



# The Strengthening Families in Canada Project:

Violence Prevention Education and Outreach in Immigrant and Refugee Communities

(Phase 1)





# Project Summary

- 1 year
- Community Mobilization Program, National Crime Prevention Strategy
- 4 partners:
  - Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC),
  - Multicultural Wellness Program/Mount Carmel Clinic (MCC)
  - Teen Talk/Klinic (TT)
  - Immigrant Women's Counselling Service (IWCS)/Nor-West Co-Op Community Health Centre



# Project Summary (cont'd)

## Purpose:

To raise awareness and knowledge about family violence and of community resources and services for violence prevention for immigrant and refugee men, women and youth.



Through community education and research this project aims to build capacity in immigrant and refugee communities around this complex issue.

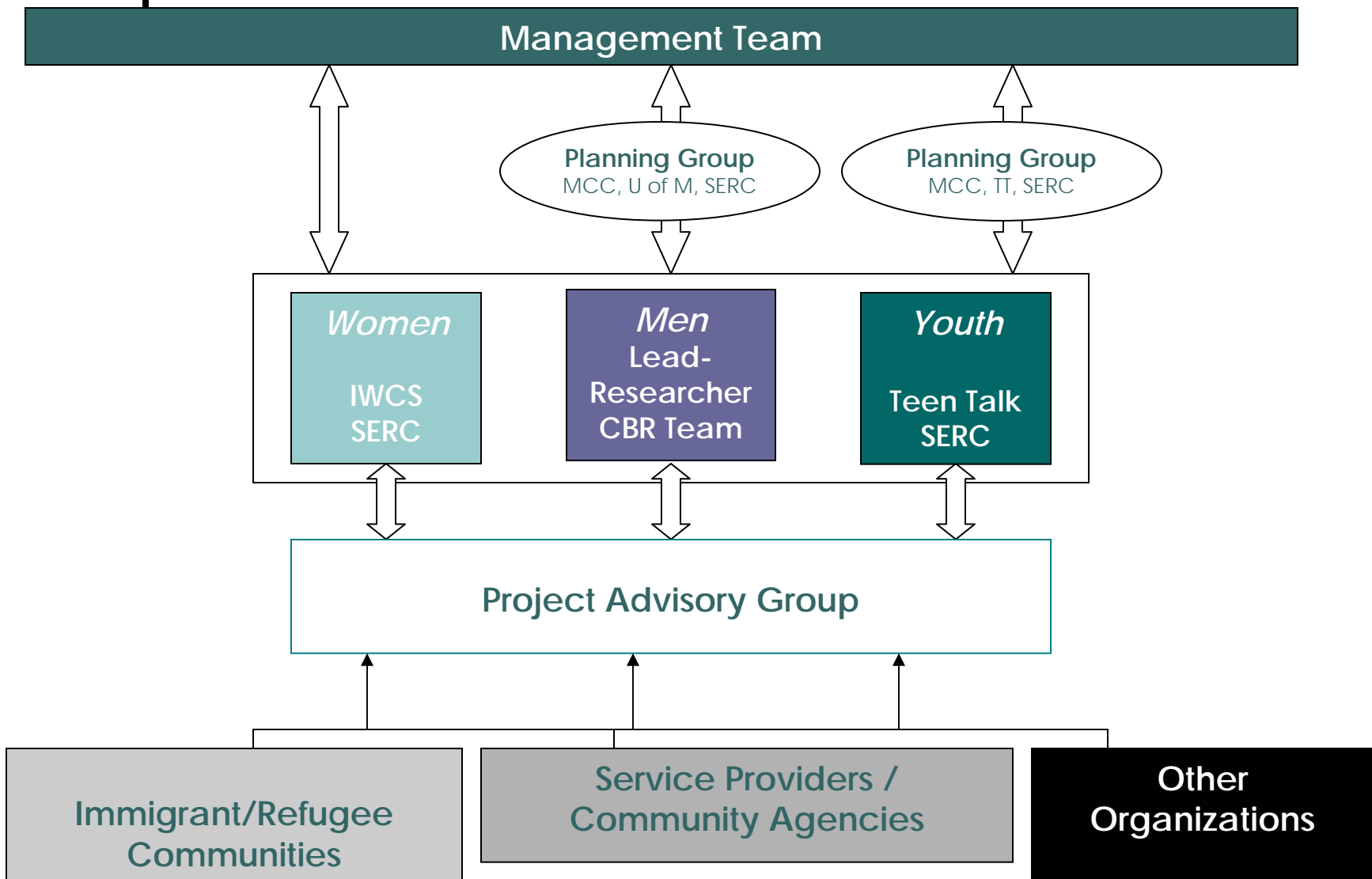


# Background

- Women's Action Against Violence Project (WAAV): IWCS & SERC – led to women's and men's streams
- Youth Pilot: MCC & SERC
- Other partners approached, TT confirmed
- 4 partners: experience in immigrant and refugee communities; youth; violence prevention
- Application to CMP



# Project Structure



# ● ● ● | Project Components

- 3 “Streams”
  - Women: Violence prevention education 10 week session
  - Youth: Violence prevention education 8 week session
  - Men: Community based research project
- Final Events
  - Community Celebration for participants, families, staff, political representatives: to celebrate successes, disseminate findings, and solicit feedback for next steps
  - Service Providers/government/funders: dissemination & to build support for Phase 2 (today!)





# Women's Project

- Lead agencies: IWCS, SERC
- Objectives
  - To reduce isolation, and enhance capacity of immigrant and refugee women to organize at a grassroots level against violence against women
  - To explore through workshops violence against women, societal expectations and gender roles, political/justice/social systems and community organizations
  - To build skills and knowledge in the area of violence against women and community outreach so that women can become community resources themselves





# Women's Project

## Principles:

- Multicultural
- Women can take action together
- Immigrant/refugee women can address the issues themselves
- Violence against women crosses cultural boundaries and barriers



# Women's Project

- 10 weeks, 3 hrs, weekday night
- 13 women, 9 core members
- Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, China, India, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Chile, El Salvador
- 3 outreach workers and 3 project support workers (logistics, note-taking), from different cultural background
- Babysitting, bus tickets, food
- Guest presenters identified and contacted
- Participants recruited by outreach workers
- Workshops: Unit A, Unit B, evaluation and closure
- Evaluation: pre- and post-test, focus group



# Women's Project

- Unit A
  - Orientation Session/Intro to Family Violence
  - Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
  - Sexuality and Culture
  - Family Violence and Health
  - Empowerment and Self Esteem
- Unit B
  - Justice System
  - Family Law
  - Immigration System
  - Welfare System
  - Community Resources for Women and Evaluation



# Women's Project

## Evaluation Findings:

- Safe space, break down isolation and create mutual support
- New information and skills learned
- Ability and examples of serving as resource in community to other women
- Sustained program by IWCS
- Recommendations from women for future:
  - More on self esteem and mental health
  - More on legal issues: zero tolerance, family law, legal aid, mediation
  - Greater frequency, opportunity to re-connect



# Youth Project

- Lead agencies: TT/SERC/MCC
- Curriculum development over several weeks
  - Heavy emphasis on recent immigration and adaptation
- 8 weeks, 3 hrs each, weekday evenings
- Food, bus tickets
- Newcomer, Latin American youth, 9 core members
- LA Youth Project Outreach Worker
- Parents contacted in recruitment/consent (in Spanish)
- Staff: youth experience/background & immigrant experience/background
- 2 facilitators Spanish-speaking, group held primarily in easy-to-understand English
- Participatory, fun activities; food, music
- Evaluation: session ratings evaluations/focus group with sub-set of participants after group



# Youth Project

## Topics

- “Juggling Cultures”: identity, acculturation, culture shock
- Communication skills
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Maintaining mental health
- Youth sexuality
- Birth control and HIV/STIs
- Appreciating diversity
- Youth panel (immigrant/non-) share experiences



# Youth Project

## Evaluation Findings:

- Safe space created for sharing openly:
  - “At school, we don’t have the opportunity to talk to friends, and we don’t talk about these topics. We don’t have a way to know what someone is thinking or to have discussions. We don’t share and discuss the issues.”
- Focus on acculturation very important – and lead to better understanding of & communication with parents
- Isolation broken down as youth develop connections and find common experience
  - "In Canada, I could be in the middle of a room full of people and feel very lonely"
- Strong interest in continued participation
- New knowledge learned and that could be applied in their lives



# Youth Project

## Recommendations

### ○ Youth:

- Dating and relationships with parents, peer pressure
- Balance of negative and positive. Provide sense of hope
- Longer sessions, multicultural sessions

### ○ Facilitators

- Continued emphasis on integration, opportunities to practice skills based on different settings, e.g. school, family
- Additional topics: Media messages; drugs/gang involvement prevention



# Men's Project



## **Lead Researcher**

Louise Simbandumwe

## **Community Based Research Team**

Carlos Campos, Aurelio Madut Danto  
Raul Dimaculangan, Mubarak  
Mohammed, Abdul-Rahim Noori and  
Hanh Pham

## **Research Advisory Group**

Louise Simbandumwe, Paula Migliardi,  
Shereen Denetto and Dr. Brenda Bacon,  
University of MB, Social Work



## Men's Project: Origins of the Project

- Women's recommendations to the WAAV project evaluation
- Limited research and programming on domestic violence prevention with immigrant men



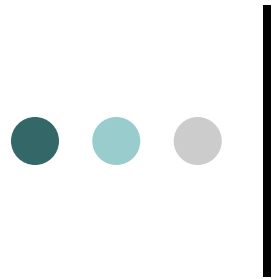
## Men's Project Objectives

- To develop an understanding of how domestic violence is perceived by immigrant and refugee men
- To determine the best way to deliver culturally competent community education/public awareness on domestic violence for immigrant and refugee men



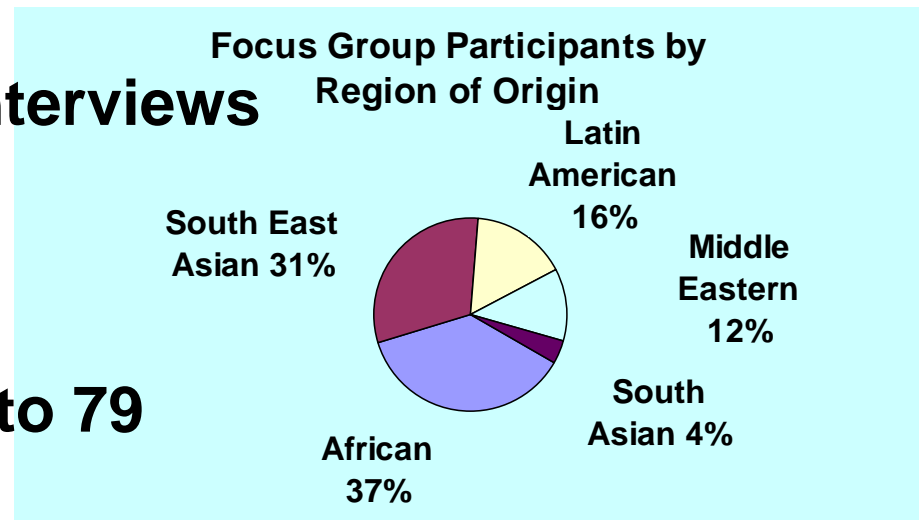
# Men's Project Methodology

- Community-Based Research approach & model
  - Research Advisory Committee
  - 6 Community-based researchers from diverse communities
  - Process for questionnaire development, co-facilitation of focus groups, data analysis and final report feedback
  - Focus groups (primarily) & interviews with immigrant and refugee men
- Literature and Program Review
- Service providers (local, Canadian) focus groups and interviews



# Men's Project: Participant Profile

- 65 men, 22 countries
- 7 focus groups and interviews
- Ages ranged from 17 to 79
- One third were newcomers
- 60% came to Canada as refugees





# Men's Project: Men's Understanding of Domestic Violence

- Broad range of actions considered to be domestic violence:
  - Physical
  - Psychological
  - Economic
  - Intergenerational conflict



# Men's Project: Men's Understanding of Causes of Domestic Violence

- Economic stress, unemployment, loss of status
  - “Frustration. I am not confident because I don't get a job, economic frustration affects the emotional order”
- Adapting to cultural differences and loss of power in childrearing and gender relations
- Expanded rights, resources and freedom of women:
  - “Men have privileges. In African countries men tend to dominate. Here women find a better status...that can create problems”
- Lack of information



# Men's Project: Perspectives on Power

- Reversal of power dynamics within the home
- Perception of higher position of women within Canadian society
- Expansion of women's rights provided protection and equality for women
- Acknowledgment of resistance of immigrant men to extending their rights to women and children



## Men's Project: Need for Prevention Programs

- Reactions to focus on immigrant men in particular
- Support for increasing access to information – before or just after arrival
- First language
- Information is not enough – stable permanent services



# Men's Project: Primary Prevention Programs

## **Primary Prevention Approaches**

- Public Awareness
- Community-Based Approaches
- School-based Programs
- Orientation for Newcomers

## **Community Education**

- emphasis on positive values
- acquisition of skills and information to promote family harmony
- broad range of related issues as opposed to just focus on domestic violence



## Men's Project: Recommendations

- Offer separate parallel streams for women, youth, and men as well as joint sessions
- Adopt a holistic approach to domestic violence prevention
- Incorporate materials that emphasize positive messages about family harmony without compromising domestic violence prevention



## Men's Project: Recommendations cont'd

- Incorporate stand alone sessions for community groups and agencies
- Involve men as partners – in paid positions – in program development, recruitment and delivery
- *Train the Trainer* approach
- work with specific communities to adapt the program
- advocate for long term core funding to support primary domestic violence prevention initiatives



# Success Factors: Partnership Development

- Good cross-section of partners
- Collaborative framework
  - active participation of core partners
  - increased resources/opportunities
- Multiple opportunities for involvement
- Community resources as guest speakers a form of partnering



# Success Factors: Community Education and Outreach

- Education techniques:
  - Adult education/youth education
  - Many immigrants/refugees- professional skills & experience
  - Increase in knowledge and skills reported
- Outreach and recruitment methods
- Integration of cross-cultural issues, context, processes throughout (versus add-on)
- Holistic/population health approach (e.g. women's: law, social assistance, etc.)
- Relationship-building, peer-support facilitated
- Accessibility



# Success Factors: Research and Evaluation

- Key component in planning/implementation
  - Monitoring
  - building community engagement
  - confirms successes & builds promising practices
- Research partnerships



# Success Factors: Individual & Community Capacity Building, Community Engagement

- Engagement as a core principle
- Community participation facilitated
  - Staffing, including past participants
  - Project Advisory Group
  - Community event/dissemination
- Supporting increased self-esteem & empowerment:

“Improve self-esteem - Encourage yourself – because you have knowledge now, you feel you have more confidence as well and we have a support system now. You don’t feel alone and helpless – and you know there are people who can help you and you can also help somebody if they’re in trouble”



# Success Factors: Individual & Community Capacity Building, Community Engagement cont'd

- Empowerment:

“Now we know our rights as women, as immigrant women. If we’re in an abusive relationship, we know the right steps to take. If there is fear of deportation, now we know – we can find the right people, right places”

- Addressing isolation, building social capital

- Peer Resource Model

- Increased opportunities:

- Youth – United Nations Study on Violence Against children, North America Regional Consultation. Toronto, June 2005
- Report to school classroom
- Community presentation by youth
- Follow up summer sessions



# Success Factors: Organizational Capacity Building

- Bringing together IR and non-IR agencies – building capacity and access
- Staffing
- Organizational Processes/Policies
  - Promotes examination of cultural competence in practice, policies



# Learnings & Challenges

- Diversity within diversity – accessing all; being neutral
- Partnerships – time intensive; ensuring common expectations
- Flexible approach to education to address presenting issues: finding a balance between goals of project and immediate needs of participants (e.g. youth)
- Language barriers with multicultural approach
- Holistic approach
- Integration of cross-cultural information, context, processes rather than “add on”
- Working in IR community on sensitive issues such as violence, sexual health
- Lack of resources, e.g. for immigrant youth
- Community member involvement at all levels of project



# Next Steps

Phase 2 proposal developed:

- 2 year project
- Integrated team (men/women) as community based public educators
  - Develop ethno-specific prevention education tools
  - Implement in specific communities
- Youth: 2 types of sessions
  - Acculturation, support, violence prevention and sexual health info
  - Peer Resource Training and implementation
- Women's and youth curricula fully developed
- Service provider professional development

# Questions?

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