

Nowhere to Turn?

*Responding to Partner Violence
Against Immigrant and
Visible Minority Women*

Forum Proceedings



CANADIAN COUNCIL ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Enhancing the Capacity of the Voluntary Sector and the Justice System
to Respond to
Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women**

Proceedings of a National Forum

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Ottawa

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Members of the project Advisory Group deserve special recognition for their work on this project in addition to jobs in their own organizations. Their dedication to the task and excellent ideas created a positive climate, which was appreciated by the Forum participants and acknowledged as a key factor in its success.

Another major factor in the Forum's success was the role played by the presenters. They delivered clear and thought-provoking ideas, which helped set the tone and focus of the discussions. Thanks to all the presenters at the Forum.

The Forum was also honoured by the presence of federal representatives, including Penney Baxter from the Department of Justice Canada, Barbara Riley from Status of Women Canada, and Patrick McInrue from the RCMP. Participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in formal and informal discussions with these representatives, and their presentations were extremely useful in discussions about the major issues faced by organizations in delivering their services.

Thanks also to Sylvie Desforges and Rachel Green from the CCSD and to Natasha Mirza-beg, a placement student from Carleton University, for their administrative support and assistance with the Forum.

Thanks to all the people who participated in this Forum. It was a success because of your dedication and commitment. Let us stay in touch and continue to work together!

Introduction:

This report focuses on key recommendations from a national forum on “Enhancing the capacity of the voluntary sector and the justice system to respond to violence against immigrant and visible minority women in Canada.” The Forum was held May 22-23, 2003 in Ottawa.

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) organized the Forum as part of a larger study on immigrant and visible minority women who experience partner violence. In that larger study, focus group discussions were held with frontline workers in seven cities across Canada: Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. The goal of the National Forum was to provide frontline workers with the opportunity to discuss findings from a draft report on this project and to have them identify recommendations for action.

“The people who attended from Calgary have decided to maintain the connections and share the information we learned at the Forum with other agencies and professionals back home. The Forum was of significant value to each of us and the work we are trying to accomplish. The opportunity to view our work through this broader lens and gain a better understanding of the complex context and socio-political influences on this issue was invaluable, and will enrich our planning and day-to-day work.” *Forum participant*

The larger research study was guided by an advisory group of 11 experts from immigrant and visible minority communities, frontline workers and government departments. Members of the advisory group also participated in the planning and facilitation of this National Forum.

The Forum stimulated a lot of interest, and it raised hopes that the voluntary sector and the justice system would gain useful recommendations to enhance service delivery to immigrant and visible minority women who experienced partner violence.

“The structure of the Forum, with brief presentations to stimulate and guide the discussions, allowed ample time for dialogue and information sharing. It was conducive to focused and productive outcomes. The presentations themselves provided good information about innovative programming, funding issues and lobbying attempts by agencies to resolve some of those concerns.” *Forum participant*

Background:

The Forum was organized as part of a broader research project examining partner violence against immigrant and visible minority women. The goals of the research project were to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and causes of partner violence against immigrant and visible minority women, identify recommendations for actions to increase access to community services and the justice system in order to support victims, and to promote services that are responsive to the needs of this evolving and diverse population.

The research project was also designed to address policy priorities of the Department of Justice Canada, through its Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD) initiative, namely policy priorities concerning family violence, equality, diversity and access to justice. Work under this project was also linked with identified priorities of the RCMP (learning about diversity), Solicitor General Canada (victims and diversity in the offender population), and Status of Women Canada (eliminating violence against women).

Immigrant and visible minority women who experience partner violence face a complex problem that can be further complicated by additional social, cultural, financial, linguistic, legal and immigration issues. And these issues can be further compounded by systemic barriers that include stereotyping, discrimination, isolation, marginalization, and by funding cutbacks that affect the provision of services. Evidence from a review of the research literature and observations from focus group discussions clearly showed that the intersection of these social, cultural and systemic barriers have a profound influence on immigrant and visible minority women who are victims of partner abuse and on their ability to obtain relevant and appropriate help.

Traditionally, immigrant and visible minority women who have been abused have not sought help for the problem. Empirical evidence from Statistics Canada's Victimization Survey and from focus group discussions indicates that these women were the least likely to report incidents of abuse to the police, and they were the least likely to use available social services. In order for immigrant and visible minority women to access social services and other helping agencies, they must feel confident that there are culturally appropriate assessment and intervention programs in place.

"I was pleased to be a part of this Forum and inspired by the work that others are doing. I am impressed by the level of community collaboration around intimate partner violence, and I would like to emulate this model in Nova Scotia." *Forum participant*

To follow up on the research findings, the Forum included discussions on strategies to reduce incidents of partner violence against immigrant and visible minority women, as well as strategies to provide more sensitive and appropriate victimization services.

Forum discussions focused on the following topics:

1. The development of greater cultural competency in the justice system and in agencies that deliver victimization services;
2. The development of culturally appropriate education materials on violence against women, to be used with ethno-cultural groups in the community; and
3. Building networks and partnerships to address the problem of violence against women in immigrant and visible minority communities.

"The Forum was well-organized, with ample opportunity for everyone to speak and provide feedback to the presenters. It was a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere, and I met many interesting people. I will go back to Halifax with some very useful information and a better understanding of the issues." *Forum participant*

“This ‘sacred space’ provided the rarity of time to reflect on the broader context for this work and to fit our individual struggles and successes into a national framework. It helped clarify the social and political impacts that ultimately shape the lives of the women, children and men with whom we work.” *Forum participant*

Opening remarks from the Canadian Council on Social Development: John Anderson

John Anderson, Vice President of Research at the CCSD welcomed the Forum participants and provided a brief overview of Canada’s changing demographics.

Evidence from the 2001 Census shows a growing trend of ethnic diversity in Canada. In 1981, 9.4% of the population was made up of immigrants and visible minorities, and by 2001, this had risen to 13.4%. This was the result of dramatic changes in the source countries for immigrants to Canada. Prior to 1961, the vast majority of immigrants to Canada came from Europe (90.5%); only 3% came here from Asia. Between 1991 and 2001, however, the numbers changed dramatically, with most new immigrants now coming from Asia (58%), and only 19.5% from Europe.

Unfortunately, the implications of these changes have included greater economic marginalization and racial discrimination towards Canada’s immigrant and visible minority populations. In his concluding remarks, Anderson reaffirmed the CCSD’s support for policies to meet the needs of those most adversely affected.

Background to the Forum: Khaddouj Souaid

Khaddouj Souaid, a graduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, outlined the importance of addressing partner violence against immigrant and visible minority women. Presentations at the Forum would seek specific strategies to reduce partner violence and enhance the provision of more sensitive and adequate victimization services. In addition, action plans and recommendations for policy changes would also be sought. She reiterated the importance of these discussions and encouraged all participants to use this opportunity to be heard.

Presentation of the interim report, *Nowhere to Turn?*: Ekuwa Smith

Ekuwa Smith, Senior Research Associate at the CCSD, presented the findings from the first stages of this project, and described the role that the Council’s Cultural Diversity Program had in bringing a focus to this issue. She expressed gratitude to the focus group participants and talked about the wonderful relationships she had formed through the course of this project. Her research indicates that while “abuse is abuse is abuse,” and it is damaging and hurtful no matter what language the victim may speak or what colour skin

they may have, immigrant and visible minority women find themselves in a particularly complex situation.

Key findings from the study indicate that partner abuse remains a significant problem in Canada – one-third of all Canadian women reported being victimized by abuse. For immigrant and visible minority women, the problem of partner abuse is further complicated by issues related to their social status and cultural background, by racial stereotyping, by linguistic challenges, and by a lack of access to supports within the justice system.

Additional concerns related to such things as living on low incomes because of economic marginalization, worries about how reporting the abuse would affect their immigration or refugee status, and the lack of culturally appropriate services to provide them with support and assistance.

Dr. Smith summarized the results from focus groups that were held in seven cities. Among the major issues identified by those frontline workers were the need to develop strategies to promote adequate legal representation, community outreach, counselling services, and collaborative networks, and the impact that different legislation – such as Bill C-22 on divorce and child custody – may have on immigrant and visible minority women fleeing abuse.

Summary of the Forum Presentations:

The Forum included panel presentations at five plenary sessions and five workshops. In all, there were 22 presenters and 65 participants at the Forum (see Appendix B for the detailed Forum Agenda).

The first plenary session presented personal case stories which dramatically illustrated the very real and human suffering endured by victims of partner abuse. Other plenary sessions focused on funding strategies; institutional support and service delivery; and best-practice models for delivering comprehensive multicultural services, policing practices and alternative justice resolutions. The final plenary summarized policy recommendations from the workshops. Workshop sessions focused on legal representation, community outreach, the impact of different legislation, developing collaborative networks, and counselling approaches.

“I enjoyed the presentations and sharing information about existing programs as well as discussing gaps and challenges within the justice system, immigration policies, issues with racism and discrimination.” *Forum participant*

Plenary Sessions:

Personal Case Stories :

“I appreciated the three courageous women sharing their personal experiences and the hurdles they had to go through with systems and services, as well as dealing with families and friends.”
Forum participant

1st Presenter:

This woman described her community as a place where partner abuse is considered to be a family affair, and a woman who reaches out for help is said to have betrayed her husband and family. Women who leave their marriage are frowned upon and they are subjected to social and cultural isolation and ostracism. Key concerns in this woman’s struggle against partner abuse were the lack of shelters and subsidized housing, difficulties in accessing employment and financial supports, and inadequate access to counselling services and legal representation. She stressed that when immigrant and visible minority women in abusive situations reach out for help, they often feel as if they have simply moved “from the frying pan into the fire.” For some of these women, the abusive relationship may seem more stable and predictable than the chaotic and often frustrating process of trying to deal with the systems currently in place.

2nd Presenter:

The second presenter emphasized the strong influence of culture on immigrant and visible minority women. She expressed frustration with current systems designed to help abused women. For such women, the option of leaving the abusive situation is fraught with uncertainty because they do not know what will happen. She urged people within the system to sympathize with immigrant and visible minority women who were victims of partner abuse, and to treat them with respect and dignity.

3rd Presenter

The third presenter summed up her experiences with social services, police and the courts as “a nightmare.” She called on shelters to be more sympathetic to victims of partner violence and recommended that people working in the courts and police systems receive special training on ethno-cultural issues around partner violence.

Funding Strategies:

Because funding has such an enormous impact on the availability and quality of services for immigrant and visible minority women, funding strategies were a priority on the Forum agenda. Penney Baxter from the Department of Justice Canada, Barbara Schleifer from the United Way of Calgary, and Barbara Riley from Status of Women Canada were presenters for this session.

Penney Baxter, Program Analyst with the Department of Innovations, Analysis and Integration Directorate of the federal Department of Justice opened the funding plenary by discussing her department's role in supporting projects.

Ms. Baxter acknowledged that there has been a lack of federal funding in this area, but there have also been some creative ways of supporting programs related to violence against women. Other funded projects have focussed on issues of crime prevention, victims of crime, youth justice, and child support. She distributed copies of the Department's funding guidelines and pointed out some criteria to consider when developing proposals – such as innovation, sustainability of the project and collaboration efforts. She encouraged the Forum participants to follow-up with her on their project ideas and indicated her department's willingness to help them develop their ideas into winning proposals and to assist in the search for funding.

Barbara Riley, Program and Development Officer, Status of Women Canada presented information about her department's funding program, the resources available, and criteria to consider when developing proposals. She highlighted the broad goals and objectives of the department, and suggested they should be the focus of proposals submitted. These included women's equality on issues related to political participation, economic and social well-being, and access to justice. She also indicated her department's interest in assisting agencies in developing strategic action plans for their initiatives, providing technical support, and assistance in facilitating partnerships. She outlined key criteria for good proposals, as follows:

- ✓ Broad goal and purpose fits into the department's goals and purpose;
- ✓ Clear statement of the issue and its context;
- ✓ Identification of specific outcomes;
- ✓ Illustrate the need for the project and its feasibility;
- ✓ Establish links between the project goals, activities, deliverables and outcomes; and,
- ✓ The participation and involvement of women is directly linked to the issue.

Barbara Schleifer, Senior Research Associate at the United Way of Calgary, indicated that each United Way operates independently, and she described the priorities of her organization. These include safety from violence, children and youth, economic well-being, and community safety nets. Her organization has helped address issues related to immigrant and visible minority communities through a family conflict program. This initiative was requested by the immigrant community in Calgary, and the United Way of Calgary facilitated the project by recruiting additional partners, including the city, Canadian Heritage, and a coalition of immigrant-serving agencies. Keys to the success of the project were that it was initiated by the cultural community and it was run by a stakeholder committee.

What does the system have to offer?

Halima Nur Ali, from Pinecrest Queensway Health and Community Services in Ottawa, spoke from her perspective as Case Manager for Mental Health Services. She acknowledged that existing services do not meet the needs of immigrant and visible minority women who are new to Canada. Many services do not take into consideration those who have no proficiency in English or French, or those who do not understand Canadian culture. “We have to meet the women where they are, which means we have to change our approach,” although that it is not necessarily easy to do. Citing one case on which she had worked for 10 years, a woman who was experiencing partner violence had been further abused by the systems designed to help her. The victim had been threatened with jail time and had almost lost her children to her abuser.

Maha Bustami, a Community and Immigration Counsellor at the Arab Community Centre in Toronto, was herself a new immigrant to Canada 10 years ago. She observed that in light of gender inequality in the Arab community, options available to Arab women in Canada were inadequate. Little had been published about violence in Arab families, and partner violence was seen mainly as a “family affair.” She stressed the need for social workers to understand the cultural context of partner violence when dealing with Arabic women, and she expressed frustration with the Canadian legal system. In her view, the justice system offered some help to victims of domestic violence, but budget cuts had had a negative impact on the most vulnerable victims. She said cases need to be processed more quickly in order to reduce stress and trauma, and she urged participants to support extended family members who often must step in to care for abused women.

How do you build services with an ongoing diversity component?

Melissa Rowe, Executive Director of the Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute in Ottawa, engaged Forum participants in discussions about their views of diversity and how those views could be incorporated into their organizations. Ms. Rowe defined diversity as valuing the people in an organization and incorporating their perspectives in the smooth running of the organization. The key was “seeing diversity as an asset.” Other participants shared strategies that had worked in their own organizations, such as strategies related to community outreach, staff recruitment, the use of dedicated spaces for women, and adapting principles and techniques of program delivery to suit different client groups.

Ms. Rowe provided tips for valuing diversity, including the following:

- ✓ Actively solicit input from a diverse group of people;
- ✓ Involve different groups in problem-solving and developing opportunities;
- ✓ Challenge assumptions that limit opportunities;
- ✓ Educate yourself about your own cultural values and background;
- ✓ Speak out when others’ values and views are not taken into account; and,
- ✓ Examine issues from other points of view before making decisions.

“How can non-immigrant communities work as allies with immigrant communities in a way that is transparent and meaningful? How can we do this in a way that it is not tokenism or exclusionary? How can we build on our mutual strengths to create an even stronger force to collectively bring about change in the various systems?”
Forum participant

Best Practices:

This final plenary, chaired by Khaddouj Souaid, dealt with best-practice models to address the needs of victims of domestic violence and deliver meaningful services to victims and their families. The discussions included the role of the police, alternative justice models, and comprehensive services.

Role of the Police:

Kai Liu, a Staff Sergeant in the Partner Assault Unit of the Ottawa Police Service, opened this session by discussing current initiatives to address what he referred to as “society’s most prevalent problem” He spoke about the risk of intimate homicide/femicide and what the Ottawa Police, in conjunction with the community, have been doing to provide better protection for victims.

A working group, known as the Revised Service Delivery Model (RSDM), was formed to identify a strategic plan of response. Gaps identified by the working group included the lack of availability of investigators trained in this area, inadequate staff to meet the high volume of investigations, and a lack of case managers to monitor, document and follow-up on incidents of domestic violence. Several recommendations were made, including the following:

- increase staffing;
- create case management positions;
- formulate partnerships with victim-service agencies; and,
- provide continuous training for all frontline staff.

S/Sgt Liu reported that the working group’s recommendations had been put in place, with the creation of the Partner Assault Unit in 2000 as one example. By adopting this approach to risk management, the number of cases assigned to the Unit had dramatically increased. This, he felt, was a direct result of the community having had meaningful input into the creation of the system, then supporting and promoting it. S/Sgt Liu said this was the only specialized domestic violence investigative unit in Ontario, and they have created one of the most comprehensive risk-indicator tools in the business.

“Information on Ottawa’s specialized domestic violence court and police unit has helped me draw direct comparisons with Calgary’s institutions, which will help inform my advocacy for systemic change.”
Forum participant

Alternative Justice Resolutions:

Smita Vir Tyagi, Coordinator of the Men's Program at the Counterpoint Counselling and Educational Co-operative Inc. in Toronto, stressed the need for diverse initiatives to counter the phenomena of domestic violence. She called for strategies which incorporate a multi-sector response and a coordinated community response. She urged women's advocacy groups and shelters to build community capacity by developing "a seamless response." She also reiterated that as stakeholders, immigrant and visible minority women have a key role to play in addressing partner violence by raising their voices and their presence "at the table." She hoped that more abusers would voluntarily opt for counselling, rather than only when it has been mandated by the courts. She identified education for men and boys and economic empowerment of women as two other key components in the solution to partner abuse in immigrant and visible minority communities.

Comprehensive Service Delivery:

Shashi Assanand, Executive Director of the Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Services Society, provided an overview of her organization's work in providing culturally sensitive services to immigrant and visible minority women and their families. The Society's setup models what services for this group should be, avoiding the alienation that some women experience when dealing with mainstream agencies and the "ghettoization" of ethno-cultural agencies. Her organization provides educational programs to promote awareness of and sensitivity to issues of family violence in immigrant and minority communities and helps build community capacity through leadership development and volunteers.

Workshops:

Development of Collaborative Networks:

Facilitator: **Luciya Spencer**, Executive Director
Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa

Presenter: **Dreeni Geer**, Director
Women and Children's Safety and Strategic Safety Partnership Program
Metropolitan Action Committee for Violence Against Women and
Children (METRAC), Toronto

This session focussed on the marginalization of immigrant and visible minority women in mainstream agencies and how to develop successful coalitions to address their concerns.

Anti-violence work can begin from a common understanding of marginalization based on the intersections of gender and race. The key to realizing such a vision is to incorporate healthy and inclusive practices into the organizational structures and daily work of

agencies. Once these practices become part of the regular delivery of programs, genuine services for immigrant and visible minority groups cease to be viewed as “add-ons.”

Immigrant and visible minority women are not a homogenous group. They constitute a rich and diverse population, with differing needs, issues and concerns, but few initiatives currently in place recognize those distinct experiences. Coalitions can help build this recognition, but developing coalitions can be challenging. The challenges include a lack of funding, little staff time available, and competing organizational interests. In order to form effective and united coalitions, these obstacles must be addressed.

Legal Representation:

Facilitator: **Margaret Wilhelm**, Executive Director
Minority Rights Association of Greater Chateaugay

Presenter: **Beryl Tsang**, Trainer/Materials Developer
Immigrant Women’s Program, Education Wife Assault, Toronto

This discussion focused on access to legal representation for immigrant and visible minority women who experience partner violence. Navigating through the justice system can be a huge challenge for these women. They face language barriers, negative attitudes from some lawyers, high legal fees and inadequate legal aid, their cases move slowly through the courts, and there are few alternatives in the system beyond simply prosecuting the abusers. Comprehensive legal representation would include lawyers who have some cross-cultural understanding and who would listen to and respect the views of their clients. It would also include basic education about court procedures and human rights for the victims. An essential component in the development of responsive laws and policies is a thorough analysis of the policies and practices in relation to gender, race and class. Here again, it is important to include the voices of these women when determining adequate legal services in their battle against partner violence.

Counselling:

Facilitator: **Lilian Valverde**, Coordinator
Latin- American Coalition of Family Violence

Presenter: **Alba Féliz Rodriguez**, Director
Centre for Cross-Cultural Counselling and Education, Ottawa

This workshop explored counselling approaches to address the emotional and psychological needs of immigrant and visible minority women who are victims of partner violence.

The emotional and psychological issues affecting this group are complex and multi-layered. Some of the issues identified included the following: feelings of loss and grief; cultural shock; low self-image; feelings of isolation and alienation; and a general lack of support. Prolonged stress caused by cultural adjustments, family separation, and economic and cultural marginalization were also identified as major concerns facing

these women. Particular focus in the discussions was given to issues related to housing, immigration status, legal issues and financial struggles.

Different counselling approaches were discussed. Among the models used by Forum participants were the following: the cultural-deficit approach; the social constructionist or socio-cultural approach; feminist counselling; collective storytelling; and the psychological approach. Some forms of counselling should be revised to better reflect cultural and linguistic knowledge. For example, the feminist counselling approach needs to recognize the impact of ethnic and socio-cultural factors on these clients, in addition to the political influences on women. Participants also felt that incorporating both Eastern and Western values – rather than one or the other – would be beneficial, and the collective storytelling approach was highly recommended by most participants.

Community Outreach:

Facilitator: **Shamin Sayani**, Support Advocate
Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre

Presenters: **Kim Bailey**, Sexuality Education Resource Centre, Winnipeg
Martha Aviles, Immigrant Women's Counselling Services, Winnipeg
Khaddouj Souaid, Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute, Ottawa

Presenters from the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) and Immigrant Women's Counselling Services (IWCS) shared with this session, and they described a joint training program that was set up to address issues of domestic abuse and sexuality for immigrant and refugee women. The program focused on principles of multiculturalism, women's collective action, and the ability of immigrant and refugee women to address their concerns. By doing so, organizers hoped to enhance the capacity of immigrant and visible minority women in Winnipeg and generate grassroots support to address the cross-cultural problem of violence against women. These principles were key to the success of this project. It is an excellent model of how mainstream agencies can reach out to immigrant and ethnic communities, gain their trust and support, and thereby deliver relevant and appropriate services.

Khaddouj Souaid spoke about other issues relevant to community outreach, such as economic empowerment, social engagement, political participation and access to justice. Forum participants stressed the need for advisory groups – with community representatives – as essential components of projects and programs. Issues around language proficiency, specialized training, and translation services were also deemed important to successful community outreach.

“I'm impressed by the great work being done across the country in small agencies – and often with very little funding – to bring about change in their communities. We can all benefit from learning about the many creative initiatives being developed and we can integrate them into the work of our own agencies. I would like to see more opportunities for immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies to come together with 'mainstream' agencies to discuss how to make all of our

organizations more accessible, particularly to those who face multiple barriers due to language, sexual orientation, disability, age, or mental health.”

Forum participant

Impact of the Legislation:

Facilitator: **Erin Lee-Todd**, Children’s Counsellor
Interval House

Presenter: **Beth Jordan**, Director of Women’s Services
Assaulted Women’s Helpline
Fatima Jaffer, Anti-violence Worker
Vancouver Custody and Access Support and Advocacy Association

Discussions here revolved around issues related to Bill C-22 and other legislative policies that will have an impact on the lives of immigrant and visible minority women who are experiencing partner violence.

Presenters spoke about particular events and movements that have had an influence on proposed legislation and pose potential risks to women trying to escape abuse. Among those were the following: groups in the 1990s organized around father’s rights and lobbying for things like tax breaks for child support payments; Ontario’s Child Law Reform Act; issues around eligibility for legal aid; and work by Senator Anne Cools to require shared parenting upon divorce or separation.

A key concern with the current legislation is its assumption of gender equality in the home. As many Forum participants know from their frontline work, that is rarely the case. As a result, they believe this legislation and similar policy initiatives could potentially harm women, and could seriously damage the lives of immigrant and visible minority women in particular.

Forum participants were also concerned that immigrant and visible minority women had had little or no input into these issues. They identified the need to invest human and financial resources to engage women in these important discussions, and they also recommended that policy-makers reach out to ensure that grassroots and community groups are involved in the development of relevant policy and legislation.

Key Recommendations From Forum Participants:

1. Community outreach:

- Community agencies need to build trusting relationships with immigrant and visible minority women.
- Agencies need to develop comprehensive programs to support men, women and children.
- Educational programs about partner violence and prevention strategies are needed, with some specifically targeted for audiences in cultural communities.

- Community organizations need stable core funding, rather than the current project-based funding models.

“I made several contacts at the Forum that I have followed up. They helped answer specific questions about culturally appropriate practices because they are doing things in their communities that we have not yet done.” *Forum participant*

2. Legal representation:

- There is a need for more information about legal resources available in the community.
- Legal services for this population of women need to be delivered with more sensitivity and more awareness about cultural principles and customs.
- Trained peer educators and advocates are needed to support victims as they go through the court system.
- More women would be encouraged to tell their stories if the judicial system was more culturally appropriate and more supportive.
- The complications caused by clashes of race, gender, and religion need to be recognized in the delivery of legal services because they affect the women’s ability to reach out for help.
- Judicial services provided by different levels of government need to be better coordinated.
- Special court sessions with trained staff – like dedicated family violence courts in some jurisdictions – should be developed to deal with this population.
- A comprehensive program of advocacy, mediation and direct services for immigrant and visible minority women is needed in the Canadian judicial system. The “Friend of the court” model used in Ann Arbor, Michigan, was cited as an excellent example.

3. Impact of legislation:

- Regular meetings at the provincial and national levels are needed to give service providers the opportunity to discuss the impact of different legislation (such as Bill C-22) on their clients.
- More cross-sectoral work in communities and regions is needed to build on collective strengths and develop strategies around proposed legislation and policies that affect community-based services.
- Federal, provincial and municipal policy-makers need to help foster community outreach initiatives to immigrant and visible minority groups. This will enhance the involvement of such groups in the development of relevant and appropriate legislation.

“I gained tools to prepare to intervene in the next round of changes to custody and access legislation (Bill C-22). Some of the information was specific to the perspectives of racialized women.” *Forum participant*

4. Development of collaborative networks:

- Provincial and municipal governments should allocate budget resources to help develop grassroots coalitions around issues of partner violence in immigrant communities.
- Community-based organizations and government agencies need to recognize the value of coalitions and networks, and support them with staff time and resources.

“I appreciated the opportunity to network with people who are dedicated to making the lives of immigrant women, children and men safer and more fulfilling. I made several contacts during the Forum with whom I hope to sustain communications and I’ve learned about some innovative programming that may be effectively ‘transplanted’ to our community.” *Forum participant*

5. Counselling approaches:

- Counselling programs are needed that include enough flexibility to accommodate these clients’ diverse needs, such as flexibility in the number of counselling sessions, yet are broad enough to provide such things as bus tokens, food, or childcare, for example.
- The collective storytelling approach is useful for this group of women.
- Counsellors in settlement agencies should receive training to handle issues of partner violence and ethnic diversity, as well as specific cross-cultural training.
- Agencies that deliver services to immigrant and visible minority victims of partner abuse require adequate funding to enable them to deliver their services and provide prevention and outreach work in the community.

6. Other recommendations:

- A network for service providers and advocates is needed to promote information-sharing and provide support in this work.

Appendix A: Project Advisory Group

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Appendix B: Forum Agenda

Nowhere to Turn? Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women

National Forum
May 22–23, 2003
Ottawa, Ontario

Sponsored by the Canadian Council on Social Development
with support from the Department of Justice Canada

Day One:

Opening Plenary: 8:30 am – 10:30 am

Introduction

John Anderson, Vice President of Research, Canadian Council on Social Development

Background and purpose of Forum

Khaddouj Souaid, School of Social Work, Carleton University

Presentation of report, *Nowhere to Turn?*

Ekuwa Smith, Senior Research Associate, CCSD

Personal case stories:

Faiza Al-Hilo

Ms. Asiya

Maria Yacob

Questions and comments: Khaddouj Souaid, Facilitator

Break: 10:30 am – 10:40 am

Concurrent Workshops: 10:40 am – 12:15 pm

Community outreach

Kim Bailey, Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC)

Martha Aviles, Immigrant Women's Counselling Service

Khaddouj Souaid, Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute

Facilitator: Shamin Sayani, Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre

Notetaker: Maria S. Nguyen

Legal representation

Beryl Tsang, Education and Training Materials, Education Wife Assault

Facilitator: Margaret Wilhelm, Executive Director, Minority Rights Assoc. of Greater
Chateauguay

Notetaker: Carmen Moncayo

Impact of legislation (Bill C-11, C-22, etc.):

Fatima Jaffer, Anti-violence worker, Vancouver Custody & Access Support & Advocacy Assoc. (VCASAA)

Beth Jordan, Director of Programs and Services, Assaulted Women's Helpline

Facilitator: Erin-Lee Todd, Family Services Canada

Notetaker: Bally Bassi

Lunch: 12:15 pm – 1:30 pm

Plenary: 1:30 pm – 3:15 pm

Funding strategies:

Penney Baxter, Program Analyst, Department of Innovations, Analysis and Integration Directorate, Department of Justice Canada

Barbara Riley, Program and Development Officer, Status of Women Canada

Barbara Schleifer, Senior Research Associate, Community Investment and Partnerships, United Way of Calgary and Area

Facilitator: Khaddouj Souaid

Break: 3:15 pm – 3:30 pm

Plenary: 3:30 pm – 5:15 pm

What does the system have to offer?

Halima Nur Ali, Case Manager, Pinecrest Queensway Health and Social Services

Maha Bustami, Community and Immigration Counsellor, Arab Community Centre

How do you build services with an ongoing diversity component?

Melissa Rowe, Researcher/Consultant, Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute

Facilitator: Khaddouj Souaid

Dinner: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

7:45 pm – 10 pm Open space Café (optional)

Sevilla Leowinata, Human and Organizational Development Consultant,
Brown and Leowinata Ltd.

Day Two:

Plenary: Best practice models : 8:30 am – 10:30 am

Role of the police :

Kai Liu, Staff Sergeant, Partner Assault Unit, Ottawa Police Services

Alternative justice resolution:

Smita Vir Tyagi, Counsellor, Counterpoint

Comprehensive service delivery:

Shashi Assanand, Executive Director, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Services Society

Facilitator: Khaddouj Souaid

Break: 10:30 am – 10:45 am

Concurrent Workshops: 10:45 am – 12:00 pm

Development of collaborative networks:

Dreeni Geer, Director of Women and Children's Safety and Strategic Safety Partnerships
Program, Metropolitan Action Committee for Violence Against Women and Children

Facilitator: Luciya Spencer, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa

Notetaker: Julie Black

Counselling approaches:

Alba Féliz, MSW, RSW, The Centre for Cross-Cultural Counselling & Education

Facilitator: Lilian Valverde, Latin-American Coalition to End Family Violence Against
Women & Children

Notetaker: Barbara Cotrell

Lunch: 12:00 pm – 1:15 pm

Plenary: Summary of Policy Recommendations: 1:15 pm – 3:15 pm

Plan of Action (Presenters from workshops)

Open Microphone: Questions and comments

Facilitator: Khaddouj Souaid

Closing: 3:15 pm

Appendix C: Forum Participants, by City

Ottawa

Alba Féliz, The Centre for Cross-Cultural Counselling & Education
Barbara Riley, Status of Women Canada
Ekuwa Smith, CCSD
Erin Lee Todd, Family Service Centre of Ottawa
Francine Mbienda-Naoussi, University of Ottawa
Halima N. Ali, Pinecrest Queensway Health and Community Services
Jenny Wolff Jean-Francois, Maison D’Amitie
Joan Gullen, Community & Social Advocacy
John Anderson, CCSD
Khaddouj Souaid, Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute
Luciya Spencer, Immigrant Women’s Services
Melissa Dickey, United Way of Ottawa-Carleton
Melissa Rowe, Sojourner Truth Research and Policy Institute
Michèle Dumel, Community Social Data Strategy, CCSD
Milan Younis, Consultant
Natasha Mirza-beg, Carleton University
Patrick McInrue, RCMP
Penney Baxter, Department of Justice Canada
Regine Cirondeye, Mouvement Ontarien des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones
Sevilla Leowinata, Brown and Leowinata Ltd
Staff Sergeant Kai Liu, Ottawa Police Services

Halifax

Barbara Cottrell, Meta Research and Communications
Carmen Moncayo, Multicultural Immigrant Services Association
Donna Cusack, Coverdale Centre
Lynda Ceresne, Halifax Regional Police Victim Services
Nancy Gray, New Start Counseling
Sybil Thomas, Bryony House Transition Home

Montreal

Antonia Sealy, Barrow Institute
Margaret Wilhelm, Minority Rights Association of Greater Chateauguay
Sadeqa Siddiqui, South Asian Women’s Community Centre

Toronto

Beryl Tsang, Education Wife Assault
Beth Jordan, Assaulted Women’s Helpline
Irene Gabinet, Woman Abuse Council of Toronto
Dreeni Geer, Metropolitan Action Committee for Violence Against Women and Children
Lillian Valverde, Latin American Coalition to End Family Violence Against Women and Children
Maha Bustami, Arab Community Centre
Monique Divert, L’Appui Transitoire, Oasis Centre des Femmes

Rina Joy C. Sioson, Philippine Women Centre of Ontario
Smita-Vir-Tyagi, Counterpoint Counseling and Education
Valerie Bedminster, Community Health Centre for Women

Winnipeg

Arla Marshall, Winnipeg Family Centre
David Rice-Lampert, Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism
Kim Bailey, Sexuality Education Resource Centre
Martha Aviles, Immigrant Women's Counseling Services

Calgary

Barb Innes, Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary
Barbara Schleifer, United Way of Calgary
Julie Black, Calgary Coalition on Family Violence
Naida Brotherston, Jewish Family Service
Shamin Sayani, Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre

Vancouver

Bally Bassi, Elizabeth Fry Society of Vancouver
Cecilia Diocson, Philipino Women's Centre
Fatima Jaffer, Vancouver Custody and Access Support and Advocacy Association
Shashi Assanand, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society

