Guidelines for Service Providers:

Outreach Strategies for Family Violence Intervention with Immigrant and Minority Communities

Lessons Learned from the Muslim Family Safety Project (MFSP)

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CHANGING WAYS

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1. Introduction

This manual aims to provide guidance for organizations and service providers in Canada to reach out to isolated and vulnerable minority groups in an effort to reduce rates of family violence. It builds on the success of the Muslim Family Safety Project in London, Ontario. During the past five years, the Muslim Family Safety Project (MFSP) has been very successful in reaching out to London's Muslim communities to engage religious and community leaders in culturally and linguistically-appropriate public education campaigns on family violence and to develop the capacity to address the needs of Muslim women who are being abused by family members.

While recognizing the diversity within and among minority communities and the problems caused by generalizing, in the process of building the MSFP, we have learned a great deal about the steps and strategies required for effective outreach to other isolated, minority communities. In particular, we have learned about the necessary steps for raising awareness about family violence within minority communities in a culturally-competent manner, while developing mutual understanding between the community and mainstream intervention services, and creating an environment that enables women and children who are victims of abuse to seek help.

Canada's multi-cultural community is growing and mainstream anti-violence agencies across the country are increasingly aware of the need to provide culturally-appropriate outreach services. However, agencies are often uncertain about how best to work with minority communities. Uncertainty quickly turns to inaction when faced by additional barriers of language and cultural beliefs. Service-providers need guidelines for reaching out to minority groups, in order to begin a dialogue about family violence within these communities. Such guidelines need to go beyond the provision of information in multiple languages about abuse. In addition, they need to encompass recommendations and strategies for establishing partnerships with minority communities, supporting discussions about family violence, and linking minority communities with mainstream services. Equally importantly, the strategies need to develop capacity within the communities and encourage minority communities to take responsibility to stop violence against women and children, to create their own response towards family violence, and to enable women and children to seek help.

Through the creation and distribution of a culturally-sensitive guide for working with minority communities to end family violence, we hope to meet the goal of supporting equitable services to minority communities across Canada. This guide fits in with the Government of Canada's Family Violence Initiative objective of improving access to justice, equality and human rights of minority communities in Canada through community consultation and partnership.

The strategies take into consideration the Canadian immigration laws, demographic changes in Canada, and the available resources of family violence services.

The project focuses on the following objectives:

1. To develop a culturally-sensitive resource guide to provide strategies for mainstream agencies working to end family violence, and to enable them to reach out to vulnerable minority communities.
2. To identify outreach strategies that promote increased minority community engagement and leadership to address family violence
3. To share MFSP's community development model with service providers and members of other minority communities across Canada.

2. Addressing Domestic Violence in Minority Communities

Mainstream services face serious challenges in effectively addressing domestic violence in immigrant communities. Multiple factors have contributed in creating these challenges, but primarily the differences in the conceptualization of violence against women between mainstream services and immigrant communities. Mainstream Canadian service providers, based on a model of individual rights, perceive violence and abuse against women as non-negotiable, and the safety of abused women is the priority in these situations. While immigrant cultures also see abuse as unacceptable, the approach tends to differ. Domestic violence against women is often seen as a family matter which implies that only the family can and should resolve it without the intervention of anyone outside the family.

There are particular challenges facing communities from collectivist societies.[1] According to Haj-Yahia, collectivism involves obligations to extended family and the broader community. There is an expectation that personal needs will be subordinated to those of the collective. Women are expected to maintain harmony in order to uphold the family's status and reputation, and are expected to be patient in the face of domestic abuse. Women often look to their extended families for support, and are expected to accept informal mediation offered by family members to reconcile disputes. Women who ask for assistance from agencies or supports outside the collective often face ostracism as there is a strong belief that families need to solve their own problems.[2]

Practitioners face a number of dilemmas, says Haj-Yahia, including whether to intervene with the focus on ensuring safety and ending the violence in keeping with Western, individualistic values, or to accept the battered woman's autonomy and determine the type of assistance she wants without judgment or pressure. Also, within a collectivist culture, because there is an expectation that women will comply and seek harmony at all costs, there is often a tremendous cost for a woman who speaks out as she may be accused of not living up to the expected codes of behaviour for a wife, mother or daughter. She may even be seen as responsible for her husband's behaviour because she is defying cultural and normative expectations.

There is a crucial need for practitioners working with abused women from collectivist cultures to really understand the context and values of the communities and to empower the women by offering choices and accepting their decisions without judgment. Pressuring women to defy cultural norms based on individualistic values can isolate women from their family and community or alienate them from accessing services, thus creating the unintended result of increasing the risk of continuing abuse.

The previously mentioned dilemmas reveal some of the unique characteristics of collectivist cultures that create particularly sensitive situations for abused women, and how difficult it is for them to escape from these situations on their own or even with the help of conventional mainstream services.

Migrating experiences can also have a dramatic impact in the context of domestic violence against women in immigrant communities. This is particularly true with respect to pre-migration experiences, especially for those who migrated from conflict zones. Families from conflict or disaster zones face more complex challenges than might be expected from those whose migratory experience was not affected by organized violence. Different challenges also exist for refugees as opposed to other classes of immigrants. These challenges can influence interpersonal relationships, namely within the immediate and extended family, within their ethnic or "national"

1 Haj-Yahia, & Sadan E. (2008). Journal of Marital and Family Therapy,Vol.34, No.1,1-13.
2 Haj-Yahia, & Sadan E. (2008). Journal of Marital and Family Therapy,Vol.34, No.1,1-13

community, and across Canadian society in general. Trauma, within pre-migration experiences, is considered one of the main risk factors associated with family problems, including domestic violence. Consequently, the social experience of a refugee differs, in the sense that despite the presence of services addressing apparent settlement needs, the majority of such services do not reflect their complex past experiences with war and organized violence. War trauma, when not treated with a proper remedy targeting its various dimensions, can evolve into disturbed behavioural patterns including violence. Certainly, refugees who are susceptible to such risks may also disrupt traditional hierarchies and authority structures, in particular those within the family[3]. For instance, adolescents living with the trauma of war might be more prone to deviant behaviour such as violence against their parents, thereby challenging their traditional family framework. Often their trauma shows in school difficulties, alcohol abuse, thoughts about suicide, violence, or general misbehaviour.[4]

Practical implications for outreach strategies:

The following answers to questions are important in order for mainstream services to effectively address domestic violence in their outreach strategies with the identified community.

1. Does the identified community have a collectivist tradition? If so, has this been taken into consideration?
2. What are the specific migratory experiences of the identified community?
3. What is the role of religion or cultural traditions within the community?
4. To what extent is the service provider willing to take into consideration religious aspects that may play an important role in the community, in outreach or intervention strategies?

3 Summerfield, D. (1998) Sociocultural dimensions of war, conflict and displacement. In Refugees. Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration (ed A. Ager), pp. 111-135. London: Pinter.

4 Hodes, M. & Tolmac, J. (2005). Severly impaired young refugees, Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 10(2), 251-261.

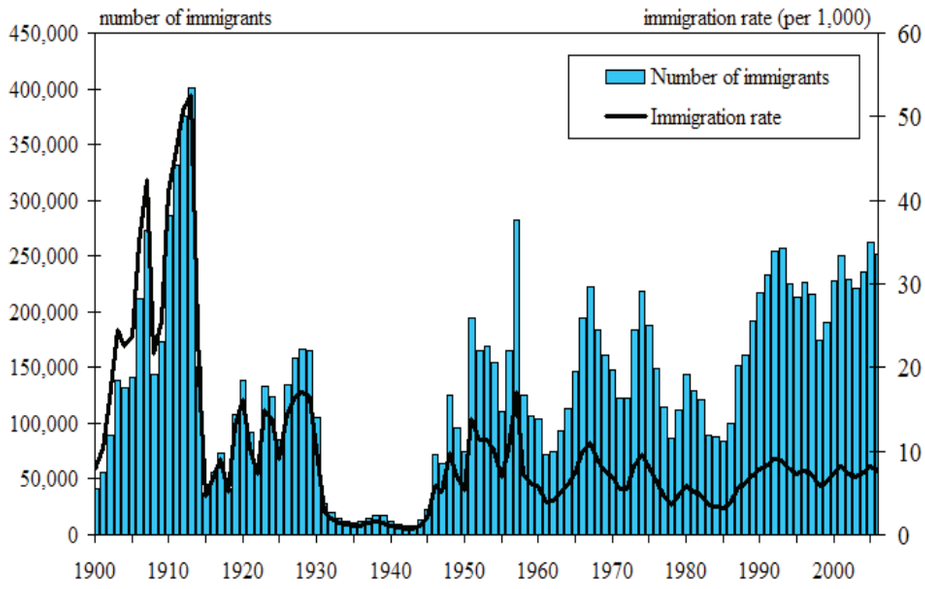
3. Refugees and Immigrants in Canada

Canada has welcomed an average of 240,000 newcomers to Canada each year, since 2001.[5] A small percentage, those recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), are admitted under government sponsorship supports such as government-assisted refugees (GARs) or joint assistance sponsorship (JAS). The greatest percentages of arrivals to Canada are from non-refugee classes such as those sponsored by family members already settled here (Family Class) or individuals and their families who meet settlement selection criteria outlined by Citizenship & Immigration Canada. A point system is used to weigh language abilities, age range of applicants, educational and work experience along with other factors to select immigrants. Others arrive in the country as refugee claimants to be determined or not, as Convention Refugees by the Immigration Refugee Board (IRB). There are other opportunities for immigration status, such as a Temporary Resident Permits, Minister's Permits and a new class which allows those currently living in Canada with a temporary visa, to apply for permanent residence from within the country.[6]

Pre-migration experiences vary enormously. Many newcomers leave their countries of origin through voluntary relocation. Others are forced out because of local conflict and many live for years as displaced groups prior to immigrating. Those who are able, use their finances or skills to begin an application process to emigrate. Others have no choice but to look for alternative ways of seeking immigration status and finally arrive as refugee claimants. Others who are accepted as refugees from within their countries of origin might have to wait for years to enter the rigorous and laborious process of selection for permanent residence. Although those who are JAS, GARs or Convention Refugees certainly fulfill the criteria developed by the United Nations after World War II,[7] many others arriving under different classes share characteristics and experiences associated with conflict, violence, disruption and fear. Some individuals and families from conflict zones have strategies, tools or cultural world views and community supports which ease transition whereas others do not. Some find that the tools that were formerly helpful do not help in a new society. Emigrating is an arduous process. Pre-migration experiences are part of the continuum of settlement. Those experiences which are particularly violent or disruptive to family and community relations are significant factors in how well the complexities of so much change will be negotiated by newcomers and their families.

5 Population and Demography. Retrieved July, 22, 2009, from http://www41.statcan.gc.ca/2008/3867/ceb3867_000-eng.htm
6 Skilled workers and professionals: Who can apply six selection factors and pass mark. Retrieved July, 21, 2009, from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-factors.asp
7 OHCHR. (1951, July 28).Convention Relating to Status of Refugees. Retrieved July, 21, 2009, from http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm

Number of immigrants and immigration rate in Canada, 1900 to 2006



Data sources: Statistics Canada, 2006, Report on the demographic situation in Canada 2003 and 2004, Statistics Canada Catalogue number 91-209-XIE; and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.Figure source: Statistics Canada, 2007, Canadian Demographics at a Glance, Catalogue number 91-003-XWE.[8]

Immigration by Provinces and Territories[9]

Geographic Name	Total Population	Non-immigrant population	Immigrant population	Immigrated before 1991	Immigrated between 1991 and 1995	Immigrated between 1996 and 2000	Immigrated between 2001 and 2006
Canada	**31,241,030**	**24,788,720**	**6,186,950**	**3,408,420**	**823,925**	**844,625**	**1,109,980**
Newfoundland and Labrador	500,610	490,855	8,385	5,390	695	855	1,440
Prince Edward Island	134,205	129,150	4,785	3,335	270	315	855
Nova Scotia	903,090	854,495	45,190	30,305	3,540	4,445	6,900
New Brunswick	719,650	690,695	26,400	18,070	1,895	2,135	4,300
Quebec	7,435,900	6,535,430	851,560	438,940	109,640	109,075	193,905
Ontario	12,028,895	8,512,020	3,398,725	1,884,440	462,080	471,470	580,740
Manitoba	1,133,510	974,735	151,230	92,535	13,215	14,290	31,190
Saskatchewan	953,850	901,080	48,155	30,615	4,340	5,110	8,090
Alberta	3,256,355	2,702,225	527,030	295,390	62,240	65,720	103,680
British Columbia	4,074,385	2,904,240	1,119,215	605,680	165,230	170,465	177,840
Yukon Territory	30,195	26,990	3,005	1,950	325	345	385
Northwest Territories	41,055	37,985	2,815	1,470	400	345	600
Nunavut	29,325	28,820	455	300	55	50	55

Both charts are from www.statsCan.gc.ca Statistics Canada

8 Number of immigrants and immigration rate in Canada, 1900 to 2006 ." Statistics Canada. 25/01/2008. Statistics Canada, Web. 15 Oct 2009. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/2007001/figures/4129865-eng.htm>.

9 Population by immigrant status and period of immigration, 2006 counts, for Canada, provinces and territories." Statistics Canada. 03 March 2009. Statistics Canada, Web. 15 Oct 2009. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-557/T403-eng.cfm?Lang=E&T=403&GH=4&SC=1&S=99&O=A>.

4. Culturally-Competent Community Outreach

a. What is community outreach?

Community outreach is a practice of conducting local public awareness campaigns through targeted interaction. The purpose is often to educate a particular community using respected and relevant channels of engagement. The goal is to increase knowledge and awareness of services, and strengthen and support helping networks, through an understanding of the needs of the identified population.[10]

b. What is cultural competency?

Cultural competency is defined as a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross–cultural situations[11]. Operationally defined, cultural competency is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes.[12]

c. What is a culturally-competent outreach strategy?

A culturally-competent outreach strategy is based on respect and dialogue. It involves an awareness and understanding of the cultural norms of the particular community, respect for their basic values, traditions and beliefs, and the ability to listen with a concerted attempt to set aside any preconceived notions. It involves, at the very least, an acute awareness of one's own preconceptions and the ability to accept different points of view. It promotes the principles of inclusiveness, and provides services that reflect the beliefs, attitudes, language and actions of the identified community. It does not mean going against Canadian laws or fundamental values. [13]

d. What is cultural misinformation?

Cultural misinformation refers to stereotyped information about a group of people that is applied as a generalization to an individual. It limits what we see and understand about an individual and associates a set of attributes to a group and then applies group attributes to an individual from that group. The cultural stereotype describes how most people of a group supposedly behave and how they should behave. It is used often to justify mistreatment of individuals by the dominant culture.[14]

10 Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families, Rowena Fong (ed.), pp 7, New York, The Guildford Press, 2004.

11 Towards a culturally competent system of care, volume II, programs which utilize culturally competent Principles, Isaacs, M. and Benjamin, M, Washington, D.C : Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center, 1991.

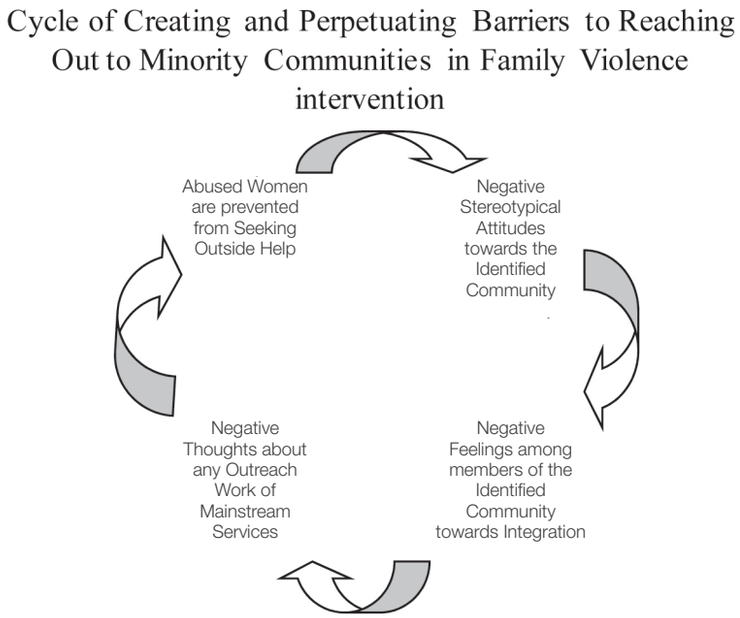
12 Exploring the intersection between cultural competency and managed behavioral health care policy: Implications for state and county mental health agencies, Davis,K., Alexandria, VA: National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning, 1997.

13 Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families, Rowena Fong (ed.), New York, The Guildford Press, 2004.

14 Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families, Rowena Fong (ed.) New York, The Guildford Press, 2004.

e. What are some of the barriers to community outreach?

There are many barriers to reaching out to minority communities to address domestic violence. These barriers are similar to those that prevent many abused immigrant women from accessing mainstream services. These include mistrust and fear of "others", which can build on the negative stereotypes of the minority community by mainstream service agencies, fear of being expected to compromise values, and unfamiliarity regarding how to approach people. In order to overcome these barriers, the identified community needs to be encouraged to take ownership of both the problem and the solution. The following chart illustrates the way that barriers can be created and perpetuated when working with minority communities.[15]



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5. The Process of Building a Community Outreach Plan

The solution for reaching out to minority communities to address domestic violence is to build bridges between mainstream service providers and the identified community based on mutual understanding, trust and collaboration. From this, a partnership plan of action can be established. This section provides details on the steps and strategies that can be used to effectively overcome the challenges of reaching out to minority communities as well as building culturally-competent community outreach strategies.

a. Understanding the identified community

It is important to remember that the concept of community outreach is fundamentally about people. The people determine how they will perceive your plan and how they will respond to it. Each community prefers to be identified in a certain way that makes sense to them. That may not necessarily be the way others see them.

The integration process for newcomers varies from person to person, based on many factors including their past history of trauma, resiliency level, language, personality and support network. However, as different ethnic and cultural communities have different experiences of integration, immigrants' abilities to feel connected to both their current communities or to their community of origin are affected. For some, there are more challenges and the process is more complicated.

Both on an individual and community level, the sense of belonging and identity will have a significant impact on the way the community and key people determine the success of your outreach plan. It is important to understand your identified community, and based on this understanding, decide upon the best approach. The most important thing is to understand how they see themselves and not how they are labelled by others. This will help the discrepancies between the two perceptions and help develop a realistic outreach plan.

When service providers listen to and accept the self-identification of the minority communities, they will begin to understand them. Hence, service providers will have knowledge concerning the nature of the target community, thereby knowing how to aid the target community. Indeed, the methods to aid minority communities will differ depending on each community and their particular world view. This is precisely the success this manual proposes: the ability to reach out to minority communities while learning about their inherent identities and translating such an understanding into effective methods of an outreach plan.

Some key steps for building a better understanding of the identified community.

Recognizing and identifying any misinformation

As a mainstream service, start first by checking any misinformation about the identified community. Cultural misinformation is considered one of the main barriers to reaching out to immigrant communities especially when it comes to addressing sensitive issues like domestic violence. Here are some tips:

- Question generalizations about groups.

- Broaden your understanding and sensitivity to other cultures through a variety of means, such as reading community newspapers (asking for translations when necessary) and attending community festivals. In addition, talking to a variety of individuals from the community including members of different ages, genders, religious affiliations, and tribal identities where applicable is important in order to view diversity within identified communities.
- Identify cultural stereotypes.
- Gather information from individuals and evaluate the information as it relates to that person's experiences. Ask questions.
- Be aware of your thought process, your own background and influences.
- Reach beyond your comfort level. Challenge any pre-conceived notions you may have.
- Avoid the temptation to generalize - apply information only to the situation in which you received it.
- Increase your attention to cultural misinformation.

Seek out key people in the identified community

Key people are not necessarily those who have formal leadership positions in their community. They could be less visible but very influential. It is therefore important to have a general idea of how the community is structured and functions. In many communities, these represent the community from different aspects of its core religious, cultural and social values. As such, individual leaders may exercise different types of leadership. For example, one may have religious influence; another may have cultural or social influence. Some leaders integrate all three areas of influence. Some key suggestions are:

1. Start meeting with those leaders with whom you are already familiar and who are most likely to be interested in the issue at hand. They could be individuals who already work in the field of domestic violence or social services and who understand both the mainstream culture as well as the minority culture.
2. Remember that being a member of the minority community does not necessarily mean that this person's work is welcomed and accepted by that community. At the same time you should ask how the individuals with whom you collaborate fit within the community context in terms of their tribal, cultural, religious or language background.
3. In the early stage, the focus of your plan should be on establishing personal relationships based on mutual trust and transparency.
4. Ask the leaders of the identified community about who else should be included in the process of building relationships.
5. Divisions within communities are normal and common. Try and be aware of any divisions and remain neutral and open-minded.

Understanding how decisions are made within the identified community

In order to better understand how decisions are made in immigrant or minority communities, we need to understand their core values about family and gender relationships and how they perceive the core values of the western culture.

Many immigrant communities, especially those coming from collectivist societies, are very concerned about losing their identity. They may perceive certain aspects of western culture as threatening to their families' cultural and religious core values in the way in which they empower individuals over the family and collective interests. Keep in mind that not all immigrants chose to leave their country of origin and some live "out of their suitcases" for years, awaiting the opportunity to return "home." Culture shock is challenging for all immigrants but is often particularly difficult for those who did not have the opportunity to mentally prepare for life in a new country.

Minority or immigrant communities' attitudes toward and impressions of domestic violence services have a significant influence on how community leaders will respond to outreach programs of violence against women (VAW) agencies. Whether the community responds positively or negatively depends on their perception of these services and the role they believe these agencies would play in affecting the unity of the family. If they

believe that the role of VAW service is to break families apart, then the response will likely be suspicious and negative. In contrast, a positive response could be expected if they perceive that the role of VAW service is to strengthen and support families.

The preservation of family unity and its cultural and religious values is a central concern for many immigrant families. Domestic violence as a violation of basic individual human rights with consequences resulting in holding the perpetrator accountable by society regardless of their position in the family and the community may be a foreign concept for those families who see domestic violence as a problem only the family should address. Based on this notion, the community could see its members as victims of domestic violence services that undermine traditional family values by interfering with family unity. Without an understanding of this perception, outreach work with these communities by VAW agencies will be negatively impacted. It is important to note that understanding this perception does not necessitate agreeing with it. Nevertheless, the understanding will help service providers better understand how decisions are made and, as a result, open dialogue for the best ways of building collaboration and partnership.

Four Screening Aspects Tool (FAST)[16]

In addition to the previously mentioned strategies, here is another practical tool that will help you improve your understanding of your identified community. "FAST" refers to "four aspects, screening and tools". The four aspects that need to be considered in working with minority communities in both intervention and outreach are listed in the following chart:

Universal Aspects	Ethno-Cultural Aspects
Migration Aspects	Religious Aspects

How does FAST work?

FAST can be used as a guide for asking questions that help to build a better understanding of the identified community.

Universal Aspects

In any work you do with a minority community, the first step should be to approach your clients or the identified community from a universal perspective. In other words, ask yourself how to start gathering information. If you need information about domestic violence you could ask general and open-ended questions regarding marriage, gender and family relations. It is also helpful to know how domestic violence is defined by that community, how people usually respond, and how safety concerns of victims of domestic violence are addressed. These are general questions that are safe to ask and help build information about the context of domestic violence in the identified community. Based on the answers to these questions, you will have a better idea as to what kind of information you still need.

Migration Aspects

As discussed earlier, individuals' migratory experiences have a significant impact on their behaviour. It is essential therefore, to develop an understanding of community members' experiences. During interviews with

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key people, ask sensitive and open-ended questions related to their migratory experiences. You may want to ask for example, “can you tell me about your life before coming to Canada?” “How did you feel about leaving?” “What was it like to settle in a new country?”

Information about pre-migration experiences and post-migration difficulties would be helpful to understand the challenges members of the identified community have faced in their integration process. Success or failure of integration has significant influence on outreach and accessing services by immigrant families affected by domestic violence.

While there are some commonalities in the integration experience, some immigrants face far greater challenges that can make the process much longer and more difficult. Refugees forced out of their home, for example, and coming from conflict zones where they were tortured or traumatized, often experience a profound and debilitating culture shock. Having lived through the horrors of war, their anxieties are often easily displaced onto their new environment and relationships. Mental health issues like post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, coupled with the multiple losses they’ve experienced, and ongoing worry and guilt-feelings about “abandoning” family and friends back home, renders their process of integration much more complex[17].

Another way of looking at the integration experience of the individuals or the community is to look at their ability to cope with the culture shock. You can consult the following culture shock model for a general understanding of the phases some immigrants may experience:

According to this model, immigrants go through the following steps in their integration experiences.

Step 1: The Honeymoon Stage

When immigrants arrive in a new country they initially feel excited, stimulated and enriched. During this stage, they still feel close to everything familiar back home.

Step 2: The Distress Stage

Everything immigrants encounter no longer feels new; in fact, the entire experience begins to feel like a thick wall which is preventing them from building a new life, and reaching their potential in their new setting. They feel confused, alone and realize that the familiar support system is not easily accessible.

Step 3: Re-integration Stage

During this stage, immigrants start refusing to accept the differences they encounter. They are angry, frustrated and even feel hostile to those around them. They start to idealize life “back home” and compare their current culture to what is familiar. They dislike the new culture, the language, the food. They reject the new culture as inferior. They may even develop some prejudices towards the new culture. This is a common reaction to anything foreign. It is part of the adjustment process.

Step 4: Autonomy Stage

This is the first stage in acceptance. Immigrants start to accept the differences and feel like they can begin to live with others. They feel more confident and better able to cope with any problems that may arise. They no longer feel isolated and instead they are able to look at the world and appreciate where they are.

17 Holt, G., (1998, July, 8). Burden’s of war remain with refugees. Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Step 5: Independence Stage

Immigrants are able to discover themselves again within their new setting. They embrace the new culture and see everything in a new, yet realistic light. They feel comfortable, confident, and able to make decisions based on their own preferences. They no longer feel alone and isolated. They appreciate both the differences and similarities between their new and inherent cultures. They begin to feel at home.

Ethno-cultural Aspects

In addition to the migration aspects, you can build a better picture of the community by asking questions related to their ethno-cultural background. It is not enough just to know from where members of the community originated. You should ask questions that give you better insight about the diverse ethnic and cultural background of each community. For example, if you target a Muslim community you need to understand that not all Muslims are Arabs and not all Arabs are Muslims. The common ground within the Arab communities is the Arabic language and even that differs considerably among different countries. For example, the Arabic spoken in Morocco is quite different from the Arabic spoken in Lebanon. The emergence of dialects of the Arabic language is due to the wide geographic spread of the language. As Arabic was introduced to various lands, each populace added aspects of its inherent linguistics with the Arabic language. Thus, even within the Arabic language, there exists considerable diversity.

The common ground within the Muslim communities is the religion of Islam and not the culture, ethnicity, country of origin or the language. However, it is also important to note that within the religion, there are many varying interpretations, many of which may be at odds with one another. So you will need to ask questions that help you understand the cultural references of each community and how people identify themselves. Here are some examples:

- Does everybody in your community speak the same language or are there different languages?
- Where do people go if they have family problems?
- What kind of protection procedures are there to prevent domestic violence?
- Do women ask for outside help? If so, in what kind of circumstances and where would they turn?
- How do parents discipline their children?

Religious Aspects

The focus of this part of FAST is to look at the role of religion in the idenified community. Some communities consider religion as the base of their belief system regarding family and gender relationships. For others, religion is less important. As such, the focus should be on the breadth and impact of religiosity on the community. It is crucial to get accurate information about how the community defines for itself the role played by religion. However, asking these kinds of questions can touch on very sensitive issues, therefore it is important to find respectful ways to obtain information in order to understand and honour the belief system of the people you are serving.

Here are some suggested questions:

- How important is religion in your community in resolving family issues?
- Is there religious diversity in your community?
- If so, how do different groups deal with family conflicts?

b. Building Mutual Understanding

The success of building mutual understanding depends on your level of awareness of the identified community.
The more you reflect on your own cultural assumptions , the more you are able to understand the context of the community you are working with. As a result, you will see more positive responses from these communities toward your outreach plan. Mutual understanding means that both groups - anti-violence agencies and the identified community - have a greater capacity to work on their misinformation about one another and start looking to each other as potential partners that share the same goals irrespective of their differences. Building mutual understanding with the community will help you identify your priorities and your short term and long term collaborative community goals. Here are some key issues you should consider in building mutual understanding:

- Discuss the best ways to invite representatives from different community groups. These include faith-based, ethno-cultural, or professional organizations, among others.
- Explain your role, your limitations and your realistic goals. It is important to be transparent and honest about funding and to avoid building false expectations.
- Start with statistics that can help you build common ground for future collaboration in addressing domestic violence. These could include::
    - Information about family violence in Canada generally (for example recent Statistics Canada figures). This may help your audience not feel that they are being singled out.
    - Facts about how women and children comprise the majority of domestic violence victims.
    - The impact on children who are exposed to domestic violence.
    - Information about domestic violence in the identified community (numbers, case studies etc.). It is better to have a member of the that community to highlight these facts.
- Highlight key facts about the criminal justice system's response toward domestic violence and how the criminal justice system works.
    - Perhaps also mention that it is very difficult for people generally to ask for help.
- Based on these facts, ask about the best way to address domestic violence in their community and how they want to contribute to domestic violence prevention.
- Create a safe space for community leaders to share their fears and concerns about the VAW in their communities.

c. Developing a collaborative plan of action

The main goal of this section is to assist you with the development of a plan for long-term, collaborative relationships with minority communities so they can play a significant role in preventing domestic violence within their own communities. Collaborative means the communities' needs and interests will be reflected in the action plan. Below are some suggested steps for the development of a plan:

Creating a collaborative team

The first step would be to connect with, then invite key people from the identified community to establish an advisory committee that can identify common goals and develop a collaborative plan. Use the knowledge you have gained from the previous activities and build upon the results of your work in establishing mutual understanding.

Consideration:

- It would be very helpful to find VAW workers who are part of the identified community and include them as facilitators to develop the plan, which includes finding the best way to recruit members from the community for the advisory committee.
- Involve representatives of both informal and formal leadership

- There may be differences of opinions at times which can result in dynamic opportunities for dialogue, this process may take time and considerable effort. Allow for cohesiveness in your work plan. It's important to be inclusive and to ensure that all voices are heard.
- The process of team building can take time, start with the people who respond to your invitation even if you are not able to include the different groups within the community at the beginning of your outreach project. It's important to be clear that this is the starting point and you are going to continue reaching out to other members of the community.

Developing guiding principles for the collaborative plan

One of the major tasks of the advisory committee will be to develop guiding principles and a framework for the collaborative work. It will be helpful to draft the guiding principles and framework in clear and simple language. (e.g. avoid using technical or legal terms). The following points should be included in the guiding principles:

- Common ground that takes into consideration the core values and ethics of the identified community and those of the mainstream agencies.
- Identification of the most appropriate approach to reaching out to the community to address domestic violence.

Naming the Project

One of the first things that the advisory group should discuss is what to name the collaborative project. The name should be sensitive to the culture of the community. The more the community feels comfortable with the name, the greater the chance for success.

Launching the project

Launching the project should officially take place in a geographically central location where members of the identifed community usually gather and engage in their activities. The main purpose of launching the project is to gain legitimacy for addressing domestic violence within the community by asking community leaders to publicly state that domestic violence is a social problem and the community does not tolerate it. Women also need to hear that leaders of the community are taking a stand against domestic violence, so that they feel more comfortable asking for help. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the Canadian framework of domestic violence, specifically about the criminal justice system. The launch could be used to open a public discussion about the issue of domestic violence with representatives of VAW agencies so they can share their thoughts and ideas with members of the community. Supporting materials like Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) can be provided at the launch.

There are several things you should consider for the preparation of a successful launch such as:

- Discuss the best way to invite representatives of the diverse groups within the community.
- Use the community's channels of communication
- Make sure that you invite all key representatives of the community.
- Identify who will speak during the launch from both the VAW agency and the community.
- Make sure that the community speakers represent the diversity of the identified community.

d. Developing the actual plan

The initial response to the official launch of the project within the community will give you a better idea about the opportunities and challenges related to addressing domestic violence. It will help you set the stage for the actual activities that will guide you to achieve your collaborative objectives and your goals.

The actual plan should reflect the main priorities identified by both the mainstream agencies and the identified communities. It must be also consistent with the guiding principles of the project that were initially agreed upon. The main focus is to build common ground that integrates the perspectives of both groups. This is key for the success of the plan. Here are some suggested objectives:

Build mutual understanding and respectful relationships

One of the main barriers to accessing domestic violence services by immigrant families affected by domestic violence is the misunderstanding of these services by immigrant communities. Similarly, mainstream services face barriers in their attempts to reach out to minority communities largely because of a lack of understanding of those communities. Thus, building mutual understanding is key to overcoming these challenges.

Community Experiences in Building Bridges to Improve Domestic Violence Intervention

1. Building Mutual Understanding
2. Building Trust
3. Collaboration and Partnership Based Actions
4. Safe Environment for Abused Women to Ask for Outside Help

The focus should be on the following:

Two-way education:

Public education campaign is needed to raise awareness within the identified community on the issue of domestic violence. The public education plan should use language that is familiar to that community. Community leaders should be encouraged to participate in the development of the materials and to put their name on them. Such materials will have a stronger influence on members of the community. This endorsement is also an acknowledgement for and respect toward the community. By including key people from the community in the public education campaign, there is greater likelihood that the community leaders will take ownership and responsibility for the problem as well as the solution. In addition, spiritual and cultural authority figures may then speak out against domestic violence, welcome and support the outreach plan of anti-violence agencies and publicly advocate for victims of domestic violence within their communities.

Improve the cultural competency of the mainstream agencies working with the identified community. The focus should be on building capacity within mainstream services to better understand the context of domestic violence within the identified population and the most effective ways to respond to their needs. Conducting training for service providers on issues related to the cultural context of domestic violence in the identified community will provide the service providers with skills that help them better communicate with their clients. The training should be designed in a way that could be part of the process of building mutual understanding by inviting key people in the identified community to offer the training sessions, and creating interactive dialogue between them and the service providers. If appropriate, the training sessions ideally should take place in community venues. This would provide another opportunity for workers of mainstream agencies to visit the identified community's places of worship or other cultural locations.

Building an intercultural resource centre

One endeavor that will work very well in sustaining mutual understanding would be to create an intercultural resource centre. The centre should include a variety of informative materials, available in all languages spoken by community members. The resource centre should be easily accessible to community members and the information should be kept up-to-date. Through this centre, mainstream service providers can find the resources they need when they want information or other resources to support their clients. The centre's role would be to match the needs of the clients with the existing resources within that community. The same thing would be true for the identified community if they are looking for information or any other resources from the mainstream communities.

6. The Muslim Family Safety Project Model

a. What is the MFSP?

The Muslim Family Safety Project (MFSP) is a community-based collaborative project between the local Muslim communities and the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (LCCEWA). The MFSP was initially housed at Changing Ways[18] and brought anti-violence agencies and the London Muslim community together to address domestic violence in a culturally-competent manner. The project was launched in February 2004 at the London Muslim Mosque with the participation of over 250 members of the Muslim community and representatives of local anti-violence agencies. Initial funding for the project was provided by the National Crime Prevention Centre (2004-2006), and later supported by the London Ontario Victim Services Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General, London Community Foundation and the London Muslim Mosque. Funding was used to implement a community outreach plan for the Muslim community to address the issue of woman abuse and for service agencies to be sensitive to the needs of the Muslim community.

b. The objectives of the MFSP

- To establish and promote dialogue between the Muslim community and mainstream anti-violence agencies.
- To facilitate an environment of mutual understanding and respect.
- To enable and promote the mobilization of the Muslim community on the issue of family violence.
- To empower Muslim women to define and articulate their needs and social realities.
- To enable the collaborative development of prevention and intervention materials and services that meets the needs of Muslim women.

c. Guiding principles

Using a collaborative and community development framework for action

From the beginning, the approach of the Muslim Family Safety Project (MFSP) has been one of community development through participation and collaboration. In order to meet the needs of Muslim women and families affected by woman abuse, it was important to engage a diversity of voices from the Muslim community and the local service provider community in the process. From its inception, the Muslim Family Safety Project has made a conscious effort to include a multiplicity of stakeholders from the Muslim community, including the various Islamic cultural and religious groups, religious leadership, local women's organizations and groups, and youth, as well as a broad representation of local service provider agencies. Participatory project activities involved opportunities for dialogue, the exchange of knowledge, perspectives, concerns and ideas. These activities helped to build mutual understanding and common ground for collaborative work on anti-violence strategies that reflect the specific experiences of woman abuse in the Muslim community and that integrate the expertise of both the service providers and Muslim communities.

18 "Changing Ways is an organization in London, Ontario, which helps men to eliminate their abusive and violent behavior in their primary and intimate relationships". http://www.changingways.on.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=69

Building common ground for members of the Muslim community to work in collaboration with local service providers was key in meeting the needs of Muslim women and children victimized by violence and male perpetrators of violence. Without the expertise and guidance of stakeholders, creating an environment that is safe and responsive to Muslim women and families affected by woman abuse would be very difficult. Project partners played a significant role in shaping the process: they helped define objectives and determined how best to achieve them. The contributing voices of the Muslim community in particular, played an important role in integrating some religious elements that emphasized the rejection within Islam of domestic violence.

In addition, the strong involvement of members of the Muslim community and the service provider community translated into greater capacity building in both communities. The participation and contributions of a diversity of stakeholders generated valuable knowledge by improving understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of woman abuse in the Muslim community and by supporting meaningful strategies for change. The collaborative and participatory approach of the Muslim Family Safety Project enabled members of the Muslim community to learn from one another, allowed them to develop a greater understanding of the expertise of the service provider community, and made it possible for the local service providers to gain a deeper awareness of the experiences, knowledge, needs and values of the Muslim community. The development of a framework focussed on connection and exchange, supported an environment in which services became appropriate for Muslim women and families affected by violence. Service provider agencies were then able to engage in more effective outreach and service relationships with abused women in the Muslim community due to an improved contextualized understanding of challenges, concerns and needs.

Building an integrated framework that incorporates Canadian legal and social frameworks along with Islamic teachings on domestic violence

In order to overcome barriers of cross-cultural disconnection in service relationships, it is important to begin to appreciate and acknowledge the experiences of woman abuse as understood from the perspectives of Muslim women.

The development of culturally-appropriate community responses to address domestic violence refers to the establishment of service relationships with members of the Muslim community, and public education materials that integrate religious and cultural knowledge, values and perspectives. The integration of the understandings, values and concerns of members of the Muslim community on the issue of woman abuse enables the project to respond in a manner that is meaningful and engaging. Members of the Muslim community need to be able to relate to any process that seeks to support Muslim women and families affected by woman abuse, otherwise strategies for change and support will not have much impact. The inclusion of Islamic perspectives and teachings provides a familiar context to public education on woman abuse for members of the Muslim community.

Including men in project activities

In order to support the development of a safe environment for Muslim women to speak out about abuse and seek out help, men and women of the Muslim community need to be involved. While the main strategy lies in empowering women through awareness-raising activities and women's support services, a significant part of the strategy for change lies in the inclusion of Muslim men.

However, community development practice on anti-violence work must include men not only in prevention and intervention strategies, but also in the project process. The involvement of Muslim men in the development of the Muslim Family Safety Project has had a positive impact on the acceptance of project related objectives and activities by the Muslim community. The integral participation of both female and male community members builds a sense of ownership toward the project and supports the proactive stance that woman abuse and family violence issues are a shared responsibility. By engaging both men and women of the Muslim community directly in shaping the content and structure of the Muslim Family Safety Project, the importance of the issue of woman abuse gains legitimacy. This enables the building of a safe and responsive community environment in which Muslim women and families affected by woman abuse can step forward and seek out appropriate support.

d. Identifying the problem

The need for this project grew out of several factors that were identified by previous research on barriers of accessing services by Muslim women and the observations of mainstream service providers. They recognized the need to work harder to ensure that their services would be available and appropriate for the growing number of Londoners who are new to Canada and to cultivate better outreach strategies for new Canadians, especially those who speak neither English nor French. For example 10% of London's population –about 35,000 people - is Muslim, the highest proportion in Canada.[19] Abused women who choose to access advocacy and residential services receive sensitive and effective assistance. However, the current mainstream response to woman abuse, which focuses on advocacy, safety, and coordinated/enhanced prosecution may not be culturally-appropriate and may not meet the needs of this intervention. The study conducted on barriers of accessing woman abuse services suggests that they should be the principal focus of efforts to raise awareness of the issue. The current model in effect is complaint-driven, and depends on a woman accessing the service and/or contacting the police. As such, abusers are unlikely to be held accountable through mechanisms such as batterers' treatment programmes, and their children may be exposed to violence for many years, increasing the possibility of emotional problems and violence in their adult relationships.

Providing woman abuse services to Muslim women in isolation of their families and their community of origin is not likely to be as effective as it has been for non-Muslim Canadian women. Men need to be included in prevention and intervention efforts.

Building relationships between the anti-violence agencies and the Muslim community

Key individuals in the Muslim community were identified by the coordinator of the project prior to its establishment. That happened through the participatory action research that was conducted to look at the barriers of accessing services by Muslim women. Part of the research process was interviewing key people from both the Muslim community and mainstream anti-violence agencies. The study discussed the social, political and religious context of gender and family relations in a Muslim community and the perception of members towards domestic violence and related services. The findings of this research have helped agencies represented at the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (LCCEWA) to better understand the Muslim community and the Islamic perspective of domestic violence. For advancing the relationship and mutual understanding, the following steps were undertaken:

- The LCCEWA, who was sponsoring the project, appointed a project coordinator who was a member of the Muslim community and who worked at Changing Ways, as the agency leader of the project. The coordinator worked with the support of an advisory committee from the LCCEWA.
- After the project began, the coordinator and the advisory group decided to extend the advisory committee by including representatives from the Muslim community.
- The coordinator of the project acted as a cross-cultural facilitator and helped both groups to overcome their stereotypical attitudes towards each other.
- A community map was developed and key people from faith-based groups as well as from ethno-cultural groups were identified. All this happened with the participation of representatives of the Muslim community in the project advisory committee.

e. The official launch of the project at the Mosque

What did we do?

The Muslim Family Safety Project was officially launched at the London Muslim Mosque on February 8th 2004 with presentations by religious and community leaders in the Muslim community and service provider representatives. This was followed by an open discussion forum. The official launch took place after almost a year of outreach with organizations and members in the Muslim community and local anti-violence agencies. Such outreach and relationship-building activities played, and continue to play, an important role in setting the foundation for dialogue and collaboration between two groups: the Muslim community and anti-violence

19 Baobaid, M. (2002). Access to Women Abuse Services by Arab-Speaking Muslim Women in London, Ontario. Background Investigation and Recommendations for Further Research and Community Outreach. London, Ontario, Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children.

agencies, which have differing perspectives concerning the advancement of safety of women and children within their families.

What did we do to prepare for the launch?

- Discussed the proposed plans at the advisory committee meetings.
- Developed posters that were culturally-sensitive and that included an Islamic perspective on domestic violence.
- Used the ethnic media, in particular the Arabic language newspapers and the Mosque's weekly newsletters, the Mosque's emailing lists, and the Friday sermons to advertise for the launch.

f. A strategic planning workshop day

- On Saturday June 26th 2004, a day long workshop was held in conjunction with the Association of London Muslims (ALM) at the Islamic centre of South Western Ontario. The goal of this workshop was to bring members of the Muslim community and representatives from anti-violence organizations together to collaborate in developing strategies to address the issue of family violence in the Muslim community.
- Speakers from both groups shared their views about woman and child abuse in the morning session. The members of the workshop had an opportunity to get to know each other through dialogue in six small groups where they discussed their thoughts for the next steps of the project.
- Some of the key themes that resulted from the discussions were:
  - There was consensus that the preferred model is one of collaboration between mainstream services and the Muslim community. Some participants saw such collaboration as a step towards providing unique and independent services to the Muslim community.
  - While collaboration is the most demanding model of service because it requires a process of two-way education, it is essential for several reasons. Collaboration invites mainstream agencies to learn about the Muslim community and to develop sensitive and appropriate responses. And for Muslims, it is an opportunity to benefit from an increased awareness and understanding of Canadian culture and laws.
  - Participants felt that there was a need to identify leaders from the Muslim community and from mainstream services to promote further collaboration and offer opportunities for joint learning.

g. The public education campaign

What did we do?

- 15 different presentations in different venues across the city and over a period of 22 months focused on the negative impact of domestic violence on family members, especially women and children.
- More than 50 articles were published in the Muslim community local media. Most of these articles were published in Al-Bilad Newspaper (in Arabic) as well as in English. It was the first time in the history of London's Muslim and Arab community to have articles in a community newspaper dedicated to addressing domestic violence. Over the same period of time many mainstream agencies were also profiled in the newspaper.
- The Imams of the London Muslim Mosque and the Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario collectively dedicated six Friday sermons to the issue of woman abuse and child abuse.

How did we do?

- Engaged Muslim community leaders in addressing domestic violence in their community.
- Planned for most of the activities to take place in the Mosques, and other places where members of the Muslim community gather.
- Integrated Islamic perspectives of domestic violence in all public education programs.

- An information pamphlet was developed that included Canadian legal information about domestic violence, as well as the Islamic viewpoint stating that violence against women was not acceptable in Islamic law. The Islamic perspective was written by London's two Imams who agreed to put their names on the pamphlet thus giving it more legitimacy in the eyes of the community. It was translated into the six most commonly spoken languages in London's Muslim communities.
- Mainstream service providers were invited to the Mosques to educate the Muslim community about their services and domestic violence.

h. Why was it important to engage religious leaders?

- To dispel the myths about the position of Islam towards domestic violence against women that some Muslim men and women wrongly believe.
- To provide legitimacy for publically addressing violence against women.
- To help women identify that, according to Islam, abusive behaviour is unacceptable, and, as a result, be encouraged to ask for outside help.

Why was that effective?

The whole process was based on mutual respect and understanding where every group felt equally represented and their core values respected.

i. Training workshops for service providers

A series of training workshops for mainstream service providers were organized. 402 workers from 17 agencies benefited from these workshops. The focus was oriented towards building knowledge and skills relevant to providing culturally-appropriate services for Muslim women and their families who were affected by woman abuse.

The main objectives of the training were:

1. Improved knowledge of Islam including the role and status of women, the position regarding violence against women, and family relations in Islam.
2. Improved knowledge of the cultural diversity of Muslims in London and the social, cultural and religious context of the lives of Muslim women and their families in Canada. This included an understanding of the world views of Muslim clients.
3. Increased practitioner awareness of values, assumptions and biases that impact communication and relationship-building with Muslim clients and those that interfere with providing culturally-appropriate services and supports.
4. Increased knowledge of relevant skills for relationships with Muslim clients. This included strengthening cross-cultural communication skills, empathic understanding and connection with Muslim clients.

j. The creation of the Muslim Family Support Service (MFSS)

The need for the Muslim Family Support Service resulted from the research findings and recommendations of the Muslim Family Safety Project where women who had experienced partner abuse were identified as experiencing barriers to utilizing community services.

In 2005, the MFSP initiated the Muslim Family Support Service (MFSS). It was launched in cooperation with local service agencies and the London Muslim Mosque to meet the needs of Muslim women and their children affected by domestic violence. The MFSS is overseen by an advisory committee that is comprised of 50% of representatives of the Muslim community and mainstream agencies.

The MFSS assists individuals, couples, and families in the Muslim community in their efforts to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties through:

1. Outreach to the Muslim community to encourage use of this service;
2. Establishing knowledge of and links with community services/resources;
3. Clarifying and understanding the individual/family situation that is causing distress;
4. Providing assessment, crisis intervention and safety planning as needed;
5. Facilitating the client's connection with appropriate community resources to meet identified needs.

The importance of establishing dialogue with existing agencies in order to reflect upon how to provide more accessible and culturally-appropriate service has emerged as a fundamental element of the work of the MFSS.

Since February 2005, the service has assisted more than 500 individuals. The client base is very diverse and countries of origin include Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. Clients are from different Islamic sects but may or may not be practising Muslims. The service was initially funded by the London Community Foundation, and later sustained through the support of the London Muslim Mosque until 2007. Currently the outreach worker is housed at Family Service Thames Valley and Changing Ways and funded by the United Way of London and Middlesex.

k. Challenges

One of the challenges of the Muslim Family Safety Project has been the integration of differing conceptual approaches to the issue of woman abuse by the Muslim community and by feminist oriented anti-violence agencies. The work of developing appropriate and meaningful services and supports requires responsiveness to the needs, values and concerns of members of the Muslim community as framed through their unique perspectives. In order to advance the safety of women and children in the Muslim community, and to address male violence in the home, it is necessary to engage in flexible relationships around service provision that allow minority religious and cultural communities in particular, a voice in the process. This process certainly requires an examination of key concepts and practice in existing anti-violence work, in order to address barriers of access and gaps in service. It is important to begin with integrating an intersectional understanding of the dynamics of woman abuse in its specific social, cultural, and psychological contexts as experienced by women and families in Muslim communities. Some of the main challenges that the Muslim Family Safety Project faced were as follows:

The place of Islam in the project

Even though it was made very clear in all the documents of the MFSP that the Project was not a religious project, rather a collaborative work to address domestic violence in London's Muslim community, many people from both mainstream services as well as the Muslim community believed that it was a religious organization that promoted the implementation of Sharia in family disputes. This kind of perception has been very challenging to resolve.

Engaging the Imams, male community leaders, and the Mosque

One of the main strategies used in the MFSP has been to work with the religious and community leaders of the Muslim community. Even though the leaders have provided the project significant support, there has been some hesitancy to work with them and questions about their sensitivity towards the safety of victimized women.

Clarifying the definition and use of culturally-appropriate prevention and intervention services

Theoretically there was a concern about culturally-appropriate prevention and intervention services. It has always been challenging to find a balance between the belief system of the given community and open dialogue about the safety of women and children

l. Insights

What important insights emerged from the Project?

- It is important to understand the perspectives, values, and experiences of both women and men.
- Understanding the manner in which Muslim men define or give meaning to violence will help to develop appropriate prevention materials to change attitudes.
- It is important to understand how Muslim women define domestic violence.
- A gap exists between how social services are provided by anti-violence agencies and the needs, values, and priorities of members of Muslim families affected by domestic violence.

m. Lessons learned from the MFSP

- The necessity of employing an intersectional and contextual approach to understanding different realities and worldviews.
- The importance of creating spaces for participation, open discussion and active listening, to allow for no-stigmatizing dialogue.
- The critical need to develop methods that are culturally-appropriate and responsive, and that take into consideration the values, experiences, perspectives of the identified community.

8. Appendix[20]

Acclimatization: When immigrants deal with their immediate basic needs and are becoming familiar with their new environment including customs, language, governmental and social systems, rights and responsibilities, even the weather. Life is in a state of flux.

Adaptation: When immigrants gain more in-depth and specific knowledge about their new environment, reassess personal goals, develop social networks and become more independent. Life is reasonably stable but still in transition. Energy is spent mostly on improving their level of overall functioning.

Assimilation: According to the Annual Review of Sociology, immigrant assimilation is a complex process in which an immigrant fully integrates themselves into a new country. Social scientists rely on four primary benchmarks: socioeconomic status, geographic distribution, second language attainment, and intermarriage. Encyclopedia Britannica online defines immigrant assimilation "as a way of understanding the social dynamics of American society and that it is the process that occurs spontaneously and often unintended in the course of interaction between majority and minority groups".(www. britannica.com)

Categories of Immigrants:[21]

Business immigrants: Permanent residents in the economic immigrant category selected on the basis of their ability to establish themselves economically in Canada through entrepreneurial activity, self-employment or direct investment. Business immigrants include entrepreneurs, self-employed people and investors. The spouse or common-law partner and the dependent children of the business immigrant are also included in this category.

Economic immigrants: Permanent residents selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy. The economic immigrant category includes skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial or territorial nominees and live-in caregivers.

Entrepreneurs: Economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who are selected on the condition that they have managed and controlled a percentage of equity of a qualifying business for at least two years in the period beginning five years before they apply, and that they have a legally obtained net worth of at least $300,000 (Canadian). They must own and manage a qualifying business in Canada for at least one year in the three years following arrival in Canada.

Foreign students: This category includes individuals who enter Canada to study on a temporary basis. Every foreign student must have been issued a study permit but may also have been issued other types of permits or authorizations. The foreign student category excludes foreign workers who may have been issued a study permit, as well as humanitarian and compassionate cases that have been issued a study permit.

Foreign workers: This category includes individuals who enter Canada to work on a temporary basis. Every foreign worker must have been issued a work permit but may also have been issued other types of permits or authorizations. The foreign worker category excludes foreign students who may have been issued a work permit associated with their studies or status as a student and individuals who have been issued a work permit for humanitarian reasons, such as refugee claimants.

20 Prairie Global Management. Developing Immigrant Settlement Services: A Guide for Communities, Manitoba Immigration & Multiculturalism's Settlement & Labour Market Services Branch.

21 Facts and figures 2008 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents: Glossary of terms and concepts." Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 25 08 2009. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Web. 8 June 2009. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/statistics/facts2008/glossary.asp>.

Government-assisted refugees: Permanent residents in the refugee category who are selected for resettlement in the Convention refugees abroad class or the source country class and who are eligible for government assistance.

Humanitarian and compassionate cases: Permanent residents in the other immigrant category, including sponsored humanitarian and compassionate cases outside the family class, as well as humanitarian and compassionate cases without sponsorship and cases that take into account public policy.

Independent immigrants: The independent immigrant category is a pre-IRPA (Immigration & Refugee Protection Act) category that includes skilled workers selected for their labour market skills and business immigrants selected on the basis of their business experience and other related skills.

Investors: Economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who are required to make a substantial investment in Canada that is allocated to participating provinces and territories for economic development and job creation.

Other immigrants: Permanent residents in the other immigrant category include post-determination refugee claimants, deferred removal orders, retirees (no longer designated under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)), temporary resident permit holders, humanitarian and compassionate cases, sponsored humanitarian and compassionate cases outside the family class, and people granted permanent resident status based on public policy considerations.

Post-determination refugee claimants: Permanent residents determined to be members of the post-determination refugee claimants in Canada class (PDRCC) who are included in the other immigrant category. The PDRCC class is a prescribed class where permanent residence is granted to protect a client from a threat in the country of nationality or origin where there is a risk to the life of the applicant, or a risk of excessive sanctions or inhumane treatment.

Privately sponsored refugees: Permanent residents in the refugee category who are selected for resettlement in the Convention refugees abroad class, the source country class or the country of asylum class and who are privately sponsored by organizations, individuals or groups of individuals.

Refugee claimants: Refugee claimants are temporary residents in the humanitarian population category who request refugee protection upon or after arrival in Canada. A refugee claimant receives Canada's protection when he or she is found to be a Convention refugee as defined by the United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, or when found to be a person needing protection based on risk to life, risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, or danger of torture as defined in the Convention against Torture. A refugee claimant whose claim is accepted may make an application in Canada for permanent residence. The applicant may include family members in Canada and abroad.

Refugee dependants: Refugee dependants are permanent residents in the refugee category who are family members of a refugee landed in Canada, and who were living abroad or in Canada at the time of application. Their applications for permanent residence are considered concurrently with that of the principal applicant in Canada.

Refugees: Permanent residents in the refugee category include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and refugee dependants (i.e., dependants of refugees landed in Canada, including spouses and partners living abroad or in Canada). With the introduction of IRPA, "refugees" are referred to as "Protected persons".

Refugees landed in Canada: Permanent residents in the refugee category who have had their refugee claims accepted and who subsequently applied for and were granted permanent resident status in Canada. With the introduction of IRPA, this group is referred to as "Protected persons in Canada"

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