

PROVIDING A WAY STATION
A STUDY OF THE JOINT APNA
GHAR AND THE ENTERPRISING
KITCHEN PROGRAM TO
PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES TO IMMIGRANT
WOMEN VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

By

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INTRODUCTION

This report examines an innovative partnership designed to assist the employment needs of immigrant women who are survivors of domestic violence. In late 1999 a partnership was formed between The Enterprising Kitchen (TEK) and Apna Ghar, two organizations that are located in Chicago's Uptown community. Apna Ghar, which provides services including shelter and counseling to South Asian immigrant women, sought client assistance from TEK, an intensive employment training program for women who are very marginal to the labor force. This report examines the first eighteen months of the partnership in which Apna Ghar referred twelve women to TEK's training slots. It looks at how the TEK model served the needs of both the immigrant women referred by Apna Ghar and the general TEK population, which is primarily composed of African American women.

This report demonstrates the effectiveness of a small, focused and personalized work preparation program that provides a "way station" for learning new habits and skills that address the needs of both sets of women.

The program assisted a majority of the Joint Apna Ghar-TEK Program participants in becoming self-effective and in attaining, or making significant steps toward, employment. The women in these programs faced significant challenges in preparing themselves to secure stable employment with a livable wage. The immigrant women faced a series of inter-related challenges. The domestic violence itself affected their sense of efficacy and self-confidence. Many did not have the necessary immigration status to work in the United States. The legal issues related to the domestic violence they experienced and their immigration status were complex and often impacted their work and training schedules. In addition, their unfamiliarity with American culture and language and their traditional family roles and responsibilities made it difficult for them to move out of the immigrant community to find employment.

The other TEK women also had a complex series of factors and life events that impacted their ability to gain stable employment. These issues included a history of substance abuse, poor physical or mental health, family violence, prolonged periods of unemployment, lack of education,

homelessness, young dependent children, and criminal records. These factors were prevalent in large numbers among many of the women. Forty-nine percent of the women had two or three of the issues and thirty-four percent had four or more of these issues.

The challenges that confront these women point to the need for additional programmatic features and public policy changes, in particular for the immigrant women in the Joint Program. These include more transitional and subsidized housing options, longer tenure at TEK for the immigrant women, more systematic follow-up and supportive services for all TEK graduates, availability of public assistance to recently immigrated women who are victims of domestic violence, and an expedited immigration procedure for this immigrant population.

The two organizations requested that the Loyola University Chicago's Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) conduct a study of their Joint Program. The Center for Urban Research and Learning has a long history of working with community-based organizations, city organizations, social service agencies, health care providers, and government officials. By fostering a collaborative relationship with organizations outside the university, CURL recognizes the importance of working with communities in seeking new solutions to pressing urban issues. Collaborative research and teaching that promotes social equity are the centerpiece of CURL.

The research project centers on two research concerns. First, the Joint Program focuses on providing a concentrated number of services to a small group of women. This is a very expensive employment model. The collaborating organizations wanted to demonstrate the complex needs of both the women who were part of the collaboration and the general TEK population to illustrate that such an employment training model is necessary for women who, for a variety of reasons, are extremely marginal in the American workforce. Second, the Apna Ghar staff wanted to examine in detail issues faced by their clients during their transition to work in order to better understand the employment problems faced by immigrant women survivors of domestic violence.

The Joint Program provides an opportunity to examine these issues and to provide both programmatic and policy recommendations to better address the needs of this population.

In this report, the reader is first introduced to the Joint Program and the methodology that was used in this study. Then, the report describes the

women who participated in TEK and compares and contrasts those referred by Apna Ghar to those referred by other organizations. Next, the report examines the interactions between the program and the participants, analyzing how well the various components of the program address the employment and training needs of both sets of participants. Finally, the report proposes programmatic and policy changes.

Background

Apna Ghar and TEK are both situated in the Uptown area in the northside of Chicago and both serve women from the larger Chicago metropolitan area.

- TEK

advocacy for social services such as public aid, childcare, job training and housing. In order to assist the women, most staff members are themselves South Asian, speaking the languages of Hindi and Urdu.

- *The Joint Program*

In late 1999, TEK and Apna Ghar secured funding for a Joint Program that built on the referral relationship that had grown between the two agencies. They both recognized that the employment needs of the immigrant women referred by Apna Ghar to TEK could not be addressed by a simple referral arrangement. First, many of the women referred to TEK by Apna Ghar had problematic immigrant work status. Second, the issues related to the women's transition to a new culture and language suggested a need for a much closer collaboration between the two agencies. So, a partnership was born. TEK provides job training and Apna Ghar provides shelter, counseling and legal advocacy to the domestic abuse survivors. An important feature of the program is the provision of short-term cash assistance. Many of the immigrant women are not eligible for any social welfare programs, such as Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), that are available to survivors of domestic violence who are citizens of the United States. Those whose immigrant status is in question cannot earn wages that they sorely need. Through the Joint Program the women are provided with an internship scholarship and awarded a cash stipend as part of the terms of the scholarship. Also, every client of Apna Ghar who successfully completes the three-month program receives a \$150 bonus that is intended to assist her move into stable housing.

The Joint Program provides a place to learn about American work culture. Apna Ghar refers clients who are the most recent immigrants to TEK. In particular, Apna Ghar refers women who have some, but limited, ability to speak and understand English, have little or no employment history, and yet are motivated to enter the work force. Apna Ghar continues to provide assistance in addressing needs that are specifically related to moving them towards stabilization, such as safe and affordable housing, assistance in finding technical or educational opportunities that will enhance their probability of economic self-sufficiency, and help within the legal system.

- *The Service Delivery Model*

TEK conducts an intake interview to set specific and manageable goals and objectives for each participant's tenure in the program. Each participant's progress is checked periodically while in the program. The women learn the basics of being in the workforce - getting to work on time, managing workplace situations including resolving conflicts, phone literacy, basic computer skills, and managing finances. One major practical benefit and outcome of the TEK program is the creation of an employment history for the participant which facilitates other job opportunities.

The immigrant women work Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. During this time they take part in TEK's core curriculum that includes literacy, computer training, and one-on-one work with a financial planner. In preparation for future employment 1roD wo an

METHOD

A key aspect of this study is its participatory and collaborative nature. Leading staff from TEK and Apna Ghar participated both in the design of the study and in the analysis of the data. Data was gathered from interviews, focus groups, participant observations, and a review of all TEK and selected Apna Ghar case records.

- *Staff Interviews*

Five staff were interviewed by CURL. The participating staff members included three from Apna Ghar and two from TEK. All of the participants were women. Each woman was asked about her observations concerning the program and her observations about the interactions of the clients with the program (see Appendix 1 for interview instrument). The Apna Ghar staff interviewed included the executive director, the program director, and a counselor. At TEK the staff interviewed included the executive director and the associate director.

- *Participant Interviews*

surmise that these women want to put the painful circumstances of their family crisis and their chagrin at having utilized social services behind them.

Nine of the 45 women who had participated in TEK by referral from other agencies were also interviewed. Researchers aimed at interviewing two to three women from each year the program had been in operation. Some of the women were difficult to reach. They had changed their addresses, moved outside the city, and/or did not call back to express an interest in being interviewed. However, researchers conducted interviews with two women from 1996, two women from 1997, three women from 1999, and two women from 2000. The interview was composed of open-ended questions (See Appendix 2) and took between 30 to 60 minutes.

There was a slight difference between the interview questions posed to the two groups of women because of their diverse histories (see Appendix 2 for TEK interview questions and Appendix 3 for Joint Program interview questions). The women who worked at TEK in previous years and were accepted into the study were offered a \$10 gift certificate from TEK as an incentive for participating in the interviews. With the exception of one phone-interview, all the interviews were conducted in person. The interviews with the women referred from Apna Ghar took place at the Apna Ghar office. Two of these interviews were conducted with the assistance of a translator. The interviews with individuals from the non-immigrant group took place outside the TEK workplace, at a site of mutual choice such as a coffee shop or a restaurant. The interviews that took place at Apna Ghar offices were taped and subsequently transcribed for analysis. In addition, each interviewer also took field notes.

- Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted with eight women who were working at TEK at the time of the research (see Appendix 4 for focus group discussion questions). All women at TEK were given the opportunity to participate during work hours. The purpose of the focus groups was to get an overview of how employees perceive the TEK experience and to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of working at TEK.

At the time the focus groups were conducted, 12 women in total worked at TEK. Eight women participated in the two focus groups. Three women were absent on the days scheduled for the focus groups and one

declined to participate. The first focus group was conducted with five participants and included women referred to TEK by both Apna Ghar and other referring agencies. In the second focus group there were three participants. The three participants of this second group were all graduates from TEK who were currently working as supervisors at TEK.

employment, reason for termination of employment, educational level, history of substance abuse, health status, and their history of family violence. In addition, there was information about their current TEK status, whether they were still working, had graduated from the program, or had been terminated. While this information was very useful, it had serious limitations. First, the demographic information was initially gathered during the intake interview. Recipients were not pressed to fill in all data, and the staff did not always subsequently fill in the missing information as they became aware of it during the course of their

interactions with the participants. Given the small number of participants, the intimacy of the program, and the pressing time demands on the small TEK staff (at the time of the research, there were only two full time staff), staff relied on their memories, and information was not always captured on paper. Therefore, there is at least one empty data field in every case.

Another problem with the database is the lack of follow-up information on their subsequent employment history. There is little time for staff to maintain contact with graduates of the program. Although many former participants kept in touch, there was little record-keeping related to their subsequent employment. However, even with these limitations, a review of this data gives us some understanding of the prevalence and patterns of issues that the women confront.

FINDINGS

The Women: A Group Snapshot

Sixty-two women participated in TEK at the time of the study. Of those, twelve participated through the joint Apna Ghar-TEK program started in late 1999.

Table One: TEK Participants

		Status chart			
Women referred to TEK by other agencies:	Total #	Graduated	Terminated	Still at TEK	Missing
1996	8	5	1		2
1997	8	4	3		1
1998	12	7	4	1	
1999	9	6	1	2	
2000	10	4	3	2	1
2001	3			3	
SUM	50	26	12	8	4
Women referred to TEK by Apna Ghar:	Total #	Graduated	Terminated	Still working	

All but one of the women (a Latina) in the Joint Program were either Asian or Middle Eastern immigrants. Except for one South Asian woman from India, all the TEK participants referred by other organizations were African-American (79%), White (13%), or Latina (6%).

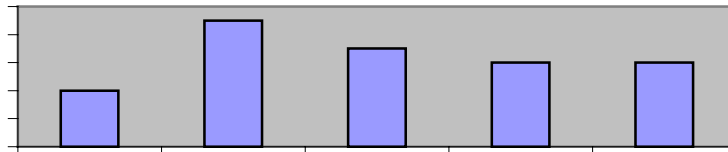
- *Age and Parental Status*

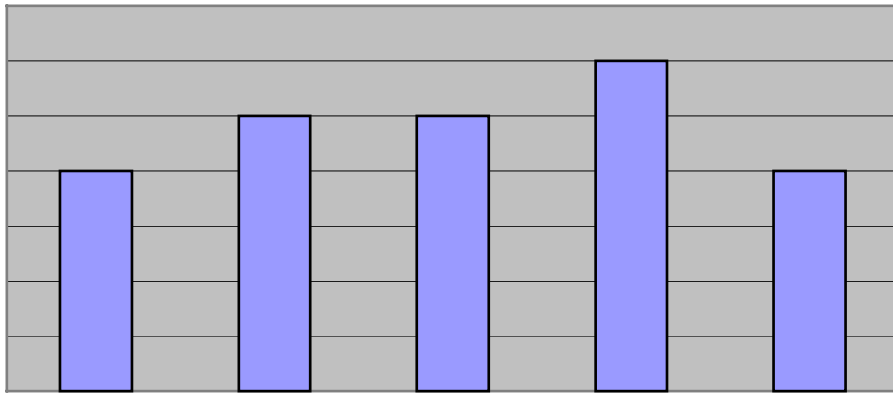
The women in the Joint Program were younger than the other TEK women. The plurality of the Joint Program women were in their 20's, while the plurality of the other women were in their 40's. Three out of

- Previous Work Experience

Just over half of the women at TEK reported having some work experience. All of the women with previous work experience, with one exception, were not in the Joint Program. As the following chart shows (Chart 1), most women with work experience were in the midst of a long spell of unemployment.

Chart 1





that these women faced were coincidental or secondary to these two issues. On the other hand, many of the other women at TEK have had a history of difficulty in adjusting to the work force primarily because of these health issues.

Of the 32 women for whom we have information, 18 reported having mental health problems. While none of the women in the Joint Program reported having any mental health problems, staff reported that at least 25 percent of the women in the Joint Program exhibit some symptoms of mental health issues including anxiety, depression, and other symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Participants' Challenges to Workforce Participation

Participants faced significant challenges in attaining stable employment that would provide them with sufficient income to stabilize their lives and meet their economic responsibilities. The nature of those challenges were different for the two groups of women. The immigrant women were confronted with two sets of inter-related challenges: the first due to domestic violence, the second due to their immigration status and their unfamiliarity with American society and the English language. The other TEK women's challenges were predominately tied to health and substance abuse issues.

Work Transition Issues of the Immigrant Women

Some of the work transition issues of the Joint Program women are obvious from their profile above. For the 50 percent who were mothers with dependent children, childcare was a recurring issue. Since most were not eligible for welfare, subsidized childcare was not an option. Educational skills, per-se, were not an issue. Most of the Joint Program women were well educated. Seventy-seven percent had completed high school, and two-thirds of them had received either a two-year college or a university degree. Though the majority had some experience with higher education, most had little familiarity with working outside of home. Only two had any employment history. Few had facility with English³.

- Attitudinal Issues

Many of these women, coming out of an abusive relationship, found it emotionally difficult to cope and had little confidence in their ability to succeed. Apna Ghar staff described how many of the women, still deeply

embedded in their native cultures, were dealing with feelings of shame

job where she didn't get tired.

The Apna Ghar staff felt that while this woman's example was extreme, her case pointed out that the immigrant women who have the most difficult time in establishing independent households have not been prepared by their cultural role in their country of origin to think about expectations of independence or of work outside of the home.

In addition, one of the Apna Ghar staff, herself South Asian, suggested that many of the South Asian women she sees have a sense of fatalism or feel that they have no control over their destiny and, therefore, do not understand why anyone would ask about their expectations.

- *Lack of Stable Housing*

Many of the Joint Program women, as a result of being victims of family violence or abandonment, lacked stable housing. Apna Ghar's shelter program can provide housing for three months, although they are sometimes able to extend this for another month or so. Even then, many of the women, lacking the legal status to be eligible for public assistance and not yet receiving assistance from their spouses or families, find it difficult to establish an independent household. For example, of the five women interviewed, none were living in a stable living situation. One had returned to an abusive husband because she felt that she had no other options. She reported that at any time she might have to leave again. Another, without legal status in the United States, deeply in debt, with a new infant and deserted by her husband, was living with another immigrant woman who befriended her. One was living in the Apna Ghar shelter. She was looking for an apartment and finding it difficult. "I can't even think of a studio or a room making four hundred dollars [a month]."⁵ The fourth woman and her children were living with an aunt and looking for housing. The fifth had just left the Apna Ghar shelter at

the time of the interview. She had two children, a handicapped daughter and a seriously depressed teenage boy. She received \$300 a month in child support from her husband and had just started receiving food stamps and Medicaid.

This instability of housing creates a "catch-22" situation. On the one hand, the women participating in a program that will assist them in finding adequate employment that will allow them to support an independent household. On the other hand, the pressure to find housing often leads them to leave TEK for exploitative employment so as to have

some money to pay for housing once their Apna Ghar shelter eligibility has ended. Without legal status, most of these women do not have recourse to the public assistance that is available to victims of domestic violence. Because of this, the Joint Program women have a deadline of three or so months for successful work transition. This is often at odds with challenges that they have to address by way of the assistance of TEK and Apna Ghar before they can secure stable employment.

- Legal Tasks and Challenges

The Joint Program women had a number of legal issues to address both within the domestic court system and within the immigration service. These issues affected their ability to focus on work or employment training in a number of ways. First, court appearances often interrupted work schedules. For example, a Joint Program participant explained,

I am going through at least three things together...I have my police protection case...and so I am going to be off for two days...I came to Apna Ghar for legal assistance because my visa expired and I came on my fiancée's visa...I have to collect a lot of letters of support of evidence: my cohabitation, police clearance certificate, and reference letters.

The Apna Ghar program director observed that:

It is very hard to get women to focus on jobs. They are consumed with issues related to DV [domestic violence], going to court, meeting with attorneys, immigration issues. Perhaps the hardest is that often they let the moment define them-go[ing] with the flow, rather than organiz[ing] and be[ing] proactive.

Combined, these tasks can seem, and are, very overwhelming. As one of the women in the Joint Program noted, "You cannot put them together: work hard for a job, work hard for legal assistance, and look for the apartment. It's not possible sweetheart."

Work Transition Issues of The Other TEK Women

The other TEK women also had a complex series of factors and life events that impacted on their ability to gain stable employment and support themselves and their families. Among the factors, in varying combinations, were a history of substance abuse, poor physical or

mental health, family violence, prolonged periods of unemployment, young dependent children, homelessness, and criminal records. While the circumstance of each woman was unique, they shared these complexities. For example, 34 percent of the women had at least four or more of these issues⁶, and 49 percent had at least two or three issues.

- History of Substance Abuse

The TEK staff reported that women who have had a history of substance abuse have the most difficult time in successfully participating in the program. These women are much more likely to be terminated from the program than other participants. While only 20 percent of the women with no indication of substance abuse problems were terminated from the program, 35 percent of the women with substance abuse problems were terminated.

The women with a history of substance abuse tended to be older (most are in their forties or fifties). These former substance abusers were very likely to have multiple issues (Table 2). Seventy-five percent had two or more issues, in addition to their history of substance abuse. Some of the issues were likely to be related the substance abuse such as criminal records, poor mental and physical health, and homelessness.

Perhaps reflecting their age, or again problems associated with substance abuse, women with a history of substance abuse had long durations of unemployment. In addition, although some are college graduates, more than half had not graduated from high school.

Table 2	
Comparing Women with a history of substance abuse to other TEK women not in Joint Program	
Women with History (n=20) ⁷	
Other women (n=27)	
Average number of issues	
3.5	
1.3	
Average number of years unemployed	
7.6	
5.6	

Percent not completing high school

65%

28%

Adding to the challenges, TEK staff reported that some women often relapse into drug or alcohol use. As soon as this relapse is evident, the woman is suspended from the program. She is eligible for reinstatement after successfully completing treatment and remaining clean for three months. These cases are often the most frustrating. According to staff, the relapses often occur after the woman has made significant progress. TEK staff also reported that the “re-entry” of negative significant others are a common occurrence. For example, one woman relapsed after her boyfriend, a fellow substance abuser, had been released from jail.

- *Criminal Record*

Six women reported having criminal records. Of these six, five also reported having had substance abuse and/or mental health problems.

- *Health Issues*

Health issues were a factor in the lives of many of the women. Twenty-five women had some history of physical or mental health issues in their case report. Half were currently receiving disability assistance (all but one of those are receiving disability for mental health reasons). Others had lost jobs because of poor health or reported physical or mental health problems to TEK. Almost all had some work history, but the majority had been unemployed for more than five years.

While some women had very serious health problems (as indicated by their receipt of disability), most of those whose health problems were not

to build self-confidence and efficacy was especially important with these young women. They often have few interactive social skills and are very withdrawn, nervous, and quiet when they first come to TEK.

- *Economic Support and Housing*

Unlike the women in the Joint Program, most of the TEK women had more economic resources, primarily through their ability to access public assistance. Even so, many had precarious living situations. Half were referred to TEK as part of a plan to transition from their transitional or emergency shelter to more permanent housing. Unlike the immigrant women though, none had pressing time constraints to find employment and to support the establishment of a new household.

Interaction between the TEK Program and the Participants

The diversity and the depth of issues faced by both sets of TEK participants point to the importance of the personalized service “way station” model of TEK. The women participants in both interviews and focus groups described TEK as a supportive work environment with plenty of one-on-one personal interactions that focus on building personal skills and good work habits.

Women reported coming to TEK with many agendas and goals. All the women had been referred to TEK by either a shelter, a social service agency, or a public assistance agency. In interviews some were able to articulate reasons for being at TEK, other just said they were “referred.” Reasons ranged from: “I needed the money “ to “I wanted to get out [of] my depression...[and] organize my time.” While they have been derailed by life circumstances, often physical or mental illness or substance abuse, some clearly articulated where they want to be. They want to get a positive employment record in order to get a job or to be eligible for a skilled training program. Some, especially the women in the Joint Program, saw TEK as a form of employment and evaluated the experience by the pay they received. Regardless of their expectations though, most women reported finding TEK as a valuable way station--a place to learn important life and work skills, to gain confidence, to network, and to be supported.

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the typing classes. Others pointed to the importance of learning how to fill out forms properly. Almost every woman mentioned the value of learning how to write a resume, how to find other jobs, and how to get into another training or educational program. In addition to learning specific skills, a number of women echoed the words of one interviewee who stated, “ I learned what skills I needed.”

The women also valued attaining skills, reflecting the TEK curriculum, that went beyond specific work-related skills. Life skills training were mentioned by most of the women. Women talked about learning how to “figure out a life plan,” “set goals,” and “learn the steps I needed to take.” A number of women talked about learning how to manage time better. One woman said: “I learned how to value and respect time.” Of course, these life skills and work skills are inter-related. As Sue articulated, “I learned how to get organized—personally and at work. I learned systems.”

- Supportive Environment

The participants consistently mentioned the supportive environment of TEK. This again reflects a goal of TEK staff: to provide an environment where participants can find both informal supportive interactions and more therapeutic interventions. As illustrated in the comments in the preceding section *Skills*, many of the women learned to handle emotions

and attitudes that had become barriers to their finding employment and having satisfactory interactions with family and peers.

Participants found a caring atmosphere. One woman described how TEK helped her persist in finding the right medication for her depression as well as finding permanent housing. Another described how staff patiently worked with her to control her outbursts of rage and to help her understand her emotions. Another found it a place with “less pressure, I could handle it.” Participants mentioned the two full time TEK staff with a great deal of affection and praise.

Participants understood that this environment was not typical. In the “TEK environment,” one woman explained, we are treated “as family members, [it is] not the typical working place.” In interviews and in focus groups, many stated they wished to prolong the TEK experience and wished it could become their permanent work place. They had made friends through TEK and felt safe.

This perhaps explains why half of the interviewed women who had graduated from TEK reported often returning for visits or “just to check in with Joan (one of the TEK founders and executive director).”

The importance of the support and individual attention of the staff is perhaps best emphasized by a staffing challenge referenced throughout staff and participant interviews and focus groups. When TEK was established, the work volume was limited and staff (the director and associate director) spent a great deal of individual time with participants. This included both time at the TEK work site and at non-work activities, such as picnics and visiting museums. As TEK grew, the organizational work of the staff grew and this limited the personal time that the directors spent with participants.

TEK has begun to address this issue. Beginning in early 2001, TEK hired three supervisors who had graduated from the TEK program. Later that year, TEK was able to utilize a Public Ally intern, a program of Americorp, to develop a social service referral and support system. It is now investigating hiring a chief operating officer so that the executive director has the time to return to a more personal and programmatic focus with the participants.

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proficiency,” a needed skill as they transitioned to the American workforce.

- *A First Experience in the American Public Sphere*

For most of the immigrant women, TEK was their first experience with American people and an American work environment. Moving on in their lives and being independent was a terrifying idea for most. Both TEK and Apna Ghar staff observed that the younger immigrant women tended to be more accepting about moving on with their lives and were able to benefit from the experience at TEK better than the older immigrant women.

- *Finding Employment*

As mentioned above, only one of the women interviewed in the Joint Program found permanent full-time employment. Another was just recently completing the TEK program and was in the midst of a job search. Looking at the situations of the three other women is instructive. One who had successfully completed a bank teller training was unable to take any of the positions offered because she was unable to find childcare to meet the time slots and travel times and she cannot drive. Another had not yet attained legal immigrant status and had only intermittent employment “off the records.” Abandoned by her husband, she had also recently given birth to their child. A third woman had a disabled child and her present situation had led her into a deep depression.

- *Money, Not Training*

improve English skills. They did not readily understand the training or the orientation aspects of the program, although they noted in hindsight that the experience and support were valuable. For the majority, the

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research project centered on two concerns. First, the Joint Apna Ghar-TEK Program is based on the TEK employment-training model, which provides a concentrated number of services to a small group of women. This is a very expensive employment model. The collaborating organizations wanted to demonstrate that this model fit with, and its expense was justified by, the complex needs of the women that it focused on serving. Second, the Apna Ghar staff wanted to examine in some detail the work transition issues faced by their clients to better understand the employment issues faced by immigrant women survivors of domestic violence.

An Effective Model

The report demonstrates that the complex needs and multiple challenges of the program's participants necessitate the personalized and focused services that the TEK model provides. The women at TEK need assistance especially in learning new habits and skills and in developing more effective attitudes with which to manage their personal and work lives. The program provides an effective "way station" for learning these new habits and skills. In the words of one woman, participants learned "the things I needed to know about work." These included learning about the process and culture of work, the attainment of specific skills--general life and coping. The participants learned how to talk to a supervisor and fellow workers, how to call in when sick, and how to punch a time card. Among the specific skills they learned are word-processing and other computer programs, typing, filling out forms, and resume writing. Participants reported learning how to manage time, set and carry out goals, and "how to get organized." Participants also report that TEK allowed them to develop work and personal skills in a safe and supportive environment. Participants valued the personalized interactions and attention from staff. Staff helped participants in a wide array of ways including helping a depressed participant persist with her physician to find effective medication, teaching anger control, and finding permanent housing.

The tightly focused program has been able to assist participants in becoming self-effective and in attaining, or making significant steps toward, employment. Of the women who joined TEK, 56 percent successfully graduated from the program. Although post graduation

records are not maintained on TEK participants, we have some indication that participants are able to successfully incorporate the skills and lessons they learn at TEK to develop more stable, economically independent lives. Of the nine women from earlier TEK cohorts who were interviewed, seven were employed for one or more years after graduating from TEK.

Improving the TEK Program

We have three recommendations in regards to the operations program design of TEK.

- *Increase the availability of senior TEK staff to participants.*
The personal support and interactions with the executive director and associate director are highly valued by the participants. At the time this research was conducted, both staff members had a number of responsibilities related to the administration of the growing business. That curtailed interaction with participants to some extent. Currently, TEK is identifying structural changes to ameliorate this problem. We recommend that this organizational restructuring be a high priority of the organization.
- *Continue “way station” support to TEK alumnae.*
On an informal and ad-hoc basis, many TEK alumnae continue to use TEK resources. They seek support and advice from TEK staff and use TEK office fax, computers, and other resources in job searches. The TEK alumnae that were interviewed describe their post-TEK job experiences as full of volatile transitions and issues that would benefit from a more formal support system. We suggest that TEK investigate, formalize, and seek support for the provision of alumnae support and services.
- *Develop a tracking system.*
Data collection on outcomes is very spotty. We suggest that TEK follow up with both their graduates and non-graduates at designated

The Apna Ghar women in the Joint Program faced a series of challenges related to their status as immigrants and as survivors of domestic violence. First, like many victims of domestic violence, a majority of the women in the Joint Program were mothers of young children. For any mothers of young dependent children seeking employment, childcare is a

recurring challenge. For many of these women, the challenge is compounded by their inability to take advantage of public assistance due to their immigrant status. Not all can turn to their families for support in childcare or other issues. Three of the five women interviewed reported that they were rejected and chastised when they turned to their family for assistance. Apna Ghar staff report that this is not unusual experience for South Asian domestic violence victims.

Second, the Apna Ghar clients need sufficient time and support to negotiate all the legal and bureaucratic procedures related to their immigration status and family turmoil. Many do not have the necessary immigrant status to work in the United States. At the same time, they are addressing legal issues related to the domestic violence.

Third, while educational skills and good work habits are not an issue, few of the immigrant women had any familiarity with working outside of the home and/or of working in the United States. They need to develop the “timing” skills necessary to handle these demands along with familial and training demands. They also need to learn how to navigate American culture, especially the culture of the workplace. Finally, the ability to develop a myriad of skills, such as driving, speaking English, and promoting themselves in the workplace is necessary for their employment success.

Fourth, many of the women, coming out of an abusive relationship, found it emotionally difficult to cope and had little confidence in their ability to succeed.

Finally, the women were hard pressed to secure stable housing within the three month emergency-housing period. Because most of the women reported being ineligible for TANF and other public assistance due to their recent immigrant status, Apna Ghar staff reported that many were forced in sub-standard employment and/or returned to a violent family

situation.

Recommendations Regarding Immigrant Women in the Joint Program

The expected tenure for women in the Joint Program is currently three months. This time reflects the current three-month maximum of emergency housing funding allowable in domestic violence policy. This is an insufficient transition time for many of the women. While the stipend and bonus in the Joint Program are helpful, they are not sufficient for

women who need to find stable housing, especially women with dependent children. Because of recent immigrant status, most of the women with children are not eligible for TANF, an alternative that is available to other domestic violence survivors with dependent children. Therefore, we recommend that the two organizations pursue the following strategies to extend the time that women are supported in their transition to permanent employment.

- Apna Ghar and TEK advocate for a modification in emergency housing policy to be able to extend housing to six months or longer for women not eligible for TANF.
- Apna Ghar seek support for the development of culturally appropriate, supportive transitional housing to compliment the Joint Program.
- The development of a transitional housing stipend fund within the Joint Program to provide for stable housing until graduation.

Endnotes

¹ One of the Apna Ghar women was just ending her stay at TEK and had not yet graduated.

² Twenty-five of the 32 women who reported an employment history gave reasons for leaving their jobs in their TEK in take interviews.

³

Appendix 1

APNA GHAR STAFF QUESTIONS

The questions are presented more as discussion issues (open ended) than as question/answer.

- Do you refer women to any other work programs other than TEK?
- What is the range of services for women at Apna Ghar?
- What is the process to referring people to Enterprising Kitchen (acceptance criteria)?
- What are the challenges that women face working in this project?
- What are your challenges working with these women?
- How do you view the Joint Project between AG/TEK?
- What would you like to add or change in the Joint Project?
- Do you have any suggestions concerning interviewing the women?
- Any issues you want to add?

THE ENTERPRISING KITCHEN STAFF QUESTIONS

The questions are presented more as discussion issues (open ended) than as question/answer.

- What is the process of accepting people from Apna Ghar or other agencies (acceptance criteria)?
- What are the challenges that women face working in this project?
- What are your challenges working with these women?

- What are your criteria in referring the women to another jobs?

Appendix 1 (continued)

- How do you view the Joint Program between AG/TEK?
- What would you like to add or change in the Joint Program?
- Do you have any suggestions concerning interviewing the women?
- Any issues you want to add?

- What things/people/resources/etc. were necessary for you to achieve your goals?

Appendix 2 (continued)

- What are the biggest challenges in maintaining employment?
- You have been hired to help another group in the city to put together an employment program - what things from TEK would you keep, what new things would you add, what things from TEK would you change?

APNA GHAR GRADUATES QUESTIONS

CURRENT JOB

- What are you doing now?
- For how long have you been in this job?
- What kind of job do you have?
- What skills do you need in your job?
- How did you know about your job? How were you referred?
- Is the current job difficult for you? Are there any challenges you faced either in the beginning or now?
- How is your current job connected with your experience at TEK?

EXPERIENCE AT AG

- Tell me about your experience at AG?
- Walk me through the process of how you were referred to AG and TEK?
- How has AG helped you achieve your goals?

EXPERIENCE AT TEK

- Tell me about your experience at TEK? (open question)

Appendix 3 (continued)

- How has your personal life affected your experience at TEK?
- Did you feel that there were any cultural differences in working at TEK that presented a challenge for you? What was TEK role?
- What skills did you learn from the TEK program that helped you enter the job market and do your current job?
- What was TEK's role in helping you find a job?
- What do you feel that was missing in the program that you needed in your current job?
- In general, how do you think that your experience at TEK and AG changed your life?

FUTURE

- What do you think we should add to the TEK program to make it more effective for women?
- How could we change or add to the project between AG and TEK to improve it?
- If you were to help design a similar training program, what are the things you would change, add, focus on, or take out from the current project?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

LEARNING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- What did you get from the TEK training program?
- From whom do you learn the most?
- How do you feel that this training program will help you as an individual?
- What are the problems that you are facing through following the training program?
- What works best in the training program? What does not?

AS A NEW EMPLOYEE

- Suppose you are going to plan an orientation for new employees, what would you tell a new participant to this program?
- What are the most important things that women have to have in place in order to “advance” through this program?
- Looking at your own experiences and the experiences of your fellow participants, what do you think are some of the hardest things for new participants to handle in the program?

EXTRA CLASSES

- How important are the counseling and extra groups (GED, computer, etc.)?

Appendix 4 (continued)

GOALS AND GRADUATION

- Looking at women who have graduated from the program, what are the challenges that you think you will have to deal with in graduating and going on to another job?
- How have your ideas about what you are going to do next in your life been changed by the program?
- How do you feel that such a training program will help you achieve your goals?
- What new ideas about work possibilities or other parts of your life have you learned in this program?
- What do you think is missing in the training program and has to be included?
- You have been hired to help another group in the city to put together an employment program– what things from TEK would you keep, what new things would you add, what things from TEK would you change?
