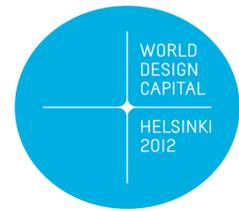


OUTReach

OURCity Take Part! Design! Suunnittele! Osallistu!

A part of World Design Capital-Helsinki 2012



City of Helsinki

Personnel Centre's Grant
for Immigrant Associations Capacity Building

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

A Survey by, OUTReach, OURCity's sub-project, to record the views and experiences of individuals with immigrant background in relation to their access to and use of the public services

Prepared by:

OUTReach (a sub-project of OURCity)

Interviews & report by:

Dina Fuad-Luke

M.A (Social Sciences - Mass Communications), University of Leicester, U.K;
RSA Cambridge TEFL, U.K; Dip. in Mass Communications (Journalism) Malaysia

Further input & support:

Michail Galanakis

Mariana Salgado

Interpreters:

Adam Adam (Somali)

Fatma Yasa (Kurdish)

Alexandra Khalitov (Russian)

Prepared for:

Human Resources Centre, Immigration Division

Helsingin Kaupunki, City of Helsinki, Finland

(Personnel Centre's Grant for Immigrant Associations Capacity Building)

Helsinki, December 2012

© OUTReach, OURCity

Our hopes:

We, the members of OUTReach, a sub-project of the OURCity project for the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012, hope that, although the OURcity project has come to an end, this survey on service-user engagement will be the beginning of many more fruitful ventures into intercultural community work.

We think that it is important to keep our interest in community matters alive, especially on issues of equality, inclusion and integration, which particularly have an impact on the well-being of people from immigrant background.

If you share these interests and wish to exchange views or propose ideas around collaborative work, the person responsible for this report would be pleased to hear from you at the following: Tel: +358 41 7082410; Email dfuadluke@yahoo.co.uk

Short bio of the author:

Dina Fuad-Luke worked as a community development worker in the U.K for over 15 years, before coming to live in Finland.

She was involved in facilitation and integration work, working with immigrants, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers in the cities of London, Bristol and Exeter.

Originally from Malaysia, she is a former journalist at the BBC World Service.

Dina is also a teacher of English.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	4
Purpose of the survey	5
Methodology	6
Informants	6
Data Collection	7
Findings:	
Brief Summary	9
Knowledge about services, rights & entitlements	10
Expectations about services	12
Factors contributing to positive perceptions of service engagements	14
Factors contributing to negative perceptions of service engagements	16
Expressing dissatisfaction –being or not being listened to	19
Specific issues of concern: Perceived racism	
Linking discriminatory actions and behaviour to racist inclinations	21
Informants' suggestions for improvements	25
Recommendations	26
Conclusion	27
Appendix:	
Table 1 - Schematic Demographic Profiles of Interviewees	
Survey Questions	
Survey Publicity	
Information about OURCity	
Contact Details	

Acknowledgments:

This survey had been made possible with the support of many people. OUTReach is indebted to the following for their time, advice, energy and belief in the project.

To Adam, Fatma and Alexandra, thank you for building the bridge for us to connect with our Somali, Kurdish and Russian interviewees. Your professional and personal skills as well as indepth knowledge of your respective communities have helped to produce invaluable data, based on people's frankness and openness, both generated through an ease of communication and trust.

Equally, we wish to express our gratitude to Juho-Atte Riikonen who translated the first draft of the survey into Finnish and provided us with some useful suggestions that facilitated our work.

To Jaana Pylkkänen, a community worker based in Meri-Rastila, thank you for our preliminary discussions and for making useful connections for us in the neighbourhood. We are also indebted for the use of your tranquil office space which enabled us to conduct interviews in complete privacy.

More importantly, we would like to express our gratitude to the Immigration Division of Helsingin Kaupunki. Without their generosity and foresight, diverse voices would not have been heard. We wish to particularly thank its Planning Officer, Miriam Attias for her endless encouragement and support during the course of our work.

In this respect, we would also like to acknowledge and thank the World Design Capital for bringing OURCity into fruition in the first place. OUTReach would not have been born had the project in Meri-Rastila not existed.

Most of all, we would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the three men and thirteen women who sat patiently through the interviews to relive their experiences of service-engagement. At times, these recollections may have proven uncomfortable, even painful for some. We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts for your courage and for sharing your stories with us.

As agreed, we respect your wish to remain anonymous.

We hope that your voices will reach far beyond the realms of this survey!

Dina Fuad-Luke
OUTReach

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

A Survey by, OUTReach, OURCity's sub-project, to record the views and experiences of individuals with immigrant background in relation to their access to and use of the public services

Questions were compiled and interviews conducted by Dina Fuad-Luke.

Interpreters: Adam Adam (Somali), Fatma Yasa (Kurdish), Alexandra Khalitov (Russian)

Introduction:

The idea of this survey came about as a result of the work of OURCity, a World Design Capital project, carried out in the Eastern Helsinki suburb of Meri-Rastila. Following on the WDC's theme of '*making a better city together*', the project aimed to create new ideas to develop Meri-Rastila into a more communal and lively place, in collaboration with local residents and businesses. The main focus was to challenge residents to take part in the designing of their own environment and services.

Central to this objective was the work of OUTReach, OURCity's sub-project, which made it its mission to engage with a diverse range of individuals in the neighbourhood. We were particularly keen to include people with immigrant background, especially those who had not participated in communal activities in the wider community – people, who for the most part, had been described within the public sector and by service providers as 'hard to reach'.

OutReach team members made numerous enquiries and explorations into various communities via both formal and informal networks from the end of 2011 and throughout the following year. However, we were to soon realise that this demanded much more - sticking posters, distributing flyers and knocking on doors did not prove adequate to get the eyes and ears of people who had, by far, not been actively involved (or asked to be involved) in neighbourhood issues.

Despite having made some initial progress, we were still left with the feeling that we were not doing enough, as OURCity's design workshops had revealed that only a sprinkling number of residents with immigrant background wanted to participate in such planned community events.

Our separate successes in organising exclusive sessions with a group of Kurdish women and in getting a small group of Somali women to a design workshop, had provided us with more questions than answers.

Where were the rest of the people from immigrant background in the neighbourhood? Why were some people disengaged to the point of being invisible? Why, despite having lived alongside each other for many years, were diverse communities choosing not to allow themselves to get acquainted with the ethnically and culturally incongruent 'other'? Why were they not responding to us as 'practitioners' and 'academics', despite our good and clearly laid out intentions? And more importantly, how we were going to encourage diverse voices to spring up amidst the rubble of non-integration, when we clearly still had a lot more to learn about intercultural engagement? Our quest for social inclusion and empowerment had barely begun.

The opportunity arose when we were successful in gaining some funding through the Helsinki City's Personnel Centre Grant, providing support to Immigrant Associations for Capacity Building (more than 50 per of OURCity's members were from immigrant background).

Our initial aims were to co-design a set of tools to help us 'make better community connections' and establish 'more intercultural connectedness'. We wanted to create an

A-Z of good communication practices within a multicultural context which would help improve our capacity to engage with the intended target groups of our project.

Underlying these intentions was our paramount interest in providing accessible collaborative platforms from which people could safely talk about their 'barriers to participation'. However, time and funding limitations meant that we had to forgo this overarching ambition and to concentrate instead, on an initial small-scale survey looking at service users' engagement experiences.

We felt that if we could at least chart people's personal journeys in engaging with services, including their interface with professionals and practitioners, then we could gain some insights to our lack of success at attracting a more diverse group of participants to the design workshops in Meri-Rastila.

It is hoped that once the findings of the survey are published, more can be done in the area of user involvement and engagement for ethnic minorities. This is of course a long road to travel, but we are confident that we are making tracks by taking ourselves to the purportedly 'unreachable' and opening our eyes and ears to their diversities and emerging voices.

Along the way, we also hope to prove that labelling people 'hard to reach' is much too convenient and puts the blame of disengagement on the doors of people already struggling to make something of their lives as 'immigrants', 'refugees', or 'asylum seekers'

It is worth noting that in the context of this survey and in all our work, our approach to engagement is based on our understanding and whole hearted appreciation of the term 'seldom heard' which now replaces 'hard to reach' in the U.K. It is used to refer to those we are trying to reach, and whom we feel need to be listened to more emphatically.

'Seldom heard' is a relatively new term. It puts the spotlight on the 'whys' (or why not) and 'hows' of linking up with people of varying cultures and needs and of past failures to pay attention to diversity. The Social Institute for Excellence in the U.K pointed out in 2008, that the term "...stresses the responsibility of agencies to reach out to excluded people, ensuring that they have access to services and that their voices can be heard."

We hope that this is what we have managed to do through this small but significant survey. In one way or another, we know we can turn around and say out loud that we have tried to listen and that, our informants weren't after all "'elusive group of people hiding under rocks with hands over their ears.'" (Voice 4 Change, U.K). No, they were not 'hard to reach' at all!

Purpose of the survey:

- To find out about the experiences of individuals from immigrant backgrounds / minority communities in respect of their access to and use of the public services
- To find out about the challenges people from diverse cultural backgrounds could face when accessing public services
- To pave the way for a corresponding survey which examines the challenges faced by service providers in meeting the needs of multi-cultural service users
- To pave the way for further studies/research on equality and diversity in relation to service provision, service users' participation and engagement
- To pave the way for co-design workshops on user engagement & involvement

Methodology:

This is a qualitative survey focussing on the experiences of people from immigrant background using a range of public services. The services were not specifically named so that people were free to talk about any services relevant to the experiences they wished to highlight.

The survey was based on face-to-face interviews, using open-ended questions, conducted in a group and one-to-one situations. These were aimed to collect stories and evidence and to give the service users the freedom to elaborate on their personal accounts (and that of their family members) of using services available in Finland.

They could also choose to talk about other experiences that were not directly related to public services, but were nevertheless relevant in the context of work and social engagements which had impacted on their lives.

There are seven questions forming the two parts of the survey.

In the first part, informants were asked about their prior knowledge of the services they wanted to access, including how information was derived and what support they had received to help them engage with the services available.

The second part enabled them to talk about their experiences of the services, including their perceptions and views of what took place during their engagement with the service providers.

Lastly, they were asked to volunteer comments and suggestions about how they wanted things to be improved.

Informants:

16 people took part in the exercise. This included people of Russian, Kurdish, Somali, Greek and Argentinean origin, aged between 20 to 60 years old. (see Table 1 in the appendix)

The informants from the Kurdish, Russian and Somali communities volunteered to participate in response to information received about the survey from the Kurdish and Somali interpreters and from a community worker based in Meri-Rastila.

In the later stage of the survey, a third interpreter contacted the interviewer to offer her services, having come across the survey by word-of-mouth. In this instance, the interpreter provided two other informants from the Russian community.

For qualitative comparative purposes, two informants with academic background were included in the survey to try and identify if educational levels and professional background had an impact on the way services were given and received.

The majority of the respondents were women. The interpreters had informed the interviewer that it was easier to enlist women from their respective communities because they were mostly not in employment and that, under the right circumstances; they were more inclined to sharing their experiences compared to the men.

This was particularly true of the Kurdish and Somali communities, although it was noted that the only Somali woman interviewed was in employment. In addition, the three Russian women interviewed were also employed.

Data collection:

Informal approach:

Data was collected using an informal interviewing approach aimed to encourage freedom of expressions and ease of communication based on people's memories, interpretations and views of their experiences.

Personal and meaningful accounts of events were prompted by direct and indirect questions, posed in culturally-appropriate ways, and where needed, accompanied by relevant examples to illustrate the point further. This was considered important to enable the interviews to be as clear, personal, inclusive and as culturally adaptable as possible.

During the group interview with the Kurdish women for example, the interpreter had a deep understanding of the dynamics involved and allowed ample time for people to be mutually supportive and to discuss among themselves, as well as to question the interviewer further, about what was being asked. This was noticeably helpful for some individuals who were less vocal and needed more encouragement to open up.

Food and drinks were provided for the group and this created an atmosphere of conviviality which helped produce a highly interactive and candid interviewing session. It helped overcome some initial fears about disclosure.

The interviewer's extensive experience of community work, particularly in working with a diverse range of people including refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers in the U.K and the current OUTReach work with communities in Meri-Rastila, had ensured that the engagement experience between interviewer, interviewee/s and interpreter was conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. This was to have a significant impact on the quality of data collected.

Language:

From the start, language was considered a crucial component which was to determine the extent of people's ability and willingness to respond to the questions.

The levels of proficiency in the spoken Finnish language among the informants differed according to the respondent's length of stay in Finland and individual personal circumstances, including such factors as the level of education and family commitment. Some individuals for example, have had to prioritise earning a living upon arrival in Finland, settling into jobs that did not require Finnish language skills for several years, before managing to find the time to learn the language.

However, it was not so much the issue of Finnish language competency, as it was the question of personal preferences that determined the nature and outcomes of the interview. Despite their Finnish language skills, most informants wished to be spoken to and to express themselves in their respective mother tongues through interpreters.

Having the questions interpreted and responded to in native languages, lifted communication barriers associated with speaking in a second language. It gave the informants the confidence to be naturally expressive, thus ensuring that the data collected were accurate reflections of their memories, perceptions and views of events.

Language difficulties have been well documented as one of the stumbling blocks to survey participation among people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

"Non-response" (i.e. refusal to take part in a survey) "due to inability to provide the required information...is always higher among ethnic minorities. Difficulty with the survey language is the main reason why this form of non-response is higher among ethnic minorities." (Collecting Data among ethnic minorities in an International Perspective, Feskens, Hox, Lensvelt-Mulders and Schmeets, 2006)

The interpreters translated the questions in the respective Kurdish, Somali and Russian languages, listened to the answers and then reproduced them to the interviewer in the English language.

This three-way interaction did not in the least pose any difficulties. Instead, it proved helpful in that the interpreters were able to connect with the informants in culturally meaningful ways and were thus able to obtain information that would not have otherwise emerged had there been language and cultural constraints in the engagement process.

Neutrality:

The neutrality of the interviewer's position was important to the informants. For example, a Russian respondent had informed the interviewer that her friend had decided to pull out of the interview at the last minute for fear of reprisals for 'telling her terrible experiences'. At this point, it was important for the interviewer to explain her position as a community worker as well as to give a brief sketch of her own migrational background. Resultantly, at the end of the interview, this interviewee suggested that she would be able to encourage her 'reluctant friend' to participate.

"People worry that they will be unable to talk about difficult subjects without saying the wrong thing or offending people...."(Guidance on Meaningful Interaction, Communities & Local Government, UK. Crown Copyright 2009).

Translated words:

Using the services of interpreters is undoubtedly beneficial to data collection among multi-lingual group samples. However, it is worth pointing out that the interviewer's reliance on the interpreters' translated words meant that the recording of direct quotes in the data collection process was precluded, with the answers, coming as they were, from a secondary source.

This should be borne in mind when assessing the findings, although it is also worth noting that responses were double checked first with the interpreters and noted down by the interviewer. Where needed, clarifications were sought or questions simplified, expanded or repeated to facilitate data collection.

Tools of engagement:

Inevitably, this resulted in a protracted engagement. In collecting information from communities and neighbourhoods characterised by language and cultural diversity, efforts had to be made to accommodate anticipated communication barriers.

Issues such as people's unfamiliarity with survey participation and their corresponding distrust of 'outsiders' (i.e. those outside their network of family, friends and acquaintances), plus the practitioner's inadequate knowledge of the informants' cultures and histories were important considerations and had to be negotiated delicately by the interviewer.

All these demanded appropriate tools of engagement such as time, patience, empathy and a genuine interest in the people being interviewed on the part of the interviewer and interpreters alike – tools, as cited in the survey, as being in short supply in some areas of public service provision.

In addition, reinforcing the purpose and anonymity of the survey and informing informants that they would be kept in the loop about any post –survey consultative activities, were equally important and helpful tools that garnered trust and generated frank and vivid responses.

Data analysis and categorisation:

Notes from the interviews were analysed and categorised, based on the themes that emerged from the responses provided.

People's memories, interpretation and views of events related to their engagement with service providers and other significant encounters were identified by categorising the responses in the following categories:

1. Knowledge about services, rights and entitlements
2. Expectations about services
3. Factors contributing to positive perceptions of service engagement
4. Factors contributing to negative perceptions of service engagement
5. Expressing dissatisfaction – being or not being listened to
6. Specific issues of concern:
Perceived racism – linking discriminatory actions and disrespectful behaviour to racist inclinations
7. Suggestions for improvement

Findings:

Brief summary:

This survey has managed to open up an initial discussion that dealt with the essence of how people from diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicity received services.

The frank observations and opinions of individuals who recalled their positive and negative experiences have been invaluable in informing OUTReach on some of the barriers people faced and are continually facing when using services.

Speaking to people about their perceptions of what represented a good or bad service, we found that the main thrust of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction centred on communication issues.

In cases where people associated bad engagement experiences with poor communication, it was noted that this did not merely refer to the way in which people did not get clear explanations and information about services, rights and entitlements. It was much more than that.

Although the experience of not having easy access to information clearly impacted on the way they used or under-used services, a more significant factor for dissatisfaction was associated with how people perceived they were being received as 'distinct' service users loosely termed as 'immigrants' or 'foreigners'. Many informants spoke of their discomfort at making return visits because of their unpleasant memories of receiving 'unwelcoming' reception or confronting 'unfriendly' and 'harsh' professionals who did not treat them with respect.

Likewise, when people recalled good experiences, it was always the way in which staff and professionals extended their warmth and friendliness; plus their willingness to understand their limitations as service users with diverse needs that were remembered most.

The survey also wanted to explore, albeit, unscientifically, if service users who had a better command of the Finnish language and those who were professionals, such as the two academics invited to participate, were less likely to receive poor service or if they were confronted with negative attitudes at work.

From the interviews, this was found not to be the case. In fact being proficient in Finnish, working as a professional and having a number of years of lived experiences in Finland, did not make any difference, as it was pointed out by one informant that this did not insulate people from receiving poor quality service and experiencing prejudice at work.

Overall, the survey identified key areas which impacted on the understanding and perception of the quality of service that people from minority communities and immigrant background received. These are described below:

Getting to the Services

1. Knowledge about services, rights and entitlements

* Information, support or guidance received to enable access to services and entitlements.

People were asked about how they first found out about a service and if they were told about what rights and entitlements were available to them under different circumstances, such as unemployment, demise of spouses, disability and other special needs.

The common thread was that people did not get the bulk of their information through the official route, relying largely on a network of experienced service users within their close circles of friends and families.

- All the informants said that initial information about the availability and details of services, their rights and entitlements were derived from **friends, family** and their respective **network of people** who had better knowledge of the system because of their lived experiences.
- Questions referring to the receiving of information from the services themselves were answered with comments which indicated that **official information** were **not always available** and that if they were found, they were **not immediately understood** by the service users because of **language barriers, inaccessible formats** (e.g. not taking into account **illiteracy** among informants) and people's **lack of accumulated knowledge** of the Finnish systems.
- There were some suggestions that things were deliberately **not clearly defined** or **kept away** from most people. Informants indicated that they had to **work harder**

at finding out things because they were immigrants. They also agreed that the system was such that service users were **expected** to have **some prior knowledge** and important details were **not fully explained**. "They won't tell you everything. Like at the job center."

- Some informants spoke of their **frustrations** of having to go through **difficulties and hardships** in their lives because rights and entitlements to such things as support money and access to a doctor, as well as the rules regarding employment and learning Finnish were **not explained** to them – "You get penalised and your money is taken away because you don't know the rules and it makes life difficult."

These are some of their comments :

'No one told me anything.'

'Not letting people know what they are entitled to – it's bad. When you don't know the language, you don't know what to look for. You don't know what documents or information exist.'

'Most things are not told.'

'Why don't they make it easy to find out about things? After my husband died, I wanted to move out of the house, but nobody helped me.'

'I slowly found out myself.'

'You have to keep asking.'

'They won't tell you everything – especially the important things.'

'Really difficult – the laws concerning foreigners were unclear'.

'No. The information was always not clear. I came to Finland as a student. I had to get health insurance, but no one told me why it was recommended and what was the limit of the insurance that we can get from Finland.'

'In the early days, I went about with a dictionary. It was only a year and a half later when my child went to school, that they offered me an interpreter.'

'When I received permit for work, I was given a sheet of paper with clarification on what I had to do in case I had complaints about my job. Nobody explained to me about my rights. ...I survived, thanks to my knowledge of English.'

'At first because of the language, we did not get access to these things. I did not know how to make appointments or even where to go. But there were always people in the community who had done it and can show you the way to do things.'

'..you do get given information and papers to fill in, but in the end it's not easy if you don't speak Finnish well. I helped my parents a lot ...I was their interpreter, but it was not easy. Some things, your parents just don't want to discuss with you.'

'I have never really asked for help, even though I did not speak Finnish at first. I learnt and tried things myself. It was easier that way.'

'In those days there were hardly any translators. Housing Services did not have any interpreters at all, and Health had a few, but they were not always available. These days you can book on line, but you must know how to do it. And there are still people who don't know they can get interpreters.'

2. Expectations about services:

*Feelings and pre-conceived ideas about services when approaching/using services:

People were asked to reflect on their personal feelings and what they expected would happen whenever they were about to visit service providers. Overall, people did not have good expectations.

- **Negative expectations** were recorded from the responses of 12 informants. These were tied to **previous unpleasant experiences**. It was noted that people **expected to face difficulties** before engaging with a service because they had encountered and remembered the **unease** they felt for **perceiving** themselves as being seen as **distinct service users** – i.e. '**foreigners**' or '**immigrants**' and consequently experiencing being '**treated differently**' because of this. This was evidenced by people's recollections of being **poorly received by** staff based on **communications** that came across as '**unfriendly**' and that which bore undertones of **disinterest** in the way information were **not spontaneously given**. People talked about the challenges of having to **prize out information** whilst struggling with language difficulties and of **staff's reluctance** to facilitate their enquiry. (see informants' comments)
- People's expressed feelings of **discomfort** and **fear** or **reluctance** to use a service were based on their own memories of feeling as '**as if they were making a nuisance of themselves**' for turning up to ask to be served in the first place. This was based on how they felt **they were being perceived and the negative assumptions** (expressed or unexpressed) that were being made about them by those they came into contact with – from frontline staff to the professionals attending to them, including doctors, nurses and social workers. These assumptions manifested in the way **unnecessary questions** were asked and **unsavoury remarks** made about them vocally and in body language (see informants' comments)
- Informants mostly reported that they **did not have the confidence or anticipation** that they would be treated well before using a service. '**Not being treated well**' centred around distinct memories of having to work hard at making their **needs understood**; at finding their concerns and requests **dismissed** by professionals and at **not achieving** anything out of their visits.
- Informants also **did not feel good** about approaching a service because of the uneasy **first point of contact** experience. They **felt awkward** and **uncomfortable** about coming face-to-face with people whom they perceived as not having the desire to welcome them. This, they said was manifested in **blank facial expressions** and the **absence of** sociable **greetings** at the first exchange. They also highlighted the **emotional vacuum** they experienced within the context of the engagement. (see section on Negative experiences)

These are some of their comments:

'Always expect to get good service, but sometimes, some services separate people – you feel it from their attitudes, the sarcasm and how they won't tell you things.'

'For every service you approach, you do feel you are an immigrant. You have to fight hard....'

'How you feel depends on how much you know. I know my rights.... but as I have had bad experiences before, I know it's not always easy.'

'You are always aware that you will be treated differently. In every service, outwardly, in front of your face, the staff seems to treat you properly. But whether or not you get what you are asking for is another story. They say they would help, but they don't really do it. They send you a letter later to make it difficult for you to get things, to get what you are entitled to! They never forget the war.'

'...always the feeling that you are being a problem – they are thinking, why are you here?'

'The staff look at you differently as if to say you're here to take money from the country. They also think, why is this foreigner here?'

'I never believe that I will get the support I need when I use a service. I don't expect much. If a Finnish person asks, she gets more help.'

'Afraid. Not confident'.

'...indirectly often bad service relates to how the autochthonous people in the host society perceive and react towards me as a foreigner that makes a big difference regarding the service they will give me. For instance a smiley good morning when we start our contact with a service provider would be appreciated. But it is not something the Finnish service providers find worth doing for foreigners, or so it seems. But then I understood that it is not personal or because I am a foreigner – most Finns don't extend this kind of civilities to each other.'

'Nervous..scared that I may have to delegate with someone who doesn't speak English'.

'Although overall, I have no problems getting information, I feel that I am treated differently. The first time I used the Health service, I was first of all asked about my nationality. I did not see why this was important, and when I got the application form, there was nothing in it that asked for this.'

'..when a Finn gets bad service, they might not feel as vulnerable as a foreigner...'

'I have had some bad experiences with the health service, so if I have to go to a normal hospital, I call my mum and cry.'

'I have to make an extra effort if I want a service, but that is also my choice.'

In contrast, four other informants did not readily express negative sentiments with regards to their expectations of impending engagements or visits. This however did not mean they had good expectations either.

Rather, they felt they could not expect the worse because, along with the bad experiences, they had remembered at least some positive ones as well and remained hopeful that these pleasant experiences would be repeated in future engagements.

- The four informants said they did not have any expectations. They highlighted the fact that it was '**people who gave bad service**, not the service itself', saying that it all depended on **who was dealing with you** – a statement that was later concurred by most of the informants.
- They indicated that because their **experiences were 'mixed'** (sometimes good, sometimes bad,) they often had no pre-conceived ideas before a visit.
- One of the informants who had Finnish secondary education also indicated that **knowing your rights** were **essential** to getting a good service. However, the same respondent also indicated that fluency in the Finnish language did not necessarily preclude you from being treated differently or unfairly by some professionals.

These are some of their comments:

'I am okay. I know I have rights. I went to school here. That helps.'

'I don't have any expectations, or any bad feelings.'

'No information, No expectation. Just nerves'.

Using the Services – views and experiences:

3. Factors contributing to positive perceptions of service engagement:

*People's accounts of encounters with services providers that were seen as helpful or good and/or had good results. Other experiences outside public service provision were also recorded.

When people talked about their positive experiences, first and foremost, they generally referred to the positive attitudes of the staff. This seemed to be the immediate response when recounting a good service.

Inevitably, it was issues relating to **communication** that were firstly cited as important in determining the quality of services. This was recorded as being reflected in some of the following ways:

1. the way they were **pleasantly** received by **frontline staff** and others, including doctors and nurses
2. the **facial expressions** of staff – smiling, friendly and welcoming
3. **polite** and **efficient** staff

4. staff's **willingness to listen** to them as service users with language difficulties
5. staff's ability to show **understanding** and **patience** and their **willingness** to try and **accommodate** their general or specific needs
6. **employers trusting** and treating an employee well

A positive experience is also related to **good access** and **outcomes** such as:

1. having been **given an interpreter**
2. having been **referred** to a medical **specialist**
3. having been given easy **access** to a **female doctor**
4. having been assigned a **new doctor or social worker** after a **complaint**
5. having been **supported** by a **helpful nurse/staff** at the hospital/health centre
6. having been **supported** to **get a flat** to accommodate the family
7. having been **provided special support** for a family member/child with **special needs**
8. having been helped by social workers to get a **child to join the family** here
9. having been shown **respect for their cultures and religion** by schools and day care centres
10. having received **good health care** during **pregnancy**
11. having been given **choices** in the health service through **websites**
12. having been **found a job** by a social worker
13. having access to a **good school and kindergarten** for children
14. having access to **libraries** with books in **own language** for children and adults
15. having access to **privacy** - KELA now having **private rooms** for clients

These are some of their comments:

'..the staff (KELA) is getting friendlier.'

'We don't get served pork (at school). We get two days holiday for Eid celebrations.'

'Generally most schools and day centres try to accept that you have different things because of your culture and religion.'

'Overall, services are okay, but you have to know what you are asking for.'

'My husband was already living here. When I came with my two girls, we got a

flat.'

'As a professional in Finland the Elaketurvakeskus staff service was always polite and efficient to me. The public health care system has been pretty good considering that most of the reception staff don't speak English or they say they don't.'

'Schools, kindergartens, libraries are the best and I love them. ..They lent us a place to co-ordinate a reading group for Spanish speaking kids.'

'Once I got into the system, it was quite easy to get support.'

'I did not have any problems with regards to my cultural or religious background once I could use the services.'

4. Factors contributing to negative perceptions of service engagement:

*People's accounts of their encounters with service providers which were seen as unhelpful or bad and/or had poor results or that did not yield any results at all. Other experiences outside public service provision were also recorded.

All informants were able to cite examples of negative experiences, which not only included their unpleasant interface with indifferent or unsympathetic staff and professionals, but also for some, the way in which they were being treated within their working environment by employers and colleagues.

As with the positive experiences, when people talked about their negative experiences, first and foremost, they talked about the attitudes of those serving or engaging with them and the quality of the interaction, which did not make them feel good or gave them the impression that they were getting /going to get a good service or good relations at work.

Communication Issues:

The following is a brief summary of people's negative observations of the way they were being talked or responded to, which impacted on their personal experiences.

1. the '**unfriendly**' and '**harsh**' tones in which some doctors communicated with some patients
2. a doctor making a **negative assumption** about a patient
3. **poor communication** by some doctors – not looking at the patient when speaking
4. some doctors being **dismissive** of patients' ailments
5. a physiotherapist being **unsympathetic** to a physical disability during therapy and making **disparaging remarks** about the patient' condition
6. social workers being **dismissive, using unhelpful language** to individuals seeking help
7. having to face '**desensitised, patronising and self-righteous staff**' at the job center

8. frontline staff **not friendly**, **emotionless** and **unhelpful**
9. the police being **dismissive** and **refusing to help** when called upon to intervene in a threatening domestic situation
10. work colleagues **not friendly** or **inclusive**
11. work colleagues **tease** and **insult** on **racial grounds**

These are some of their comments:

'I had a bad experience with a doctor once. Before I could open my mouth, to tell her my problems, she accused me of being in the habit of taking sick leave. I was very offended and left immediately.'

'The staff at the job centre are not always helpful. They just want to give you the worst jobs first. Sometimes I got sent on work experience that was of no use to me.'

'The doctor treated me in a very unfriendly and hard way. He told me not to ask questions and he never looked at me when he talked.'

'My husband died in Finland recently. The social worker got angry when I asked for help and about my entitlements.'

' You can see it on their faces. they also think, why is this foreigner here?'

'Social services turned me down when I asked for support because I was out of work. Instead they asked me what I did with the money I received from them five months ago. I did not get help because I did not beg. They expected me to beg.'

'The Police dealing with immigrants 9-10 years ago was not nice at all. The unemployment office is one of the most horrible services for immigrants. The staff is just desensitised, patronising, self-righteous and although I can make many excuses for the difficulty of their work, I still think the way they provide their service is not nice.'

'These days however sick I am, I avoid going to see the doctor. I prefer to go to the emergency unit. The woman doctor I saw once was very harsh in the way she spoke to me. She was horrible.'

'Once a doctor I met for only 4 minutes told me to get a caesarean. I told her in my country for doing this difficult decision, we consult another doctor. She called someone and said "I have here a patient from Spain who does not want a caesarean." She was very rude because I was not following her orders.'

'I do speak good Finnish and am fluent. But when talking about certain parts of my body, I need some explanations. So I politely stopped the conversation and asked for clarifications. It is very seldom that after one question, the doctor would continue looking at me. They address my husband (who is Finnish) as if I were not there, or the body was my husband's and the child not mine.'

'I wished they showed some feelings – don't behave like robots'.

'The physiotherapist had the wrong attitude towards me...he would ask why I was sitting down or using a wheelchair after surgery when he knew I had physical problems.'

'When I said I was feeling cold he, (the physiotherapist) would turn to me and said – well I'm not cold!'

'The working place is tough for an immigrant. When I first worked as a casual worker, nobody welcomed me on my first day at work, Instead, they insulted me in Finnish, thinking I did not understand the language. I was stressed from the very first day.'

Unsatisfactory/poor/unresolved outcomes:

A negative experience is also related to unsatisfactory outcomes as a result of people not receiving the solutions or advice in relation to their problems, be it health, housing employment or financial support, when they engaged with some professionals at various services.

In this respect, it was noted that the majority of the experiences deemed negative and were recorded as having the most impact on the way people viewed the service itself were related to the health service.

Several informants indicated that did not feel that they were being listened to regarding their ailments and that their health complaints had continued to impact on their daily lives and well-being, despite having made repeated visits to the health centers. Some also reported that they had to fight hard to get the treatment they wanted, or even to get to see a doctor in the first place.

In addition, there were also comments about unsatisfactory outcomes for informants seeking or wanting to seek housing and financial support, as well as from those seeking employment.

The following is a brief summary of people's account of service user-engagement which had resulted in poor outcomes or which did not provide any outcomes at all. Underlying these accounts were feelings of dissatisfaction, disappointment and unhappiness at remembering that they were not 'being listened to' or 'taken seriously.'

1. long-term physical problems/**ailments not** being **diagnosed** by doctor
2. over-prescribing of **painkillers** by doctors, **not investigating** the real cause of the health problems/complaints
3. **not getting** any **advice** regarding housing for young people
4. police **refusing to help** in a **threatening domestic** situation
5. staff at the job centre **not helping** with **job searches**
6. **not getting the support** needed from **social services**, including financial support, advice on rights and entitlements

7. having to make **several visits** to social services/housing services, being given **countless forms** before a request for application can be made
8. an informant **no longer visiting the health service** because doctors continuously gave her **painkillers** which **did not help** her situation
9. **not getting access** to a service in the first place, because people **did not know their rights**

These are some of their comments:

'The doctor said it was normal to feel the pain I was feeling. But I have been having this physical problem for a long time. He did not give me any medicine.'

'I have a severe problem with the left side of my body, yet I have been prescribed nothing but painkillers. This has been going on since 2010. The doctor says I have not got a problem, but I know I have. It has affected my life. I am depressed.'

'It is not always easy to see a doctor, the nurses make it difficult for you to get an appointment, so if you are a new immigrant you probably get sent home and you won't know that you have the right to demand to see a doctor.'

'I needed advice (on housing) but there was no youth worker to help me.'

'KELA keeps on asking me to find a job. I am alone. My husband died two years ago in Finland. I have my children to look after. I don't understand most things. ...How can I get help? Nobody tells me anything'.

'..I don't go and see the doctors anymore. Nowadays I look after myself. Doctors just want to send you home with the same treatment, the same old painkillers.'

'Many years ago, I had a problem which was family-related. I went to the police for help, but I was told to deal with it myself.'

'I had problems getting housing. I went to the youth centres, but it was just a case of filling in many forms. I needed advice, but there was no youth worker to help me. Money is always a problem yet it's never easy to get government housing for young people. In the end it was easier for me to find a private landlord. It's tough.'

'I think the worst experience I have had is with the job centre. They were not that helpful there. They didn't help me to find a job. I found it myself'.

5. Expressing dissatisfaction – being or not being listened to

50 percent of the informants have made a complaint and most were related to what was perceived as 'discriminatory practices' and 'unfavourable treatments' dished out by doctors, social workers, and employers whom they believed to be 'racist towards them as 'immigrants' or 'foreigners.'

The eight informants who said that they had made complaints had different outcomes.

Three did not see their complaints being taken seriously and did not hear anything back after the complaint forms were submitted. The reasons for the complaints were related to their feeling let down, even offended, by professionals such as doctors and social worker during consultation.

A respondent lodged a complaint against his employer and sought help from the trade union, only after enduring a long period of hardship due to a work-related incident. He had not been informed or assisted by his employer to seek medical help or to apply for insurance and the case remains unresolved.

However, the five other informants who had reported to having made complaints indicated that their complaints were dealt with and the issues were resolved. This included being given a new practitioner and a social worker, getting an apology for being wrongfully charged and getting a legal fee revoked.

Some people made more than one complaint, and reported to only getting one of the complaints listened to. One person in fact received a letter from the public authority he was complaining to telling him off for complaining in the first place.

Overall, most people did not know where to go to or how to proceed or were simply too afraid of the repercussions. One expressed the view that as foreigners, they were expected to grin and bear it and even if they did wish to complain, there was nowhere they felt they could go to and felt comfortable with the decision to express their dissatisfactions.

Even informants who had complained reported to being unaware of the process to start with and that they were given the information or assistance on how to lodge a complaint from friends and acquaintances.

In addition, some expressed the fact that they did not have faith in the system and believed that a complaint would not change anything for them.

These are their comments:

'No, I never complain. I try not to criticise openly. We are strangers in this country. There are certain unwritten rules we need to obey. We are patient people. We try to overcome our difficulties by ourselves. We talk and cry together. We support each other as a community. So we don't complain.'

'It is always hard for immigrants to complain as there is no information on your rights to complain, or if there are, we won't know how to get them.'

'You need to read between the lines. There is nothing that tells me how to complain when I need to. I have never complained even though there are reasons to do so. I don't believe it will change.'

'I asked to see another doctor and was given one. This other doctor listened to me and he told me how to complain about the previous doctor. He gave me a form. But after handing over the form, I heard nothing back. Nobody contacted me.... I felt like they were not taking my complaint seriously. I never heard back from them.'

'Luckily, I had a very good neighbour who used a wheelchair and understood what I was going through. She helped me to write a letter to complain about the physiotherapist. The physiotherapist said that

I was mentally ill. But I won...the social services gave me another physiotherapist.'

'No confidence to complain. Nobody will listen to me. Everybody is the same.'

'I did complain when I was wrongly charged to pay a fee that I shouldn't have to and while I told the police this, she said I was wrong. They apologized to me when I went back to collect the money, which was a hassle of course. But of course immigrants have all the time in the world don't we?'

'With a friend's help, I complained about the social worker. Her boss came to see me at home and she agreed that I should get support.'

'We complained about some problems in the delivering of furniture. It took 10 months to get them.'

'I had received trauma at work and nobody explained to me how to apply for medical help. More than that nobody explained to me that it was an insurance case. My boss knew about that, but he hid this information from me on how to apply for that. Only three months later when I applied for trade union help, I was explained properly about my rights in this case. Because I lost time my trauma was not recognised as insurance case.'

6. Specific Issues of Concern : Perceived Racism

Linking discriminatory actions or behaviour to racist inclinations

Although the survey had focussed on people's experiences of accessing the public services, it also provided an opportunity for some informants to air out old gripes relating to the way they perceived racism as having had an impact on their lives.

Recollections of incidents which were deemed discriminatory to individuals and/or their family members both at the point of receiving services and at school and the workplace, were produced in the course of the interview as people's memories about specific incidents outside the sphere of service provision were jogged by our enquiry into negative service-user engagements.

It needs pointing out that in recording the informants' responses to questions about unpleasant or bad experiences, in no way were the interviewees guided to make the links between those incidents deemed unfair or disrespectful towards them with presumptions about people's racist inclinations. There were no direct questions about racism or prejudice in the survey.

Instead, these links were voluntarily made by respective informants who wanted to share their stories and personal journeys of living in Finland as immigrants or as one informant puts it, 'as strangers'.

For some people, there were deep-seated anguish about people's treatment of them as 'foreigners', particularly when this had resulted in difficulties in their daily lives. Among others, comments were received about missed opportunities relating to securing jobs and getting compensation at work.

It was particularly noted that the Russian informants were the most vocal and had the most number of examples relating to 'perceived racism'. They spoke of their frustrations and unhappiness for being treated as 'second class citizens' because of their ethnicity.

This was cited as being linked to Finland's political and historical past. Informants of Russian ethnicity were particularly at pains to point out that there was prevalent prejudice towards them and that they were discriminated against at work and 'stereotyped' because of people's entrenched feelings about the Finnish-Russian war.

"At work, you get teased or people are just sarcastic to you. When you tell them to stop, they say they can't help it, it's something deeply rooted in them, something they learnt from their mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers." (a Russian informant)

This had impacted on their access to information regarding their rights at work and in getting good quality service. It had also affected other areas of their lives (see informants' comments).

Views expressed relating to 'perceived racism' were mostly made in respect of particular circumstances which some informants indicated had adversely impacted on their lives in the following ways:

1. having to make decisions to **leave work**
2. having **missed out compensations** related to work injury or trauma
3. having been **delayed** to take up a **Finnish language** course which impacted on **employment chances**
4. having been restricted to staying at home and experiencing **depression**
5. **inability to observe cultural** and **religious practices** reasonably at work
6. having being **turned down** for jobs commensurate with **qualification** and professional experience
7. having to endure emotional **pressures** and **stress at work**
8. having to **change surnames**
9. having to **avoid** going to see a **doctor**
10. having to suffer **hardship** due to **loss of financial support** as a result of being **illiterate**
11. having to suffer **financial hardship** as a result of company's biased and unsympathetic policy on refusing employees the right to consult doctors who speak their language
12. having **kept on probation** unfairly at work
13. having to endure the **humiliation** of **not** being **addressed to directly** during consultation
14. having to cope with emotional **struggles** with a daughter who continues to experience **identity crisis** related to previous **negative experiences at school**
15. having been **wrongly charged** for an offence

These are their comments:

'I had a bad experience at the job centre when I tried to apply to join a Finnish language class last year. They kept sending me back, saying that I had the wrong documents, but it was not the case. I knew I was right because a local Finnish community worker told me what they were asking for was not necessary and that I was doing the right thing. I felt that there was discrimination there because of who I am. This experience really upset me, because I ended up applying late and because of this I could not learn Finnish. I stayed at home for five months doing nothing. I was really upset and depressed. The staff at the job centre were arrogant.'

'...the most terrible thing for me is seeing my own daughter not wanting to show she is Russian in the open. I would like her to be more Russian - she does not want to speak Russian when she is walking outside with me. She says she can't help it. It's psychological. You see, from a small age she was taught at school that Russians were bad people. My daughter was told by her teachers that her mother could not force her to speak Russian. She changed her name. She is now 26 and we still argue about these things. She understands my point of view, but she still pretends to be Finnish.'

'I had a foreign surname then, and so I changed it because I was finding it difficult to find a job and get good service with a Russian name.'

'All my family and most of my friends have also changed their names, sometimes not just the surname, but the first names as well. My children have found it helped them at university and in life in general. Most of the Russian friends have changed their names. The benefit of changing your name is that you get better treatment. Even my Finnish teacher did this for the benefit of her kids.'

'I think the woman doctor I saw once was racist. She did not smile, and she was very harsh, the way she spoke to me. These days, however sick I am I avoid going to see the doctor. I prefer to go the emergency unit. I have done that sometimes when it gets bad, but in the end, they tell you to go and see your doctor.'

'They told me many times that I should go and learn Finnish. I tried, but it's hard. I have never been to school. I cannot read and write. So I did not want to go. Because of this I could not get support for my children. The social worker finally said to me that if I had problems about going to school, I should go and see a doctor.'

'Another relevant issue is that whenever I went to see a doctor (when I was pregnant or with a child getting a serious chronic disease), they do not look at me while explaining something if I am with my Finnish husband. They always look at him.'

'I have been cleaning homes for a long time. Most people trust you with their keys and know that you are a good worker, as I have been told many times that people seem to think foreigners do their jobs properly. But that's as far as it goes.'

'My son-in law is Turkish. He used to be unfairly treated at work at first, but then his boss apologised one day because he said he was good worker.'

'There is a lot of racism in this country. You only have to read the Russian blogs. Here people talk freely about the difficulties they face in their everyday

lives. I notice that when a person does not know the system, especially if they are new, they are really dissatisfied and unhappy.'

'Some services pretend they don't know what you're looking for or that they don't understand you even though you speak Finnish.'

'I have seen my children being treated unfairly a lot. My daughter faces more problems than my son because she has a Russian accent while my son doesn't have one because he was very little when we came here.'

'To give you an example, my daughter has been interviewed over ten times at work and is still kept on probation. Her managers are happy with her work but they say she is over-educated. They are afraid of this. So they keep her on probation. They ask her stupid questions like, "do you want more kids?". She's very unhappy because she has been with the company for over two years. She can't plan holidays, or anything.'

'If you are Russian, it means you go about as if you have a stamp on your forehead. We are stigmatised. Racism is rife, but here it is not recognised, not when you happen to be Russian. All the negative attitudes towards us means we don't feel good when we use public services or when we go to work. But somehow racism is only seen in terms of black and white here.'

'I am not happy that despite being a qualified child psychologist from Russia, I could not get a job in this area easily. Many times my husband pointed out to advertisements for this position, but the answer was always the same – no vacancies. I am a kindergarten teacher now, but it has taken a long time to get this job. Before this, I wrote around 147 applications and only got 5 replies, all negative. I don't understand, I could have offered support to Russian immigrant children with emotional problems.'

'I was accused of incompetence unfairly by my colleagues at the nursery. I disagreed and complained to the principal who took their side. It was not right. I knew I was always professional. I knew the Finnish language and children's songs well. I was stressed. In the end I threatened with legal action, and that changed their attitudes. Now it is so much better because there is a team of people with multi-cultural background at work. I get support from them.'

'Negative experience was connected mainly with my work, when the attitude of the leadership was as if I belonged to the lowest cast of working people, who was not supposed to ask any questions and especially to ask about rights which were mentioned in the work agreement.'

'My boss did not tell me about my rights when I faced trauma at work. I don't understand why nobody told me things. I went to the trade union, but it was too late to get compensation. I left my work because I am not able to work because of the trauma. It took a lot of energy and I lost money.'

'A lot of Russian speakers who work as cleaners in one particular company were not allowed to see a Russian doctor. They don't accept sick leave from a Russian doctor, even though the doctor is from a government hospital. They refused to pay you sick leave if you did this. This caused a lot of problem for me and it was expensive for me to go to the company doctor which was far away from my home.'

'At work, sometimes I find it difficult to practise my religion and cultures. For example, I could not get the breaks I needed to fit in the fasting schedules during the fasting month. I have no choice.'

7. Informants' suggestions for improvements:

Communication & Cultural Awareness:

Generally, people were concerned about communication issues - how they were received when asking to be served, how (or if) they were being **listened to** and taken seriously by professionals and if they were **being judged** - were important and had impacted on their **well-being** and state of happiness.

One respondent even went as far to demand that 'they (professionals serving her) should **not be robots.**'

There was a suggestion of intercultural training being extended to include trips overseas to for staff to experience different cultures.

Another suggestion was related to the training of doctors and nurses in inter-personal communication. '**They need to be trained to shake hands and look at the eyes of immigrants.** In Finland doctors study too much mathematics and little about human factors.'

Applying some **human-centred design** in the health system, it was suggested could also enable the system to be more humane its approach.

There was also a suggestion to give better **training to interpreters**, so that they could also play the role of advocates/facilitators.

A young person suggested that there should be more youth workers involved with immigrant youngsters. He cited the **absence of youth workers** to work specifically with young people from ethnic minority communities, were impacting on the latter's health and well-being, saying that whilst many suffer depression, they were afraid to seek medical help.

He emphasised the need for professionals to respond to their diverse needs. 'It is important that they were **listened to**, to know and **understand** the problems they face as immigrants.'

Information:

Informants wanted to receive information about services in a more **simplified and direct** way, which understood their limitations with language and their lack of knowledge of the Finnish systems.

Many felt that there were 'many **unanswered questions** for foreigners and that things remained **unclear** for a **long time.**' Some people said that even though they could finally find out about things, information mostly came in 'bits, here, there and everywhere.'

There were suggestions for a central place for information, provided in different languages and formats.

Complaints:

Questions were raised about the channels of complaints. There were concerns that there was no neutral person or agency which people could **complain to in safety** and with ease and confidence.

Recommendations:

This survey has managed to record people's views on service provisions. By sharing their experiences with us, they have enabled us to make some recommendations in order to facilitate and improve their engagements with service providers.

However, in order to get a fuller and wider picture of service provisions and issues relating to equality, inclusion and empowerment, there also needs to be an analysis of how professionals and practitioners provided services.

Central to this would be to provide discussions on the challenges faced by service providers in meeting the ever-changing needs of an ever-growing multi-cultural population. It is important to acknowledge this side of the equation of public services - that professionals and practitioners too, need to have their say.

It is evident from this survey that we must start from the premise that ultimately, it is people and their relationships that determine the quality of service provisions and their impact on everyday lives.

Such things as the day-to-day negotiations and confrontations with diversity and people's willingness (or unwillingness) to make more room for understanding differences require effective tools of engagement such as time, commitment as well adequate resources in order to make service provision fair and inclusive.

These recommendations have emerged from the survey:

1. More needs to be done to **empower people to talk** – this means that outreach activities need to be supported in order that facilitators, interpreters and key people from within diverse communities can work together to conduct more in-house dialogues and training. These would be undertaken with clear and careful considerations of those **barriers** that impact on people's ability to **engage** and be **active citizens**.
2. Once individuals are confident to have their voices heard from within their respective communities, they should be **facilitated** to take part in **intercultural events**. Ethnically-based groups or associations that are exclusive to their own members, should be encouraged to engage with other groups with the help of facilitators and key community persons.
3. **Collaborative workshops** that will eventually result in **co-designing services** should be established between the **service users** and **service providers**, driven by the **needs** and **challenges** faced by both sides.
4. **Other ways** of providing **information** should be explored. It is obvious that despite the existence of information banks such as Infopankki - <http://www.infopankki.fi/> and central services like Virka <http://www.virka.fi/en/info/english> , they are not always accessible to everyone, as there does not seem to be an awareness of these services among the informants.
5. The findings of the survey should be available to service providers and service users. They should be used to generate more discussions and create events on facilitating **intercultural connectedness** and **combating racism**.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that this small survey will inspire more work into understanding the diversities that have now characterised the streets, buildings and landscapes of Finland.

We are grateful for and very much stimulated by the experience of listening to a small group of people, whose narratives shall remain invaluable in the study of diversity, equality and inclusion.

Although the sixteen people interviewed were in no way representative of the true ethnic make-up of Helsinki, they had, nevertheless, in their own words, provided some insights into what service providers and city planners should be looking at when planning and delivering services for all.

The survey has also provided with us some initial answers as to why those who were 'seldom heard' had not found it easy to engage not just with public services but with the wider communities on the whole, including non-governmental agencies working in the area of inclusion and integration.

It is all too easy to say that people of immigrant background are generally 'uninterested' in integrating and becoming activate citizens. However, it is harder to try and spend time and energy to find out the reasons for this 'disengagement'. After all, ensuring inclusion in services is not just about providing equal services to all, but also about recognising people's diverse needs which impact on the way services are being accessed or not accessed; used or under-used and on whether they are received well or poorly by minority communities.

Thus, mindfulness about issues of equal access and opportunities must be borne out of an understanding of what it means to provide services that include the already largely excluded minorities. People can be excluded from services or activities not because they are not entitled to them, but because the barriers they face may prevent access or impact on the quality of their engagement and involvement.

Public services can be non-inclusive by its very nature of not understanding diversities, not by the fact that they are unavailable to a comparatively small group of users who have come to live in Finland. Moreover, assuming that everyone can read and write, that everyone should be able to speak a common language, that everyone is confident to use the services available to them, or that everyone knows they have equal rights, does not guarantee that everyone will get the service they deserve.

Equally important too, is for services not adopt the easy option of thinking that immigrants and foreigners are a homogenous group of people.

In the words of a Kurdish informant, "Everybody says we, as immigrants want the same things. But we are all not the same. We have different problems, different situations."

Can it be true then that "Equality does not mean treating everyone the same"?(Baroness Carston, 2007)?

It can, and it should be, because, as Baroness Carston further pointed out "Equality must embrace not only just fairness but also inclusivity."

Appendix
Table 1

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

A Survey by, OUTReach, OURCity's sub-project, to record the views and experiences of individuals with immigrant background in relation to their access to and use of public services

Demographic Profile of Interviewees

TOTAL NO. OF INTERVIEWEES	16
GENDER	
Female	13
Male	3
AGE	
20-40	6
41-60	9
Undisclosed	1
ETHNICITY	
Kurdish	8
Somali	2
Russian	4
Greek	1
Argentinean	1
LANGUAGE	
Finnish (varying levels of proficiency)	8
Kurdish	8
Somali	2
Russian	4
English	4
Spanish	1
Greek	1
NUMBER OF YEARS IN FINLAND	
Below 3 years	1
3+ - 5 years	2
5+ - 10 years	4
10+ - 20 years	5
20 years and above	4
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Employed	8
Not Employed	8

OUTReach

OURCity Take Part! Design! Suunnittele! Osallistu!

A part of World Design Capital-Helsinki 2012



City of Helsinki

Personnel Centre's Grant
for Immigrant Associations Capacity Building

Name: (optional)..... Gender..... .. Age..... Ethnicity.....
Language/s..... How long have you lived in Finland? Job

Before Using a Service/Services:

1. Did anyone tell you about the following? If so who?

a) your rights and entitlements

b) how to make appointments, get help

c) how to get extra support if you cannot speak Finnish/Swedish, if you have a disability or if you cannot read and write?

Your Experiences of Using a Service/Services:

2. Can you tell us about how you feel and your expectations when approach/visit a service?

3. Can you tell us of any positive experiences for you/your family when using a service?

4. Can you tell us of any negative experiences or difficulties for you/your family when using a service?

Your Experiences of Using a Service/Services:

5. Have you ever made a complaint or felt you needed to complain about a service?
What happened?

6. Have you ever felt that you could not get the most out of a service because your
cultural/religious needs were not met or understood by the service/staff?

7. Have you got any other comments including suggestions that may help improve
your access to services?

THANK YOU

OUTReach

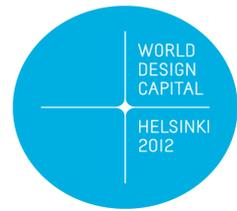
OURCity Take Part! Design! Suunnittele! Osallistu!

A part of World Design Capital-Helsinki 2012



City of Helsinki

Personnel Centre's Grant
for Immigrant Associations Capacity Building



**Do you have something to say about
the services you receive?**

**Do you want to tell us about your
personal experiences?**

As part of our OUTReach work and with the support of the Finnish Immigration Department, we are conducting a small survey to find out about the experiences and opinions of diverse communities in relation to public services.

If you would like to have your voices heard, we would like to hear from you.

We hope this will be useful for you and will help you get a better service.

Call us if you wish to take part in the questionnaire.

TEL: DINA FUAD-LUKE – 041 708 2410



OURCITY- PROJECT ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO TAKE PART AND DESIGN MERI-RASTILA INTO AN OPEN AND VIBRANT SUBURB AS PART OF THE HELSINKI DESIGN CAPITAL YEAR - 2012.

The OURCITY project is now drawing to an end as is the World Design Capital Helsinki year. To mark this two exhibitions will be held. The first in Stoa, showing the outcomes of the entire OURCity project between 08.11.2012 – 01.12.2012, and the second, a smaller exhibition showing the Alternative Master Plan in Laituri between 30.10.2012 – 10.11.2012.

The OURCITY project which commenced in autumn 2011 has used the theme *Let's make a better city together* has worked in direct collaboration with local residents to create new ideas to develop Meri-Rastila in Vuosaari into a more communal and lively part of town.

To do this, the team behind the OURCITY project, the MEIDÄN ourcity ry association which was founded in spring 2010 by seven like-minded individuals from different cultural backgrounds has networked itself with the officials, businesses and community organisations working in Meri-Rastila and eastern Helsinki, in particular Pro-Meri Rastila Liike and Meri-Rastilan Aluefoorumi.

The OURCITY project consisted of three sub-programs that through various media promoted Meri-Rastila as a diverse suburb and East Helsinki as a culturally rich part of Helsinki. OURColours did this through Fashion and Everyday dress, OURCourse through Education and Design and OUTReach through Inter-cultural Dialogue and Community Engagement. The teams coordinating each program were different but members participated in and shared their skills across all sub-programs.

The OURColours event which consisted of a cat walk style fashion show, music and dance performances and market hall type tents offering a wide diversity of multicultural items and clothing was held on 15.05.2012.

The OURCourse project was a cross-university programme where each department integrated into its syllabus a course that focused on the issues facing Meri-Rastila. During the first semester, the Laurea University of Applied Sciences- Business Department- Design Thinking course carried out user driven research to create innovative concepts for new services in Meri-Rastila. At Helsinki University - Geography Department the OurCity – A Workshop on Public Space focused on creating ideas for potential intercultural public spaces for use by young and adult men. At the Aalto University Department of Architecture the Local Development and Globalisation Course, which ran between January 2012 and May 2012 used the results of the other courses as background material for their study of local and regional development in a European and global context with Meri-Rastila being a case study area.

The OUTreach project involved the use and development of the suggestions and experiences obtained through the other projects as well as the creation of strong collaborative links with local residents and organisations. The Alternative Master-Plan project which ran between January and June 2012 was a direct result of this collaboration. This project, which involved Architects as well as students and professors from Aalto University and Helsinki University, included a number of planning workshops held in February and March. In addition the OUTreach project was involved in and gained feedback at the Rastori event in Meri-Rastila on 18.05.2011 and 24.05.2012 and organised a workshop for Kurdish women held on 28.04.2012. Most recently, it has carried out a small-scale research project investigating immigrants' access to various social services in Meri-Rastila which took place in October 2012.

The Alternative Master Plan project has received extensive press-coverage and has now been adopted by the Pro-Meri Rastila Liike who aims to use the project to help persuade Helsinki City's Planning Department to change their plans for the development of Meri-Rastila. More information: <http://promerirastila.blogspot.fi/>

More information about the OURCity project and its events: <http://meidankaununki.wordpress.com> and by email ourcity2012@gmail.com

Stoa Exhibition: 08.11.2012 – 01.12.2012

Laituri Exhibition: 30.10.2012 – 10.11.2012

MEIDÄN Ourcity ry – Association: Michail Galanakis (chairman), Seija Välimäki-Adie (vice chairman), Tristan Hughes (secretary), Mustafa Gürler, (treasurer), Mariana Salgado, Hossam Hewidy, Dina Fuad-Luke



WORLD DESIGN
CAPITAL
HELSINKI 2012

MEIDÄN
OUR City Take Part. Design.
Suunnittele. Osallistu!



OURCITY-PROJEKTI ROHKAISEE ASUKKAITA OSALLISTUMAAN JA SUUNNITTELEMAAN ITSE MERI-RASTILASTA AVOIMEN JA ELÄVÄN LÄHIÖN OSANA HELSINGIN

DESIGNPÄÄKAUPUNKIVUOTTA 2012.

OURCITY-projekti on lähestymässä loppuaan Helsingin Designvuoden tapaan. Loppuhuipennuksena järjestetään kaksi näyttelyä. Ensimmäinen näyttely Stoaassa 8.11.-1.12.2012 esittelee koko OURCity projektin tuloksia. Toinen näyttely järjestetään Laiturissa 30.10-10.11.2012, ja se esittelee Meri-Rastilan vaihtoehtoisen asemakaavan.

Syksyllä 2011 alkanut **OURCITY**-projekti teemanaan *Tehdään yhdessä parempi kaupunki* on työskennellyt suorassa yhteistyössä paikallisten asukkaiden kanssa luodakseen uusia ideoita kehittää Meri-Rastilaa Vuosaarissa entistä yhteisöllisemmäksi ja eloisammaksi ympäristöksi

Seitsemän samanmielisen, eri kulttuuritustaisen henkilön keväällä 2010 perustama **MEIDÄN ourcity ry** on verkostoitunut viranomaisten, yritysten ja yhteisöjen kanssa Meri-Rastilan ja Itä-Helsingin alueella, erityisesti yhteistyötä on tehty Pro-Meri-Rastila -liikkeen ja Meri-Rastilan aluefoorumin kanssa.

OURCITY-projekti koostuu kolmesta alohjelma- ja medioiden välityksellä on esitelty Meri-Rastilaa monipuolisena lähiönä ja koko Itä-Helsinkiä kulttuurisesti rikkaana osana kaupunkia; **OURColours** vaatteiden ja modin välityksellä, **OURCourse** koulutuksen ja designin kautta ja **OUTReach** kulttuurien välistä dialogia ja yhteisöllisyyttä korostaen. Osaprojekteja koordinoivat eri työryhmät, mutta **OURCity**-ryhmän jäsenet ovat tehneet yhteistyötä ja jakaneet ideoita kaikissa osaprojekteissa.

OURColours tapahtuma, joka yhdisti catwalk-muotinäytöksen, musiikki- ja tanssiesityksiä sekä myyntikojuja monikulttuurisine vaatteineen ja tavaroineen järjestettiin 15.05.2012.

OURCourse oli poikkitieteellinen, oppilaitosten yhteistyössä toteutettu ohjelma, jossa kukin oppilaitos järjesti osana opinto-ohjelmaansa kurssin Meri-Rastilaan liittyvistä haasteista. Ensimmäisenä lukukautena Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulun liiketalouden koulutusohjelman Design thinking -kurssi perehtyi käyttäjälähtöiseen suunnitteluun kehittämällä innovatiivisia palvelukonsepteja Meri-Rastilaan. Marraskuussa 2011 Helsingin yliopiston *Our City - A Workshop on Public Space* -kurssi keskittyi luomaan uusia ideoita julkisiksi tiloiksi nuorten ja aikuisten miesten käyttöön. Aalto-Yliopiston Arkkitehtuurin laitoksen Local Development and Globalisation -kurssi Tammi-Toukokuussa 2012 käytti aiempien kurssien tulomateriaaleja hyväkseen tutkiessaan Case Study -menetelmällä Meri-Rastilan paikallista ja alueellista kehitystä Eurooppalaisessa ja Globaalissa kontekstissa.

OUTReach -projektissa muiden **OURCity**-n osaprojektien kehittyessä syntyneitä uusia ajatuksia ja kokemuksia sekä syntyneitä yhteistyökontakteja kehitettiin eteenpäin. Meri-Rastilan vaihtoehtoinen asemakaava -projekti tammi-kesäkuussa 2012, oli suora tulos aiemmasta yhteistyöstä. Projektissa työskenteli sekä arkkitehteja että Helsingin yliopiston ja Aalto-Yliopiston opiskelijoita ja professoreja. Helmi-maaliskuussa järjestettiin 2012 useita kaupunkisuunnittelun työpajoja kaavan laadinnan pohjaksi. Tämän lisäksi projekti osallistui ja keräsi palautetta Meri-Rastilan Rastori-tapahtumassa 18.5.2012 ja 24.5.2012. Kurdilaisille naisille järjestettiin oma työpaja 28.4.2012. Viimeisimpänä on järjestetty tutkimusprojekti kartoittamaan erilaisten sosiaalisten palvelujen saavutettavuutta maahanmuuttajaväestölle lokakuussa 2012.

Vaihtoehtoinen asemakaava on saanut laajaa huomiota ja sen on nyt adoptoinut Pro Meri-Rastila -liike jatkaakseen keskustelua Helsingin Kupunkisuunnitteluviraston kanssa alueen tulevasta kehityksestä. Lisätietoa: <http://promerirastila.blogspot.fi/>

Lisätietoja **OURCity** -projektista ja sen tapahtumista: <http://meidankaupunki.wordpress.com>, sähköpostitse: ourcity2012@e-mail.com

MEIDÄN Ourcity ry – Association: Michail Galanakis (chairman), Seija Välimäki-Adie (vice chairman), Tristan Hughes (secretary), Mustafa Gürler, (treasurer), Mariana Salgado, Hossam Hewidy, Dina Fuad-Luke

Stoa näyttely: 08.11.2012 – 01.12.2012

Laituri näyttely: 30.10.2012 – 10.11.2012



WORLD DESIGN
CAPITAL
HELSINKI 2012

MEIDÄN **OUR City** TakePart Design
Summitin Osallistujat

Our hopes:

We, the members of OUTReach, a sub-project of the OURCity project for the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012, hope that, although the OURcity project has come to an end, this survey on service-user engagement will be the beginning of many more fruitful ventures into intercultural community work.

We think that it is important to keep our interest in community matters alive, especially on issues of equality, inclusion and integration, which particularly have an impact on the well-being of people from immigrant background.

If you share these interests and wish to exchange views or propose ideas around collaborative work, the person responsible for this report would be pleased to hear from you at the following: Tel: +358 41 7082410; Email dfuadluke@yahoo.co.uk

Short bio of the author:

Dina Fuad-Luke worked as a community development worker in the U.K for over 15 years, before coming to live in Finland.

She was involved in facilitation and integration work, working with immigrants, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers in the cities of London, Bristol and Exeter.

Originally from Malaysia, she is a former journalist at the BBC World Service.

Dina is also a teacher of English.