

## Building Supports Project

*Building Supports Project:  
Safety through Housing Access for Immigrant and Refugee Women*

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Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference

Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017



## Presentation Overview

- Project Goal and Overview
- Phase I Research findings à key themes
- Phase III / the policy component
- Method
- Presentations on the three sector findings:
  - Immigration/Settlement
  - Housing
  - Health
- Recommendations
- Action Plans

## Project Overview: Overall Goal

*To understand the barriers in accessing safe short- and long-term housing for immigrant and refugee women leaving violent relationships, and to examine promising practices that can facilitate the removal of barriers to safe, secure and affordable housing.*

- To examine relevant policies to determine where policy solutions might be found in possible collaborative initiatives to secure that goal
- Ideas from which concrete action plans can be developed

## Project Overview: Phases

- Phase 1:
  - *What are the experiences of immigrant and refugee women in attempting to secure housing that is safe, affordable and culturally appropriate after leaving domestic violence?*
    - Result: Phase I Report
- Phase 2:
  - *What practices can be developed to improve front-line workers' ability to support immigrant and refugee women in accessing longer-term safe, affordable and culturally-appropriate housing based on knowledge generated from Phase 1?*
    - Result: Promising Practices Guide
    - Phase 2b: "You Are Not Alone" Awareness Campaign
- Phase 3:
  - *What provincial, and select federal, policy solutions can be created to reduce or eliminate the barriers that exist for immigrant and refugee women in accessing long-term housing?*
    - Result: Policy Frame and Analysis

## Phase I Research Findings – Key Themes

BARRIERS TO SAFETY	BARRIERS TO HOUSING	POLICY BARRIERS	IMPACTS	SOLUTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language and cultural barriers</li> <li>• Shame and fear of disclosure</li> <li>• Lack of familial support, financial security, and knowledge about available services</li> <li>• Limited housing options and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Limits in THs</li> <li>• Misconceptions about THs</li> <li>• Communal living</li> <li>• Waitlists &amp; size</li> <li>• Tenant selection</li> <li>• Inadequate income assistance</li> <li>• Lack of support &amp; affordable housing</li> <li>• Landlords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discrimination</b></li> <li>• <b>Income assistance policies</b></li> <li>• <b>Legal / immigration status</b></li> <li>• <b>Legal aid</b></li> <li>• <b>BC Housing policies</b></li> <li>• <b>Access to Health Care</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health &amp; wellbeing</li> <li>• Risk of homelessness</li> <li>• Return to abuser</li> <li>• Deportation with or without children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information, support, outreach, and accompaniment</li> <li>• Staff diversity and training</li> <li>• Organizational culture shift</li> <li>• More funding and housing</li> <li>• <b>Review of policies &amp; practices</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaboration</b></li> </ul>

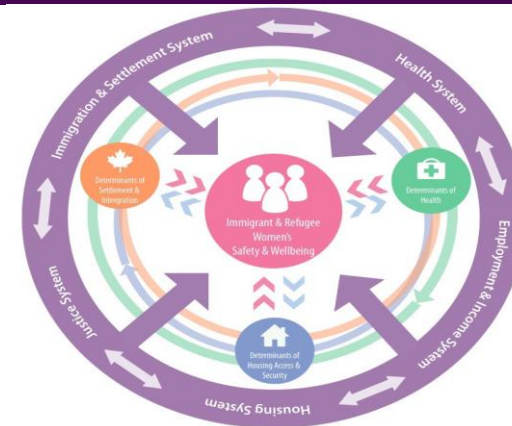
## Policy Analysis: An Overview

Primary Topic Focus	Safe housing for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence.
Goal of Policy Analysis	How best to secure the short- and long-term, affordable, safe and secure housing for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• à resulting in recommendations and Action Plans.</li> </ul>
Overarching Policy Values	British Columbia's Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) Policy (2010).  Policy Intent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The goal is to support and protect those individuals at risk" (i.e., women's safety and security)</li> </ul> Charter Section 15 equality rights values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.</li> </ul>

## Policy Analysis Overview

Sectors Examined	(1) Housing, which is the predominant lens; (2) Immigration, settlement, and integration; (3) Health and well-being.
Critical Themes Throughout	While many themes and barriers arise throughout the analysis, some of which are sector-based (i.e., housing, immigration and settlement, or health-specific), many critical themes are overlapping and intersectional.  Of these, some of the key themes highlighted throughout the analysis are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) gender issues and gendered nature of the immigrant and refugee experience (including the violence);</li> <li>(2) well-being of children;</li> <li>(3) financial (in)security (including employment);</li> <li>(4) safety and well-being;</li> <li>(5) language and cultural competency;</li> <li>(6) Awareness of available services, rules, &amp; timeline(s) for applications</li> <li>(7) Also examining intersectionalities and the interconnected nature of commonalities and gaps.</li> </ol>

## Intersecting Systems and the I&R Experience



## Sources of Information

- The sources of information that comprise the Phase III policy analysis and report are:
  - Phase I Results from interviews, surveys, and focus groups;
  - Advisory Committee Phase II Workshop summary;
  - Ending Violence Association of BC's (2012) *Immigrant Women's Project: Safety of Immigrant, Refugee and Non-Status Women*
- A systematic literature review, which included over 150 relevant policies, government reports, sector reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Interviews conducted with 14 key stakeholders



## Immigration/Settlement Analysis

## Immigration/Settlement Analysis

- **Settlement Services:**
  - Are often the first point of contact for these women, and the first agency to assist in the IRW's journey.
  - Key access point for IRW.
- Abuse may proceed with that initial entry, or, it may begin once in Canada.
- The sponsorship arrangement,
  - whereby the woman and her children are sponsored by a partner who is already in Canada, can itself trigger the abuse which can take many forms, and can manifest not just as physical abuse but financial and psychological as well.
  - **Recent shifts in sponsorship laws**

## CRITICAL THEMES

### Gender Issues & the Gendered nature of the IRW Experience

*Within immigrant and refugee groups there are different experiences based on gender, culture, status, sexual orientation, but overall, they can share common stressors, barriers, and vulnerabilities (e.g., housing, health, settlement) within the broader context of their status and their experiences of abuse.*

In order to assure all the rights of the women from those differing locations are being treated with substantive equality; however, attention should be paid to those differences.

- In 2013, the Canadian Council for Refugees raised a concern over labour and market needs to say that the government was moving toward short-term labour needs and how that especially affected women and girls:
- While the Canadian Experience Class offers a pathway to permanent status for some workers, statistics show that the class is less accessible to women.

## CRITICAL THEMES

## Safety/Threat/Fear of Deportation – Sanctuary City?

Although Vancouver is seen to be a “sanctuary city,” it can fail to meet this designation because of potential disjunctures between provincial and federal agencies’ policies and procedures for IRW leaving abuse – which may actually be counterproductive to each other’s policy intents.

- For example, a non-status woman may have secured a place in a provincially funded Transition House, and be given an extension to her 30-day stay.
- The CBSA, however, may show up at their door to remove the woman for deportation, even if she might currently be in the process of making an application for a more permanent status.

## CRITICAL THEMES

## Child Protection &amp; Family Justice System Issues

Specific to the child protection issue, it has been argued that understanding and responding to refugee families presents a significant challenge for child protection agencies.

- This is in large part because of the multiple intersectionality problems those families often experience, such as PTSD, settlement issues, lack of natural support networks, housing, employment, and language and cultural barriers.

Children emerge as a primary focus in the *BC Family Law Act* (the FLA) in which the “best interests of the child” is the governing policy intent.

- Section 13 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) also lists a number of grounds under which a child may be in need of protection. An Amendment to this section includes reference to domestic violence.
- Re-examine H&C applications regarding interpretation of the *best interest of the child(ren)* provision.

## CRITICAL THEMES

## Legal Aid: A Charter Issue?

There are minimal legal aid supports and resources available to immigrant and refugee women.

- While knowledge of available systems and laws operates as a barrier for immigrant and refugee women, the lack of legal aid support available to these populations further hinders their ability to navigate and/or receive support from Canadian legal systems.

British Columbia Government needs to fulfill its obligations under *the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and *the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* by providing adequate funds to Legal Services Society to ensure that those who have legitimate needs for legal representation on serious family or immigration matters and cannot afford to pay for it are able to obtain legal representation through Legal Aid.

## Summary of Analyses

## Key Indicators of Success

Key indicators of successful immigration into Canada are:

- 1) Welcoming communities,
- 2) Accessible/affordable/sustainable/adequate housing (i.e., temporary and long-term accommodations),
- 3) Access to language and skill-based education (i.e., support, opportunities),
- 4) Sufficient employment and income,
- 5) And community integration.

## CRITICAL THEMES

## Collaboration &amp; Coordination

Collaboration  
and  
Coordination

- 1) amongst government ministries (at both provincial and federal levels);
- 2) between government and community-based agencies;
- 3) amongst community-based agencies.

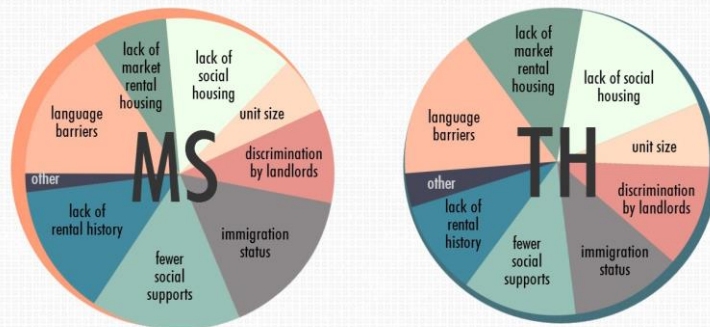
This includes coordination of timelines and procedures for applications, other documentation.

The need for sharing of information to facilitate the processes.



## BARRIERS TO HOUSING

What are the barriers to accessing housing for Immigrant & Refugee Women leaving violence?



## POLICY BARRIERS

## Critical Themes

- Safety & well-being
- Well-being of children
  - E.g., no-child(ren) policies, poor quality of housing / neighbourhoods, poverty, overcrowding, homelessness.
- Financial (in)security & poverty
  - Primary predictors of homelessness
- Language & cultural competency
  - Barriers to service provision
  - Culturally appropriate and competent service provision is paramount in creating connections between service providers and newcomer populations.

POLICY BARRIERS		
Challenges to Providing Affordable Housing		
Supply	Integration & Collaboration	Affordability
<p><b>Supply</b> is the first and most important challenge.</p> <p>Securing affordable housing for use is the biggest issue and can be remedied through the development of more affordable rentals for low- and middle-income individuals and those with distinct needs, such as IRWs.</p>	<p>The second major issue is the one of <b>integration and collaboration</b>.</p> <p>As one example of integration, in 2009, there was an integration of the Emergency Shelter Program and transition housing into the BC Ministry of Housing portfolio.</p> <p>In the 2014 report, Housing Matters BC, a specific client-centered approach was set out to better meet the needs of individuals in need of housing. In that regard, collaborating with non-profits is critical because that sector manages over 90% of the social housing stock and understands community needs.</p>	<p>A third key issue is <b>affordability</b>. It is first necessary to have the setup of a funding framework within the province that is flexible enough to incorporate IRW's needs.</p> <p>But as well, it is important to have better communications among services.</p> <p>For example, it may be that community services are unaware that non-profit settlement services have funding that they can and do dole out to provide financial supplements.</p>



Overarching Barriers & Intersecting Recommendations			
<p>Lack of Knowledge of Canadian Laws and Systems, and Lack of Legal Support</p> <p>Rights-Based Issues</p>	<p>Lack of Awareness of Services and Resources</p>	<p>Lack of Relationships that Affect Help-seeking</p>	<p>Poverty</p>
<p>Un/underemployment</p>	<p>Access to Information</p>	<p>Language</p>	<p>The Lack of Collaboration, Coordination, and Communication</p>

BARRIERS & RECOMMENDATIONS			
Immigration and Settlement			
<b>Government</b>			
IRCC	Federal Jurisdiction	Immigration Applications	Lack of Coordination Among Systems & Agencies
<b>Community</b>			
Limited Community Integration	Community Capacity	Lack of Coordination Among Systems & Agencies	
<b>Labour &amp; Employment for Immigrants &amp; Refugees</b>		<b>Legal Barriers</b>	
Labour & Employment	Expedition of Application Process	Burden of Proof	

## BARRIERS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS

## Housing

**Core Issues**

Supply & Availability	Integration & Collaboration	Affordability
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**Institutional & Government**

Limited Access to Appropriate and Secure Housing	Limited Supports to Obtain Housing	Housing Policies & Budgets	Racism and Discrimination
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**Community**

Limited Knowledge of Available Housing	Short- and Long-term Housing Models	Collaboration, Coordination, and Communication
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## BARRIERS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS

## Health

**Government**

Policy, Governments, and Budgets	Lack of Medical Coverage and Access to Emergency Care
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**Sector-Level Responses**

Lack of Culturally Safe Supports and Services	Limited Trauma-Informed Practice	Lack of Coordination between IRW Serving Agencies, Government, and Other Sectors
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**Rights-Based**

The Framework for Understanding Health and Rights of I & R	Institutional Racism	Language
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## Discussion:

## Practical Implementation of Recommendations

Based on the list of overall and sector-specific recommendations provided, consider the following:

- *How could you practically implement or use these recommendations to inform your work, collaboration with other agencies, and/or research?*

## Building Supports:

Housing Access for Immigrant and Refugee Women Leaving Violence

## Questions? Comments?



Building Supports Project:  
Safety through Housing Access for Immigrant and Refugee Women

Thank you

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Link to Phase 1 Report and the Infographic:  
<http://www.bcsth.ca/content/building-supports>

