, which offered important support services to newcomers, have been eliminated.

4. Structural Issues: Policies, Roles, and Coordination Mechanisms

Finally, the literature points to a lack of integration, consistency, and coordination among the various players in the settlement sector, i.e., among and between various levels of government, mainstream or generic service institutions, and community based immigrant settlement agencies. (see ISPR, p. 67 passim and Geronimo pp. 11-16). Specifically:

- The lack of a coherent policy framework prevents the effective integration of economic, social, and political development goals as they pertain to the domains of immigration, labour adjustment and training, human services, and newcomer settlement (Geronimo, p. 23).
- More specifically, settlement is seen to be operating as an “adjunct” program of immigration policy, without its own distinct legislative framework and strategic goals.
- There is no settlement services “delivery system” to speak of, a problem that can be traced to a lack of consensus on the scope, priorities, and goals of settlement. As a result, there is no integrated approach to the multi-faceted and differentiated needs of individuals, families, or communities of immigrants and refugees; rather, a maze of compartmentalized programs, service delivery vehicles, and funding criteria confront both the service delivery agency and its clients.
- There is no clear governance and accountability structure for policy formulation, program planning and development, implementation and evaluation, which would weave policies, goals, and strategies into one coherent system. Specifically, at the federal level, there is no effective interface mechanism or coordination between various departments such as CIC Canadian Heritage, and HRDC. (*Not Just Numbers*, 3.5)
- While this lacuna is existing, the confusion has been further aggravated by the devolution of powers and responsibilities, especially from the provincial to the municipal levels. Thus, the City of Toronto feels left out in the decision making process while it remains the direct recipient of the majority of newcomers. (*Who’s Listening*, 1997).
- Finally, mainstream social service institutions and the more established immigrant settlement service agencies are seen to be, by

and large, not adapting fast enough to the changing demographics, with most of their programs seen to be insensitive to the needs and talents of most newcomers. Systemic racism is consistently mentioned in the literature as a serious barrier to the delivery of culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services.

B. Literature Review: Literacy

This second component of the literature review examines the issue of literacy starting with an overall policy and practice framework, moving to ESL literacy in Ontario and then examining the impact of literacy as a first language issue for immigrants. It highlights some of the tensions and areas of contested terrain.

1. An Overview of Current Literacy Policy and Practice

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Statistics Canada, 1995) has advanced the idea that literacy is a continuum rather than an all or nothing condition using a five-level scale. According to the IALS, 48% of Canadians fall at the two lowest levels out of five. According to the IALS, people need to have Level 3 literacy skills to participate successfully in society. The notion of literacy on which IALS is based considers three different kinds of literacy--prose, document and quantitative. The IALS positions literacy as an economic issue. Sussman asserts (2001) that much of what policymakers believe regarding adult literacy is based on the IALS. This policy focus reflects the dominant discourse where there is an increased interest in literacy as a labour market development issue in industrialized countries (e.g., Holland, Frank, & Cooke, 1998; Hull, 1997; Imel, 1999) and the notion that literacy, productivity and global competitiveness are closely linked. Along with this notion, is the idea that literacy is an individual problem and that the problem can "be fixed" through a narrow skills-based approach both for the employed and unemployed.

However, there are a growing number of writers (Castleton, 1999; Connon Unda & Clifford, 1997; Holland et al., 1998; Hull, 1997; Smith, 1999) who are critical of this approach and argue for a more complex

understanding of literacy and solutions that are not so simplistic. Hull (1997) states, "I will argue that the popular discourse of workplace literacy tends to underestimate and devalue human potential and mis-characterize literacy as a curative for problems that literacy alone cannot solve" (p. 11).

Long (2001) notes that there is serious debate about why adults need literacy skills based on her study of participation rates in community-based literacy programs. She says that while business and government focus on literacy for labour force development and economic prosperity, program participants are interested in enhancing their personal well being and confidence, as well their ability to deal with everyday practical considerations. Moreover, Smith (1999) finds that literacy is only one factor in determining a person's employability. She asserts that the jobs available to those with less education tend to be low paying, without benefits that keep people below the poverty line. She identifies issues of racism and discrimination as barriers to employment. She also sees that with recent welfare-to-work legislation, there is a push to move participants in literacy programs into entry-level employment as quickly as possible. This approach (Imel, 1998) "merely expands the low-wage labour supply without attention to raising living standards" (p. 2).

On the other hand, the evolution of literacy in community-based settings (Norton, 2001) carries different meanings from the dominant discourse. "Key themes in community-based learning are literacy, critical pedagogy, participatory and popular education, voice and sharing power" (p. 4). Community based programs operate within an alternative discourse. They see literacy issues and other issues as rooted in social conditions and distributions of power. They reflect a community consciousness of how issues like gender, race and income affect these distributions of power. Norton also describes aspects of literacy development based on the work of Paulo Freire. Reading the word is the mechanics of reading--figuring out the words. Reading the world is related to analyzing experiences in terms of society, power relations and constructions of reality. She notes that literacy taught as skills, tasks and practices has little meaning without understanding the social context in which it is used.

2. English as a Second Language (ESL) Literacy

A recent study of the profile of Ontario's immigrants (Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Universities and Training, 2000) based on the IALS framework asserts that two thirds of Ontario's immigrants fail to have the minimum literacy for functioning in today's society. This study defines an immigrant as any individual who has officially landed regardless of date.

The study also finds that the incidence of low English literacy skills is almost as high with older immigrants as it is with younger immigrants. The study also suggests that for one third of Ontario's immigrants the issue is one of both language and literacy. However, it also finds that for 18% Of Ontario's immigrants, first and foremost the issue is one of literacy.

This study has several limitations. One is that there is no discussion of how refugees factor into the equation. Secondly, the study only looks at 6 major immigrant groups and classifies all other groups as "other." It is interesting to note that the sampling of the "other" was actually greater than the combined sampling of the 6 immigrant groups (Spanish speaking, Polish, Portuguese, Italian, Caribbean, Chinese) examined. Therefore, we have limited information in terms of countries of ethnic origin. In addition, there is no discussion of issues of low levels of first language literacy.

Wiley (1994) raises concerns about literacy surveys in that they equate literacy with English literacy. He reports that this does two things: it stigmatizes those who are literate in languages other than English and fails to provide important information about those who are not literate in any language. He also says that these surveys often equate speaking English with being literate in English. He notes that studies also often undercount language minority groups and blur how they identify their respondents, blurring language, race and ethnicity. He calls for more data collection and analysis of literacy abilities in the first and second languages.

Sussman (2001) reports that there is the idea that literacy is seen as a problem of those born in Canada quite separate from English as a Second Language (ESL). This thinking, she says, determines policy that suggests that low literacy and ESL are two quite different phenomena. In Ontario, she asserts that this limits who gets into literacy and adult basic education

programs. As a result, speakers of English as another language may be referred to ESL programs by literacy groups. Even though 28.1% of LINC programs in the City of Toronto focus on ESL literacy (Power Analysis, 1998), there is no reference to first language literacy bridging programs or to the needs of those who have low literacy in their first language.

Sussman (2001) further reports that a possible two in five Ontarians at Level 1 are speakers of languages other than English or French. Furthermore, she says that while this group is used in statistics to call attention to the literacy problem, literacy policies and programs do not always address their needs. In addition, Cumming (1992) reports that adult literacy education for speakers of English as another language is often perceived as inaccessible, irrelevant, or even inappropriate by those who need it the most. He reports that in addition to all the barriers that create obstacles to adults' participation in formal education, recent immigrants experience many more. These obstacles center around housing, financial insecurity, exclusion from local cultural practices and institutions. Cumming argues for educational programs that include elements such as locations within the ethnic communities of participants, support such as on-site daycare, transportation subsidies, instructors from participants' language group and participatory approaches to learning.

Millar (1997) conducted a national study to examine the issue of second language learners in literacy programs in Canada. The recommendations for this study include the need for more research on how the literacy skills of immigrants in their first language, level of schooling and training in Canada create barriers or opportunities to acquire second language literacy. Recommendations also centred around the need for more awareness of the issues around second language literacy.

3. First Language Literacy

The evidence suggests that (Bogdan, 2000; Collier, 1995) literacy development in the first language has a positive effect on, or is a bridge to literacy development in the second language. Barton (1990) states that literacy skills are easier to acquire in a stronger language than a weaker

one and that promotion of literacy in the primary language sustains and provides a stronger foundation for growth in English literacy skills.

Bogdan (1995) notes that the concept of integrated first language literacy is not widely accepted. She also finds that the focus on language skills as a settlement issue takes priority over literacy. She adds that ESL programs do not distinguish between educational levels and often those with little formal education and professionals are put in the same class, leading to frustration on both parts. Porras (1998) also notes this problem

Since 1986, first language literacy has been introduced in many literacy programs across Canada. The few research studies (Bogdan, 1995) that have addressed the issue of first language literacy have been favourable to the idea.

Bogdan's research concluded that "the acquisition of literacy in the first language with intensive bridging to the second, can significantly reduce the time it takes to learn the second" (p. 63). Bridging here refers to cross-referencing to the second language from lessons in the first language.

Porras (1998) asserts that adults with low literacy skills in their first language, particularly refugees, face challenges and need empowering programs to help them fully participate in Canadian society. She sees this lack of literacy as embedded in a host of larger issues that these adults face such as discrimination in housing and employment, low self-esteem, harassment on the job and the inability to do basic things, like use the public transit system or read a map. She attests to the dependence that these adults feel when they have to depend on their children for help with letters or forms or to go with them for appointments. She talks about their reduced options including always having someone else speak for them. She speaks to the particular barriers for women and those coming from war-torn countries. Porras' students are often from rural areas with low literacy skills, and little formal education. While they have great survival and coping skills, basic Canadian systems may mystify them. She asserts, too, that they often get blamed for their situation. Her own experience demonstrates the success of first language literacy development.

At home we had our own land from where we were able to receive everything we needed. We did not all have to go to work or to pay rent to live in small apartments, where there is no land to grow anything or even to walk on.

Focus Group Participant

Literacy is an important component. You have to read and write back. Social services...you have 10 days to respond in writing or you are not eligible. Canadian society has a high standard of literacy...contracts...everything you have to sign. The community can't read so they have to have translation.

Interview Participant

I have gone to my friends for help, but there came a time when they didn't have time to accompany me to offices to fill out forms. Then what I do is stay home without doing the things I should be doing, feeling that I don't have anyone in the world, that I am alone and I have to succeed alone.

Focus Group Participant

In conclusion, Porras advocates for more support from those people working with refugees from Central America, and the importance of first language literacy development in learning English literacy. She adds, "Literacy is more than reading and writing. Literacy is learning how to solve problems in society, within the family (abuse), racism, classism, homophobia, feelings of hate" (p. 15). She advocates for a popular education approach to literacy that "empowers learners to be critical" (p. 15). Campbell (2001) describes popular education as based on principles of equity and social justice in order to build a more democratic society. She notes that a popular education approach is built on dialogic, collective processes, and critical reflection.

C. Findings From the Focus Groups

This section will first describe the key characteristics of the focus group participants. Subsequently, focus group findings will be analyzed at two levels. First, gaps in settlement services in general will be discussed in terms of how they impact on the target group. Second, specific settlement issues directly related to literacy will be analyzed. Voices of focus group and interview participants appear alongside this text in the form of anonymous quotes.

It is important to understand the first category of issues. Though gaps in settlement services (brought about by service cuts, devolution of services from federal to sub-national levels, and the amalgamation of municipalities) affect all immigrants and refugees as a group, the adverse impact on the target group is compounded, given their particular vulnerability with respect to low literacy.

The second category of issues, unique to the target group, is described separately and broken down into a number of problem areas. While the focus group findings point to these problems and issues, further research need to be conducted to further probe into the complexity of these issues.

1. Participants' Profile: Key Characteristics

Focus group participants demonstrated important common characteristics across communities. Most participants had low literacy skills in their first

When I came here my objective was to learn English and get a job, I saw an ad that they teach you home care and then to use a computer. But this is not what I see here. I didn't get these classes. I've been here a year and I don't work. I want to work. I don't feel comfortable not working. The money from welfare is not enough.

Focus Group Participant

Sometimes I think the government wants us to choose between eating and paying rent. It is very hard to do both.

Focus Group Participant

language and in English. This was the result of many factors. Many came from rural, agrarian cultures and had left school at a young age to work. Others did not have the opportunity to go to school because of war in their countries. For women in some groups, schooling was not as important as getting married and bearing children. Participants were either immigrants or refugees who had mostly come from third world countries. Most were women and people of colour (i.e. a member of a racialized community). Many of the women were here alone (i.e., without their partners) with several children. Participants represented an even spread between the ages of 20 and 60. Some of the refugees had arrived as convention refugees, others as landed immigrants, and still others as refugee claimants. Many had arrived via a second country or from refugee camps. While most participants had been here less than five years, there were participants in one group who were longer-term. The impact of first language literacy issues were the same for the longer-term newcomers as they were for the shorter-term people.

Everyone wanted to work but found it extremely difficult to get a job. Language and literacy difficulties, racism and discrimination all played a part in preventing this from occurring. No one wanted to be on welfare. In fact for most it was something they had not ever been exposed to. They were frustrated not only at not being able to work but by the stereotypes others had of them as welfare recipients. Some of the younger participants were in developmental or learning situations.

The discussions underlined important differentiations among the target group, based on certain demographic characteristics. Thus, the situations of certain groups such as women, seniors, refugees and youth reveal a specific analysis unique to their own context or perspective. The report will discuss these differentiated contexts throughout the section on findings.

2. Gaps in Settlement Services And How They Impact on the Target Group

As mentioned earlier, the focus group data strongly indicated that the lack of literacy skills impacts significantly on the immigrant or refugee experience. Essentially, the immigrant experience of this target

population is fundamentally different from that of other immigrant groups, because of low literacy in their first language. In other words, lack of literacy skills is a defining element in their immigrant experience, and thus, in their settlement needs. As well, low levels of literacy compounds the usual problems that accompany the settlement process for both immigrants or refugees.

The major service gaps identified by the focus groups are described below. Though not always apparent, the lack of literacy skills, particularly in the dominant language, is a key hindrance to the settlement of newcomers, whether immigrants or refugees. The literacy issue is intrinsically intertwined with their daily struggle for survival and dignity (so called “settlement issues”) in their new land. Simply put, literacy cannot be isolated from the more basic issues of daily survival for a refugee or immigrant who is just beginning to acclimatize to Canadian society, both figuratively and literally speaking. Basic needs such as housing, health care, and employment are compounded by low literacy skills.

The list of issues or concerns given below cut across the economic, psychological, social, and cultural areas of the newcomers’ life. Though they are categorized as separate items here, newcomers from this target group experience these socio-economic realities as one inter-related whole. For example, lack of employment affects their ability to find adequate housing, which in turn can lead to health problems; such problems can then further compound the difficulty of finding a job. While the cycle of poverty can apply to all, this cycle is qualitatively different for this target group in that each problem is elevated to the next higher level of difficulty and complexity because of the person’s inability to read and write.

The main areas of a newcomer’s life where service gaps are encountered are described below, more or less starting from the most basic.

a. Housing

Access to affordable housing is what all immigrants and refugees strive for. The housing crisis being experienced in the GTA has an adverse impact on the target group, making it harder for them to find suitable

If only they would tell me what they want me to do. Instead they look at me as if I am too stupid to learn.

Focus Group Participant

accommodation. Participants feel the current settlement program ignores this fundamental area of need.

More directly related to literacy issues, the whole process of seeking accommodation presupposes literacy skills, from reading the newspaper for housing vacancies, to reading and signing tenancy agreements, to composing letters, in some cases. As well, after they have found a place, the process of filing a complaint or seeking redress in cases of conflict or disagreement with the landlord once again puts them at a serious disadvantage because of their low literacy skills.

b. Employment/job training

The access to suitable employment is one of the main issues facing immigrants and refugees. Since their level of literacy is low, they are only eligible for low-paying jobs which are also not compatible with their skills or experience from their countries of origin. They face problems in searching for appropriate employment, understanding the requirements of employers, and interacting with colleagues from different cultures when they are not able to communicate appropriately in the dominant language.

In a job market that is becoming more and more competitive in terms of skills requirements, a person who cannot read and write would be the most disadvantaged. Therefore, job-related training, including literacy for employment, would be one area that needs to be strengthened. However, there is no contradiction in saying that literacy skills training *cannot simply be a matter of training for a job*. Literacy development needs to focus on both employment and citizenship or social issues for the effective integration of the target population and their families.

In the earlier part of this report (see Literature Review), we discussed how effective literacy development has to first create a strong positive self-image in the learner before it can build the superstructure of employment skills. Learning one's first language is part of this self-affirmation and positive image building.

Went through a lot with bombing and war. Coming here is not good for our mental health. We feel depression in this country. Our kids are still in Africa. Some of my children are over 19. I can't sponsor them. They have to survive on their own. They [Canadian government] should know we are in depression.. They give us a \$500 welfare cheque and they think they have given us everything they owe us.

c. Welfare support

The amount paid out in welfare is not enough to meet even basic needs. At the same time, Welfare offices also require the beneficiaries to study full time so they are technically not able to find employment to supplement the amount and meet basic needs. This is a real dilemma for anyone below the poverty line: unable to meet basic and immediate needs, but by necessity must upgrade his or her job skills. When welfare support is not adequate, the requirement to study full time then becomes onerous and unrealistic. People will take whatever part time and insecure job they can find, and will miss going to classes, just to be able to make ends meet.

It is very difficult when we don't know if we can trust what our children tell us when they come from school. If only there were people at school who could explain to us, in our language, what is going on.

Focus Group Participant

I am a widow. I came here in 2000. I was in a refugee camp for so long. My son is 8 years old and my daughter 14. They cannot even spell. They are struggling in school and I can't help them. They don't read and write. My daughter is refusing to go to school. I'm afraid she will be a drop out.

Focus Group Participant

d. Health

Health issues focus especially on mental health needs arising from depression and post traumatic stress. Poor nutrition and poverty in general result in a low quality of life. All these problems are the direct result of the lack of access to appropriate information and other services especially in a print-dominated society. Seniors staying home to provide childcare are unable to avail themselves of literacy training and other programs. Their isolation leads to depression and other forms of mental and physical illness. The consequences of unemployment and underemployment and other settlement problems are also manifested in related issues.

This picture has a special significance for the target group. Lack of literacy makes it impossible to read and understand health-related notices and forms. Lack of literacy skills is one more wall that isolates them from active interaction with the rest of society. Social interaction is a strong element of mental health, and isolation contributes to depression, a health issue common to many immigrants and refugees.

e. Childcare

Affordable childcare is crucial, especially for women who are the primary child care givers in many immigrant families, in order for people to be able to prepare to join the workforce and to access language/literacy

training and skills training. The need for childcare also sometimes leads to seniors within the immigrant/refugee families playing the role of child-minder, thus limiting the integration of this particular group into Canadian society and resulting in other related problems. This relates to literacy in that it is obvious that if there is no childcare, one is restricted from accessing literacy classes. The direct implication for seniors lies in the fact that their children expect them to fill in for the task of child minding.

f. Children’s education

This issue is a painful one for many immigrant and refugee parents. Lack of literacy compounds their inability to keep up with what their children are learning in school, both academically and socially. It also aggravates the ever present, inter-generation gap (parent – children relations) and creates a cultural gap within the same home. In many cases, the performance of the children is an issue as parents are not able to monitor the homework, progress reports, and other school related activities because of difficulty with literacy. There is an additional impact on the target group in that they feel inadequate, in fact helpless, in being part of their children’s education. The impact on the children, on the other hand, is that they are denied a very important source of help that many would take for granted. Again, this might indicate the need for additional assistance for children in this situation.

g. Services for seniors

Senior immigrants and refugees are often burdened with childcare. This limits their possibilities and opportunities to integrate into the Canadian society by learning literacy, etc. However the programs available are also geared toward employment. Seniors do not always find the programs accessible. There are also not enough culturally appropriate programs specifically targeting the seniors from ethno-racial groups.

The seniors group is a significant segment of the target population whose needs have to be considered separately and differentiated from the settlement needs of the rest of the group.

This country is for young people. Most of the services available are for the young.

Focus Group Participant

We are persecuted every day...every day. Back home we left civil war...the gun hunted you...you are dead. Here you slowly die. Every day you experience discrimination.

Focus Group Participant

She's trying to look for a house. She has three children. The landlord asks: "How many children do you have? Do you have a husband?"

Focus Group Participant

I feel abandoned by them [the services]. Because I don't have the key to open the doors by myself. I need assistance to learn and be independent, and not have to continue to seek help. It's better that we have adequate programs that teach us how to solve our problems for ourselves. You continue every day living with the same problems and you want to break out of the cycle.

Focus Group Participant

Sometimes the social worker phones, I don't understand. Maybe she thinks we don't care but we don't understand. Have to get back to her. Any written material--have to wait for someone to help.

Focus Group Participant

h. Systemic exclusion based on race, gender, and class

Systemic racism is a reality of Canadian society. However, immigrants and refugees are faced with the additional burden of the stereotyping specifically targeting them. They become ghettoized and marginalized. Thus participants spoke passionately of their experience of being excluded or marginalized because of their race or language, when they try to access housing, jobs, training, and various social services.

Stereotypes and prejudice operate against this group not only on the basis of race but also based on language and literacy abilities, making it difficult for them to get entry into relevant employment and training and access essential services like health care.

These findings, echoed quite consistently across all the focus groups, indicate a strong need to have an anti-racist perspective in the development of literacy programs, and to provide anti-racist education for literacy tutors.

Sexism is another reality of Canadian society, The immigrant and refugee girls and women have the double problem of sexist cultural expectations from members of their ethno-racial communities.

Marginalization on the basis of social/economic class is another factor. The socio-economic class of most newcomers automatically drops when they enter Canada. This is particularly true for the refugees, whose economic resources would have been either destroyed or left behind in their flight to safety. The access to literacy/language training and skills training or employment opportunities will at least minimize and challenge this stereotype and empower the target group members with a tool to understand and perhaps change their situation.

i. Services for persons with disability

The ethno-racial people with disabilities experience the usual problems facing people with disabilities, but their situation is compounded by literacy/language barriers . They are not able to access appropriate

services since they are not able to get the relevant information and to ask for the services they need. Their specific needs also must be considered separately from the settlement needs of the rest of the group.

At school I get a lot of handouts. I'm new in the country and I can't read. They give us a bunch of papers. I have no literacy but they give me papers. I throw them in the garbage. I can't help my kids... I am so stressed. I left school in Grade 8. There is no program for literacy. Literacy is very difficult when it comes to me.

Focus Group Participant

At one time the teachers told me I didn't need my first language, that it would be sufficient just to speak English. I never met people who understood what was happening to me. I wasn't mentally ill, it was that in my childhood I never went to school. I was the child of peasants and lived in the countryside, working morning to night. Now as an adult, I recognize the deficiencies and problems I have because there was nobody to guide me when I was newly arrived in Canada.

Focus Group Participant

j. Family reunification

This is particularly an issue for refugees. The slow rate of their settlement retards their ability to bring in close family members who are waiting, in many instances, in refugee camps. The need for literacy and job skills training is key to enabling them to get some economic stability and enable them to re-unite with other family members.

k. Family counseling

Immigrants and refugees expressed the need for family counseling for issues which cannot be dealt with either on an individual basis or as a general settlement issue, such as domestic violence. This counseling would also need to be culturally appropriate and in the language of the recipients. As well, family counseling is a major service gap because this is not considered to be part of settlement services.

l. Immigration status/documentation

Some refugees entered Canada as claimants. They need help in processing their claims and in regularizing their stay in Canada. For them and their family members, appropriate employment to meet the cost of legal fees, interpreter services and legal support are essential. Literacy compounds this issue as they are not able to understand or read the documentation without the help of interpreters.

m. Other service gaps

Other significant service gaps include inadequate welfare support for low-income or unemployed groups, transportation, and clothing especially for the winter. Some people (because of immigration hurdles or barriers) are still without SIN card or Health card.

3. Specific Problems or Barriers Directly Related to Literacy and Language

a. Organizational culture of print

Service providers and other organizations that the target population have to deal with are too print oriented (documents, forms, and handouts). The information and outreach mechanisms assume a level of literacy that excludes this particular population and causes serious repercussions for them. For example, not understanding what one is signing in terms of legal documents like rental agreements can lead to tenant abuse, or not understanding and dealing with suspension papers can lead to a permanent mark on a child's record.

b. Lack of accessible and appropriate literacy programs

Members of the target population who spend time in regular LINC and ESL classes may make little progress and be frustrated by these classes. On the other hand, programs that bridge first and second language literacy allow people to develop in the stronger language and make progress in the second. Programs that cater to the first language literacy issues of newcomers are few and far between.

c. Lack of cultural interpreters and translators

When members of the target population have appointments with doctors, schools, social services, they need to have someone go with them to both interpret and assist with paperwork. Cultural interpreters are generally not available in the organizations and agencies that this group deals with. The ethno-specific agencies that provide these services are over-extended.

d. Dependence on others, isolation and marginalization

Members of the target population feel isolated and marginalized because of their lack of understanding of print. They are reliant on friends and family members to help them with paperwork and speak for them. Family may leave home and friends may not always be available. In addition, they

Many refugees don't have a series of skills. For example, they don't have literacy. Since this is the key to getting a job, they are really stuck. They can't access other services, can't get into society. They are very isolated.

Interview Participant

In many groups--refugees and family class-women are disadvantaged because of low schooling and traditional family roles. If they stay home with their children, they don't learn the language and they don't learn literacy.

Interview Participant

They [target population] have difficulty accessing health care because they can't explain their needs. They don't get the benefit of outreach programs because they don't know about them. Efforts being made assume that people are literate. This true even of ethnic newspapers. But if they don't read, they don't get it.

Interview Participant

do not know where to find services that will help them and the ones they do find are often inaccessible.

D. Basic Findings From Interviews with Knowledgeable Individuals

1. Key Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees

a. Economic integration (i.e. employment compatible with their qualifications and experience)

Economic integration is the highest priority, according to interview respondents. Canada's economy has changed to what is now called a knowledge-based economy. In the past there was a manufacturing sector, which absorbed many immigrants and refugees, who found entry-level labour intensive jobs to begin with. These jobs have disappeared or at least reduced in scale. Now people looking for jobs have to have basic language and numeracy skills. People who do not have much formal education find it so much more difficult now to get a job.

Literacy, in sum, is intrinsically related to employment and economic integration, much more now than in the past. People without literacy skills will invariably be excluded from the economy, and consequently, from the other domains of society.

b. Gender issues

Women, more than men, are concerned about juggling childcare with the need to learn language and job training. They needed quality and affordable childcare.

On the other hand immigrant women are disadvantaged compared to Canadian born women as they earn less, even if possessing the same qualifications. Immigrant women of colour are further down in the pecking order in the workplace.

c. Access to services

There are problems of ethnic enclaves concentrated in areas of low rent. The communities facilitate the flow of information but people do not integrate.

Interview Participant

Poverty may not be a reflection of literacy and skills but racism and family patterns.

Interview Participant

The problem with teaching language skills to the target population is that this group may have a heck of a time in these classes. There are some specific programs – but not a lot of support for them. There is a need to link these specific programs to other forms of integration and connect them to the social reality of the target group.

Interview Participant

Information on the type and location of services is not easily available to the target population. While newcomers in general are already faced with the challenge of accessing information, for members of this group, this difficulty is compounded due to their inability to read even the most basic of information materials.

For this group, the most accessible source of information is friends, relatives, and service providers who meet with them face to face. The obvious implication is that newcomers must first link up with these people before they can get the relevant information.

A related issue is the lack of translators/interpreters in most key locations i.e. social services, immigration and welfare offices, schools and health centers. Quite often the service providers do not speak the language of the participants. Interpreters should also have the appropriate cultural skills. There is also the assumption that people are literate.

Affordable housing is a problem in that income levels of the target population are low and public housing is disappearing. More established communities have developed their own networks to provide financial supports for mortgages for members of these communities (e.g. Italians and Portuguese) but this is not true for those from Africa, and South and Central America.

Language classes available to the target population may not be appropriate to their needs. Also, there is a tendency for mainstream agencies to send newcomers with low literacy skills in their first language to ethno-specific agencies. However, literacy training is low on the hierarchy of needs of these agencies which are already stretched to capacity.

d. Race is another factor

People interviewed indicated that people of colour, with high levels of education are either underemployed or unemployed, or they may be employed in jobs not compatible with their education and experience. In the past immigrants who had achieved a certain education level would in time get to be employed at a level compatible with their education. They would make it by a certain period.

In general, seniors of immigrant or refugee backgrounds are isolated at home. They are the ones who fill the gaps caused by the lack of quality affordable day care. The lack of literacy and cultural training is an additional barrier to their settlement. Another specific area where seniors experience barriers is their access to appropriate recreational services/ activities, which affects their mental and physical health.

e. Disability

Immigrants and refugees with disability, like people with disability in general, face accommodation barriers in trying to access services. Thus, settlement services intended for people with disability should incorporate literacy issues, inasmuch as literacy is an additional barrier for newcomers with disabilities.

f. Inter-generation issues

As soon as immigrants and refugees with young children come to Canada and their children are able to attend school, new dimensions of the generation gap become manifested. Children become exposed to another language and another culture and they start to socialize or even assimilate into the dominant culture. Meanwhile their parents and other elders are left out of the loop for lack of language skills (in English or French).

For members of the target group, this problem is exacerbated because culture is transmitted by and large through language, which includes the printed word.

Children are caught between the two realities of the culture at home and the Canadian society. When they are not able to find support at home and do not feel that they fit in with their peers in schools, many of them resort to joining gangs and become involved in anti-social, even violent behaviour.

g. Children's Education

Service providers spoke of parents with low literacy skills having a really hard time helping their children through the school system. They are unable to read the letters and progress reports and need to rely on to translate written and verbal communications. With low levels of education, they may also be less likely to understand the schools or interface with them. The need for appropriate staff that could assist parents and children through this difficult transition time was clear.

h. Class

On the one hand many refugees are people of colour and on the other hand refugees arrive here with very little. As soon as they enter Canada, they are automatically in a different economic and social class from the one they were in in their home countries, even though they may be more qualified.

i. Changing immigrant profile

We are now getting more and more skilled workers as independent immigrants. They may have some way of addressing the barriers than refugees with no means. They may also be more able to pay for their own language and skills training, university/business exams, etc. Even the professional qualifying exams have to be paid for.

j. Heritage training

According to the Canadian Multicultural Policy, young children should have the opportunity to learn about their own heritage. In situations where mothers are engaged outside the home, this task has to be handled elsewhere or not at all.

k. Education about new communities

The need for materials to be developed for school children to learn about the new communities was also raised. While there are community groups and agencies willing to take on this task, there was need for the corresponding willingness from the various funders.

E. Over-all Conclusions

Our findings showed that the settlement and integration difficulties faced by the target population are greatly compounded by low literacy in their first language. However, the literacy issue is not a stand-alone concern and must be examined within the social context in which it occurs. Issues such

as racism and discrimination, lack of decent employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing, limited access to appropriate health care, etc. all work in tandem with the literacy issue to prevent effective integration and quality of life for these newcomers.

Services that may already be difficult to access for newcomers, in general, may be totally inaccessible to this group. The emphasis on print in social service agencies and other organizations and the inability of these newcomers to deal with print provides a lethal combination with serious repercussions. A lack of cultural interpreters and translators compounds the issue.

Regular ESL or LINC programs, even those that focus on ESL literacy, are not the answer. Results show that bridging programs that start with first language literacy and work towards learning the second, work best with the target population. These programs must deal with the current social realities of participants and provide them with the opportunity to participate fully in a democratic society. These programs are few and far between.

Our literature review indicated that there is a dearth of research of the settlement needs of those with low literacy in their first language and what might be helpful strategies to address their needs. Several researchers call for more focused research on the settlement needs of this group.

IV. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the environmental scan, focus groups, and interviews with key informants..

The recommendations have implications for policy formulation, program development and implementation, governance structure, and immediate next steps. They are therefore directed to policy makers at different levels of government, relevant agencies and institutions; program managers and direct service workers, both in the mainstream as well as ethno-specific

agencies; as well as the members of the target population themselves, and the general public.

A. Policy

1. Literacy as a right in one's first language should be incorporated into the settlement service policy framework of all levels of government, and at the service agency level, which is the immediate point of program delivery. The Provincial Government's policy on literacy should target the literacy and basic skills needs of newcomers who are eligible for literacy training,-- i.e. they are at Levels 1 or 2 according to the International Adult Literacy Survey. Funding cut from special education should be restored, e.g., reading tutorials and adult education, which help young people who leave school early.

CIC should strengthen its LINC sponsored ESL literacy programs to include first language bridging programs. This practice should extend to literacy programs funded by all levels of government.

2. A policy on clear and accessible language should govern how the service agencies write, disseminate materials about their services, and conduct outreach. A field assessment should be carried out to test materials and their effectiveness. As well, outreach should be strengthened so that people with literacy issues may be reached through more appropriate strategies that consider other ways of reaching people than just through print.
3. Ensure the active participation of the target group in all phases of policy development and program implementation. Effective consultation mechanisms should be developed to ensure the active participation of the target population in decision-making, especially on issues that directly affect their lives, but also on other issues in general, given their right to civic participation. One example of this consultation mechanism would be a series of discussions in different forums, with representation from various immigrant and refugee communities and settlement agencies that

would explore issues and solutions (e.g. City of Toronto is currently organizing Working Groups on literacy issues).

4. There is a need to conduct further research into specific settlement programs and services to evaluate their effectiveness, adequacy, and relevance to the settlement needs of this target population. While basic needs such as access to housing, skills training, job preparation, social assistance and health care are a primary concern, other needs such as learning Canadian systems of banking, formal education, available services, police support, etc. should also be addressed to facilitate healthy adjustment. Such research will help inform the development of a settlement service policy framework and strategy that incorporates, as an essential dimension, the literacy needs of newcomers in their primary language, distinct from the need to develop second language skills.
5. The settlement services sector should have a well-defined policy and strategy on how to integrate a literacy perspective into settlement services. This means they should not assume that clients are literate.
6. Ensure that the survival needs of the target population are met, such as housing, food, seasonal clothing, childcare and transportation costs, as an essential pre-requisite to the creation of a conducive learning environment for literacy education. Such support mechanisms are absolutely essential for the target population to learn and to function in their new environment.
7. In the school system, strengthen the role of personnel, such as the School Community Liaison Officer, who are in direct contact with newcomers who are parents or guardians.

The roles and functions of this position should also address the literacy needs of parents and access appropriate language and cultural interpreter services for the students.

As well, there should be a re-examination of the school system as a whole, to see how it could respond to the question of parent/guardian – child relations, when the former has problems in reading and writing.

The current school system assumes that, at home, the student can approach an adult or guardian who could assist and encourage the student in homework and other learning tasks. Where this assumption does not hold true, an alternative support system for the student should be worked out, such as a tutor who can communicate orally and in writing in the language of the student.

8. In the light of the recent amalgamation of municipalities, the issues of who does what should be clarified, so that responsibility and accountability for settlement services to the target population are clearly defined and gaps may be identified and addressed.
9. Accessible information, in the forms of posters with visual images, audio visual messages, brochures, etc. should be made available in the first language(s) of newcomers in such places where they would naturally congregate, i.e. airports, malls, supermarkets, places of worship, community centers, etc.
10. Government policy at various levels should address the basic service gaps in the settlement service area, specifically as it relates to affordable housing, health care, childcare, family reunification and access to quality jobs.
11. The settlement services sector and the literacy field should promote and strengthen their anti-racism/anti-discrimination policy, complete with the corresponding mechanisms and guidelines, from program planning and design to implementation and evaluation. Such a policy should be properly resourced, (i.e., through proper staffing support and by making available adequate funds for staff and board training), and properly monitored for effective compliance.

12. At present the Settlement Policy is seen as an adjunct of Canada's Immigration Policy. There should be a distinct and well-articulated Settlement Policy, with its own legislative framework, strategic goals, and governance structure, which are linked but not subservient to Canada's Immigration Policy.

Specifically, settlement should not simply be a "program", but should have its own separate Act. "A distinct and properly articulated immigrant settlement policy should (therefore) be defined, removed from the shadows of an immigration policy framework (that) is driven primarily by labour supply and demand considerations, and by a pre-occupation with enforcement and internal security issues." (Geronimo, p. 12)

13. There should be a common definition or vision of what "settlement services" involve, which incorporates literacy and language training into the rest of settlement services. Such a common vision should inform a coherent policy framework that integrates "horizontally" the various policy goals of population planning, immigration, labour market adjustment, job creation and training, as well as settlement, including the literacy education component. From this policy framework, it is possible to achieve the horizontal integration" of roles across various levels of government, from the federal, to the provincial, and municipal levels; it is felt that while the federal government is responsible for policy, the provincial and municipal governments have to face the challenges of implementation, but without a well defined role in planning and priority setting.

Specifically, the City of Toronto as well as community based organizations should have a more active role in defining settlement priorities, goals, and strategies, including those that relate to literacy skills training.

B. Programs Geared to this Target Population

1. Literacy training in the learner's first language should be a distinct discipline or program separate from ESL programs. The bridging programs such as the one offered by the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre (CMLC) should be promoted and expanded. At CMLC (Bogdan, 1995) a bridging program begins with literacy in

the first language--learning the structure of the first language and cross-referencing the content of what is being learned to English. Promotion and expansion of bridging programs should include the development of curriculum and learning materials geared to this target group, as well as the training of literacy instructors who speak the first language of the target population and who will facilitate these programs.

2. Mainstream and ethno-specific settlement agencies, given adequate funding support, should integrate literacy into their programs and services to ensure that the needs of the target population are addressed. As well, the planning and programming, monitoring, and implementation activities of these organizations should incorporate a literacy perspective. Without such a perspective, the organization and its staff operate from the dominant assumption that all their clients can read and write (especially if they speak English); or that the client cannot read and write at all, if he or she happens not to speak English.
3. Mainstream and ethno-specific organizations should train their volunteers, staff, and board members on issues of literacy, and provide certain basic tools that will help them respond to the target population's needs. While filling important service delivery gaps, volunteering also provides these volunteers – who are often immigrants themselves - with valuable experience for employment.
4. Employment is one of the primary concerns of new immigrants. Services to facilitate their access to employment are essential. However, literacy for members of the target population should provide both labour market training as well as citizenship/social development to promote both their integration and that of their children into Canadian society. For example, if these newcomers are better able to help their children with their homework and deal with the school system, they will be better able to assist their children in their integration process.
5. Ensure the principle of “ethno-racial match” so that the service provider and the learner/participant belong to the same language/

ethno cultural group. However, staff from an ethno-specific group should be able to work with all clients regardless of ethnicity. In the hiring of staff for settlement services, those who speak the language of immigrants and refugees should be positively considered over other applicants. These staff should be made available to assist in settlement and enable larger numbers of immigrants to be served. Importantly, these staff can assist clients with the paperwork. While this is the ideal, organizations are usually fiscally constrained to achieve this ethnic match. Thus, short of having an ethnic or language match, language translators/cultural interpreters should be made available to this target population, especially in the critical areas of health, education, job training, and legal aid. To this end, appropriate policies, training programs, and funding support should be put in place to ensure the employment and/or availability of translation/cultural interpretation services.

6. The settlement service sector should have a viable program and action plan on how they will integrate a literacy perspective into their services, i.e. appropriate communication alternatives to print in the form of television messages (for example, audio and video materials), posters, brochures with culturally sensitive and relevant visual material incorporated.

C. Next Steps

1. Following the practice and principles involved in participatory research, it is important to disseminate and share the findings and recommendations of the research project, in particular with the research participants/respondents. In line with this principle, the research team asked the various focus groups and interview respondents what follow up activities or next-steps they might find useful. This section describes ideas for possible next steps.
 - Ensure that representatives from community groups and agencies that participated in the research (e.g., those who

helped organize and facilitate the focus groups) meet to discuss the research findings and recommendations. At this meeting, the research team will do a brief presentation of the report, ask for feedback from the group, and then map out an action plan.

- Ensure that after this initial feedback session, each service agency meets with the members of their original focus groups and repeat the same process; this time it will be the service agency staff who will brief the focus group participants and elicit their feedback. Each agency can then plan with their respective communities, how they want to use the research report.
 - Finally, the service agency representatives will meet again with the research team to pull together the different feedback data/plans from the five community groups. Collectively, a joint action plan of the five agencies/communities can be developed from this meeting. Also at this stage, interview respondents can be invited to be part of the feedback and planning process.
 - Subsequently, community forums/workshops can be held as training sessions with literacy practitioners (e.g., tutors in LINK/ESL and literacy classes) and settlement service providers.
 - This set of activities can be pursued and implemented as one pilot project.
2. Various service agencies and community groups which were initially invited to participate but had to decline (i.e., due to time constraints) might be interested in finding out the results of the research project. These groups can be invited to educational workshops to discuss the research findings and to plan on how the data can be used. As well, the settlement service sector through coalition groups like OCASI or research institutions like CERIS can sponsor seminars and workshops to discuss the research

findings. Literacy organizations and other groups dealing with literacy (such like the Metro Labour Education Centre) can also be invited for a discussion of the research findings to help elicit follow through activities.

3. Follow up research activities can be planned focusing on the research gaps identified in the research. Various funding agencies can be approached to pursue the research further. Specifically, the follow up research could focus on the information gap about the extent and scope of the problem in terms of first-language literacy.

Another specific recommendation from the report pertains to the research and development of settlement and literacy education programs specifically aimed at the target population (i.e., those with low literacy skills in their first language). Such a research and development activity can be undertaken, in coordination with any of the literacy/education or groups as mentioned above.

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Appendices

Focus Group Format

Focus Group Format/Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions. All the participants were asked to say when they had come to Canada, from where and the family status i.e. whether they were married, single, widowed and whether the immediate family were with them or in the home country or in a third country.
2. Objectives of the Focus Group were explained.
 - What the purpose of the exercise was;
 - How the data would be used and how the notes would be recorded i.e. no names used, etc.;
 - Confidentiality of information;
 - Process of the sharing: anecdotes, conversations, story telling, with summary.
3. Questions for the Focus Group: (Where small groups were formed, each group looked at some of the areas of settlement services i.e. family services, health care, employment, housing, training, welfare, childcare and formal school for children and legal services and then reported in the general group.)
 - What are your main settlement needs?
 - How does your ability to read and write in your own language and in English affect your ability to access these services?

The participants were asked to discuss the following questions in the context of family services, health care, employment, housing, training, welfare, childcare and formal school for children and legal services:

- Where do they go for services ?
- What services do they receive?
- What gaps do they experience in their service needs i.e. what is missing in the services or programs?

4. The findings were summarized in terms of :
 - a. priority needs
 - b. services received
 - c. service gaps or unmet needs

5. All the participants were then invited to make recommendations or suggest changes and additions they would like to see in the various programs, including how to make settlement services and agencies more accessible.

6. The facilitator and the Research Team members thanked the group for their participation and the sponsoring service agency. They again re-assured the group of data confidentiality and reiterated how the data would be used.

7. Arrangements were made for breaks during the session and participants were provided snacks and bus tickets/tokens.

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Immigrant Service Agencies

1. What percentage of the newcomers (who have arrived in Canada in the past 5 years) you serve have difficulty with reading and writing in their first language?
2. What percentage of the newcomers you serve have less than Grade 9 Secondary school education?
3. In your experience, how does difficulty with reading and writing in people's first language affect their settlement needs? What about lack of formal education?
4. How are the needs of people with reading and writing difficulties the same or different due to differences in gender, race, age, sexuality, disability, class ?
5. What (if any) services/programs does your agency offer that specifically meet the needs of this group of newcomers with low literacy skills or little formal education?
6. What programs/services do other agencies that you know of have that specifically meet the needs of this group of newcomers with low literacy skills or little formal education?
7. In your opinion, what are the major gaps in programs/services to this group?
8. What gaps in service to this group would your agency like to address? What would you need to be able to do this?
9. What other kinds of special services/programs are needed? Who should/could offer them?
10. Can you recommend other people we should interview that are dealing with the issues facing this group of newcomers?
11. Can you recommend any articles that speak to this issue of newcomers with low literacy skills?
12. Would you be interested in: - reading the report, participating in a group discussion of the report?

Interview Questions

Knowledgeable Individuals, Government
Agencies and Academics

1. In your experience, what are the major settlement needs of newcomers to Canada?
How are the needs affected by gender, race, age, disability, class, sexuality?
2. How does lack of formal education and difficulty reading and writing in a person's first language affect these needs?

Prompts:

Effect on:

- getting jobs
- accessing English language and literacy training
- learning and progressing in English literacy
- family life
- community supports
- getting housing
- accessing public services, for example, health care
- everyday participation
- affective areas such as participation as equals, sense of belonging, being valued, stability, security

3. What services/programs do you know about that are geared specifically to this group?
4. What are the gaps in service to this group?
5. What special services/programs are needed? How should they be delivered? By whom?
6. Can you recommend studies, articles, individuals working specifically on this issue?