

7 Case Studies of Community Initiatives Addressing Family Violence in Refugee and Migrant Communities

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Abbreviations

ACC: Accident Compensation Corporation
CMHCS: Chinese Mental Health Consultation Services Trust
CSRE: Centre for Social Research and Evaluation
CYF: Child Youth and Family
DHB: District Health Board
DVA: Domestic Violence Act
EWR: Eastern Women’s Refuge
FACS: Family and Community Services
IRD: Inland Revenue Department
KWNNZ: Korean Women’s Network New Zealand
MSD: Ministry of Social Development
MWA: Ministry of Women’s Affairs
NCIWR: National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges
NGO: non-government organisation
NZESS: NZ Ethnic Social Services Trust
NZQA: New Zealand Qualifications Authority
PR: permanent residence
SETAC: Shakti Education Training & Advisory company Ltd



Executive Summary

This research describes the kinds of initiatives that were perceived by community members and service providers as working well in refugee and migrant communities and the conditions that encourage them to flourish. The report presents two case studies of community initiatives addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. Six other initiatives are described more briefly. These were chosen from a dozen recommended in the course of interviews with key informants from central, regional and local government, and from community organisations. The research was not intended to evaluate these initiatives and there was no analysis of client outcomes. The purpose was to learn from those involved in addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities, and to get the voice of communities heard. It is hoped that these case studies will inspire community groups, service providers and government agencies, to initiate community-based programmes that address family violence. This research also aims to help fill the identified gap in New Zealand research on community-based programmes and family violence in refugee and migrant communities.¹

The two case study initiatives are:

- Umma Trust, which provides services and support aimed at empowering women, overcoming isolation and preventing family violence
- Second Chance, which provides post-refuge education and training aimed at independence for survivors of intimate partner violence.

The research is a joint project between the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA). The research was undertaken as part of the Programme of Action of the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families.

Key findings

Effectiveness of community initiatives

A consistent picture of the key issues, the most useful strategies and the community initiatives that were particularly effective emerged from interviews with key informants from central, regional and local government, and from community organisations.

The most effective initiatives were well networked with other groups, which gave them access to the knowledge and resources of other groups and signalled that they themselves had knowledge and resources worth sharing with others. They also had deep community ties, which meant that they had lots of community members involved in their programmes and they could also draw on skills and resources there.

The work of community initiatives

One of the themes that emerged from the research was about the importance of both prevention and intervention in addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. Often, in responding to community needs, the organisations that were focused on preventive work expanded their efforts to

¹ B Nam, J Waldvogel, G Stone, M Levine (2011) *Family violence in migrant and refugee families and successful models of prevention and intervention: A summary analysis and annotated bibliography*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington.

Ministry of Women's Affairs (2010) *Speak Up, Seek Help, Safe Home: A review of literature on culturally appropriate interventions for intimate partner violence in ethnic communities*, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington.

include work like counselling, which is closer to the intervention end of the family violence response spectrum.

The community initiatives were part of a strong network of groups committed to addressing family violence among refugees and migrants. These groups included central, regional and local government agencies, and non-government organisations (NGOs). This report discusses a range of types of community initiatives and illustrates them with specific examples. These types include:

- service and support providers: addressing a range of community needs
- refuges: aimed at the immediate safety of victims of family violence
- women's networks: addressing the isolation that makes women vulnerable.

Education, empowerment and community awareness work aimed at preventing family violence tended to be couched in terms of family safety, family health and family development. This was because family violence was a sensitive topic for the ethnic communities, and “family safety” was a more acceptable way of framing it.

Women's refuges that accept women from refugee and migrant communities have an extra challenge in providing appropriate food and opportunities for religious observance. If the women do not have permanent residence status, they will be unlikely to be able to contribute to their keep and the refuge will have to cover all costs.

Systemic Issues

Several systemic issues emerged regarding family violence in refugee and migrant communities. The most important of these were:

- Refugee and migrant women were often isolated, both from the family support systems left behind in their country of origin, and from mainstream New Zealand culture and its formal support systems. The host culture will be unfamiliar to them until they have learned to speak English and develop contacts in the host community. The issue of isolation is made worse when a woman's partner forbids her access to the world outside her home or outside the ethnic community. Isolation was identified as a risk factor for family violence in the research literature.²
- Women who are dependent on their partners to meet immigration policy requirements for a temporary or residence visa may stay in abusive relationships to maintain their current immigration status. When women leave their partners, their partners may revoke their support, and the women would then have to apply for a temporary or residence visa in their own right. During this process, the women may be left with little or no financial support. Until such time as her residence is confirmed, she may have reduced opportunities for gaining employment.
- The Victims of Domestic Violence (VDV) immigration policy³ was introduced in 2001 and changes to it were implemented in March 2009 to respond to these issues. The policy ensures that women can, without needing the support of their partner, apply for and receive an immigration status that allows them access to assistance and financial support.
- While the VDV policy exists, not all refugee and migrant women can use it. This may be because they are unaware of the policy, they are not eligible because their partner is not a New Zealand resident or citizen (that is, the partner may be on a student or work visa), or they may not be willing to go to the people or organisations competent to make a statutory declaration that domestic violence has occurred.

² Ibid B Nam et al (2011) p 9–12.

³ <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/operationalmanual/>

- A range of issues relating to the cultures of refugee and migrant communities emerged in the course of the research. The most salient was the way that some men used their culture and religion, and their standing in the community, to rationalise their coercive behaviour.
- Poverty and unemployment were identified as family stressors that can exacerbate family violence. The influence of the host culture on young people is another family stressor, especially if young people got into trouble or brought home partners their parents did not approve of.

Good practice

Three broad principles of good practice emerged from the research, and these are consistent with the literature on addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities.

- A holistic approach to family violence in refugee and migrant communities entails:
 - building trust in the community, so that community members are willing to talk about this difficult and sensitive topic
 - building good networks across the community and government sectors, so that resources can be shared and family violence can be addressed at the individual, community, societal and government level
 - involving men and male community leaders
 - dealing with perpetrators as well as victims.
- Empowering the community acknowledges community ownership of the problem and its solutions, so that communities are able to address family violence in their own way, and the emerging initiatives are relevant and useful. Empowerment also means providing individuals within the community with knowledge and training that enables them to do this work. In particular, this includes educating people about relevant New Zealand laws, what constitutes family violence, and the impact of family violence on children and their future.
- Effective engagement with the community requires that culturally sensitive and acceptable ways are found to address the sensitive issue of family violence. Mainstream service providers in particular need to be aware of the different languages, customs and traditions of the refugee and migrant communities.

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of case studies research on community initiatives addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. The report details two case studies, Umma Trust and Second Chance, and discusses their background, their work, and what made them particularly effective. The report also discusses a range of other community initiatives; family violence issues identified by participants as salient to refugee and migrant communities; and principles of good practice that emerged from the research.

The research was undertaken by the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA).

The research was developed as part of the Programme of Action of the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families. The Taskforce was established in June 2005 to advise the Family Violence Ministerial Group on how to make improvements to the way family violence is addressed, and to eliminate family violence in New Zealand. The purpose of the research on refugees and migrants was to better understand family violence and effective prevention and intervention models in these communities.

Objectives

Two literature reviews⁴ of NZ and overseas research on models of intervention in family violence in refugee and migrant communities identified a gap in knowledge about interventions in family violence in refugee and migrant communities, especially in the New Zealand context. Both reviews highlighted the importance of community involvement and engagement in addressing this problem, and both identified a need for research on community initiatives and on family violence in New Zealand's refugee and migrant communities. The aim of this research was to help fill this gap.

There were four objectives for this research:

1. develop case studies that provide instructive examples of successful initiatives addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities in New Zealand
2. learn from refugee and migrant community participants about their understanding of local patterns of family violence in their communities
3. learn from refugee and migrant community participants about their understanding of how best to work to prevent family violence in their communities
4. identify criteria for success, elements of good practice and conditions that support success when addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities.

The researchers hope that community groups, service providers and government agencies will be encouraged to initiate community-based programmes that address family violence. It is intended that these case studies be widely shared in order to:

- be used by service providers to address family violence in refugee and migrant communities and inspire new ideas and initiatives
- contribute to the discourse on addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities
- raise awareness of family violence in refugee and migrant communities.

⁴ The two literature reviews are:

- B Nam, J Waldvogel, G Stone, M Levine (2011) *Family violence in migrant and refugee families and successful models of prevention and intervention: A summary analysis and annotated bibliography*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs (2010) *Speak Up, Seek Help, Safe Home: A review of literature on culturally appropriate interventions for intimate partner violence in ethnic communities*, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington.

Selecting the case studies

The main findings discussed in this report emerged from interviews with key informants drawn from government and community organisations, listed in the appendix. The interviews focused on the key issues surrounding family violence in refugee and migrant communities and the most effective ways of addressing this problem.

The interviews included four focus groups. Three of these were with members of the Muslim, Asian, and Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities (with considerable overlap of these very broad groupings) and the fourth was with government agencies working with refugee and migrant communities. The main purpose of these was to get wide-ranging advice, particularly from within the ethnic communities, regarding research design and help with choosing the case studies and other community initiatives to include in the report.

The Auckland Region, with its large refugee and migrant communities, has given rise to many initiatives. These groups and organisations are supported by the Settling In programme of Family and Community Services⁵ and by the government agencies that refer their clients to them for the specialised help they provide. The interviews shed light on the system of working relationships between individual participants and between their organisations.

From the interviews emerged a consistent picture of the key issues, the most useful strategies and the community initiatives that were particularly effective. There tended to be much agreement on which organisations were the best ones to go to for advice or to refer clients.

When it came to understanding how the research participants identified good value in a community initiative, two key features emerged: good networking with other groups and strong support from within the refugee and migrant communities. The group-level networking meant that they had knowledge and resources to share and access to the knowledge and resources of other groups. Deep community ties meant that they had many community members involved in their programmes and they could draw on their skills and resources. The networking and community support reflected the effectiveness of these groups. In choosing the initiatives to report on, the researchers took these aspects into account, as well as the degree to which the initiatives specifically addressed family violence.

There was an important contextual element to the work of the community initiatives, as different communities will be best served by different types of initiatives, and individuals in different personal situations will need different kinds of help.

Research methods

Two recently conducted New Zealand literature reviews on family violence in refugee and migrant communities⁶ identified the lack of New Zealand research on “what works” to address this sensitive issue in these communities. A major programme of research and evaluation would be required to fill such a gap, and this case studies research is intended to contribute toward that. Specifically, MWA and CSRE set out to identify and profile community initiatives perceived as successful in addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities.

The research method was exploratory and the researchers relied initially on existing networks for key informant interviews. A snowball method was then used to identify community members and service

⁵ Family and Community Services (FACS) is a service of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Settling In is a strengths-based community development initiative that works directly with refugee and migrant communities to help them find solutions to meet their own needs.

⁶ Cited previously, B Nam et al (2011) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (2010)

providers working in this area who, in turn, referred the researchers to other community members and service providers to talk to. The researchers were conscious of the fact that the loudest voices may not always be representative of communities as a whole. This was a point made by many community members. Bearing this in mind, the researchers talked to as wide a range of people as possible in order to present a well-balanced picture.

With the help of the key informants and other community contacts, three focus groups were held with Asian (including South Asian and South East Asian), Middle Eastern, other Muslim and other refugee community members. These broad and overlapping groupings were chosen because they encompassed the largest refugee and migrant communities. The groups were mixed-gender and varied in age and length of time spent in New Zealand. They were active in community groups and some had experienced family violence themselves. The participants also shared their knowledge of family violence in their communities and their understanding of the best ways of addressing it. A fourth focus group was held with government agency representatives. Focus group participants engaged with the researchers in shaping the research design and helped make many research decisions, such as which community initiatives to study and develop into case studies, and describe in the report.

The research approach, methods, criteria for sample selection, and tools, are further detailed in the appendix.

Scope

MWA and CSRE chose to focus exclusively on profiling community initiatives perceived as successful by community members and service providers themselves. The research was not aimed at formally evaluating these initiatives and there was no analysis of their case records. The intention was to learn from those involved in addressing family violence in their communities, and to get the voice of communities heard. MWA and CSRE chose not to have direct contact with victims of family violence as this requires a different approach and longer timeframe. This is due to sensitivities around interviewing victims, such as ethical approval and victims' safety. The voices of victims are nevertheless present in this report as relayed by people working directly with them.

For the same reason that MWA and CSRE chose to focus on community initiatives, this report does not examine government initiatives nor present any analysis of current government work. It simply presents community members' views on "what works", in their opinion, to address family violence in their communities.

Research participants

There were over 50 research participants, and all held principal roles in their organisations (listed in the appendix), or specialised in dealing with family violence and with refugee and migrant communities. Each played an important role at the national or local level. Nearly all were experienced workers in addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. The researchers drew on the knowledge and insights of the key informants and community-based participants to fulfil the objectives of the study. In deciding which initiatives to focus on for this report, the researchers relied on the opinions of these interviewees as well as a series of meetings with the leaders and workers of the community initiatives to discuss their work in depth.

The quotations featured in the report are all drawn from interviews with community participants working in the community initiatives studied. The representatives of the refugees and women's networks were all women. For the rest of the community initiatives, the representatives were a mix of men and women.

Limitations of the research

The researchers did not interview victims of family violence per se, although some of the key informants who worked with victims had experienced family violence themselves. The research was confined to the Auckland and Wellington areas. The researchers are confident that the case studies and other community initiatives described in the research are good examples; however, this research was not an exhaustive study of the community-based work done in the refugee and migrant communities in New Zealand, or even in Auckland and Wellington. This research was also not intended to evaluate any of the initiatives selected. The researchers acknowledge that this research and its findings present only a part of the family violence picture in refugee and migrant communities in New Zealand.

Structure of the report

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to the case studies, Umma Trust and Second Chance, which were the primary objective of this research. One is an NGO that provides several different programmes and services taking a preventive approach to family violence. The other is a programme with the specific purpose to help survivors of intimate partner violence to live independently. The two stories are very different, and the presentation of the case studies takes this into account, using different headings to suit the narratives, while following a similar line of exposition. The chapter following the case studies discusses additional initiatives, providing a fuller picture of the range of work being done in refugee and migrant communities.

Chapter 5 summarises key findings about the nature of family violence in refugee and migrant communities. This is followed by principles of good practice in Chapter 6, which identifies the success factors of the community initiatives studied. The last chapter provides the conclusions of the research project.

2 Case study: Umma Trust

Umma Trust was chosen as a case study because it is strongly linked to a network of agencies and NGOs addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. The focus of Umma Trust is on empowering women and overcoming their social isolation. This is an important strategy for preventing family violence. If the mother is strong and supported, according to Umma Trust, the family is safe. In addition to their prevention-oriented programmes, Umma Trust receives referrals from agencies like Child, Youth and Family (CYF), the Police, and the Auckland District Health Board (DHB), to provide culturally appropriate support services for women and children who are experiencing family violence. Through being known in the refugee and migrant communities, Umma Trust also receives self-referrals from women wanting help.

Background

Umma Trust was established in 2003 to help Iraqi women who had experienced loss and trauma through the occupation of Iraq. Umma Trust's work has grown to include a range of social services including: a food bank, home visits, nutrition workshops, advice on positive parenting in a New Zealand context, children's playgroups, women-only swimming times at the local pool, and family violence prevention and response workshops for volunteer tutors. These have been mainly (but not exclusively) targeted to the wider Muslim communities in the Auckland area.

Umma Trust's representatives described their work around family violence as challenging to the wider Muslim community because community members were initially concerned that this would lead to the break-up of families. Umma Trust reframed its focus on family violence prevention as positive parenting and happy, successful families, and works in partnership with Muslim communities and neighbourhoods through an ongoing process of engagement and consultation.

“What you see all around the table are all members of the Muslim Community. What you have here is both male and female working together, and the support that the male leaders are giving to the female leaders. And I think that in it is an outstanding example within the Muslim community.”

Umma Trust's programmes include: developing childrearing skills in the context of New Zealand society; addressing social issues (including housing and employment), and health and mental health issues; and ensuring an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a New Zealand citizen.

How Umma Trust addresses family violence

The programmes and services run by Umma Trust focus on empowerment, overcoming isolation and developing the independence of refugee and migrant women through responsiveness to community needs. For refugees and migrant families, stressors such as unemployment, financial hardship, the loss of cultural and social status and support, and poor mental health, can be contributors to family violence and breakdown. Family violence takes many forms and the clients referred or who self-refer may reflect histories of physical and/or social, emotional and financial abuse. In the latter case, husbands may exert power through extreme financial control as well as confining women to the home.

“Economics dominate, the man wants to get everything and he wants to control everything, so he can support his family back home or he can have something here ... So what they do, those men, they want to keep the lady at home. You see, cook, pick me up ... and so she will never be independent of him. And some of them they don't even teach the woman how to drive. They keep them at home, and then not let them out.”

The philosophy of Umma Trust is that a strong woman is the basis of a safe and healthy family, and this is why women are the focus of its work, and why the Trust concentrates on family violence prevention.

“If you empower the women, she has better coping skills to handle the different and difficult challenges faced, giving her the confidence to make the right choices.”

Umma Trust representatives described their work as mainly preventive, saying that family and emotional issues emerged at every programme and meeting. Umma Trust also responds to referrals and direct calls from women seeking help.

Prevention-oriented activities

Umma Trust activities include women’s support groups, a food bank, women-only swimming at the local pool, and playgroup. They saw these as important aspects of preventing family violence in that they brought women into the organisation and improved family life by reducing financial and social stresses.

“Every programme that is delivered, there is a family violence component that is discussed: what are the rights for women? But first, we win the trust of the women and then we deliver the message in a strengths-based approach.”

The underlying purpose of all the programmes is to break down the isolation of the women in refugee and migrant communities who no longer had family support networks in their new country.

“The life back home and the life in New Zealand is totally different ... There, women have all their family, and they had all the other support. She was never stuck at home. She would go out with at least her mother, her sister, her cousins, but [here] she doesn’t have all that, she is isolated in the house, and she may become depressed.”

Meeting with women in similar circumstances at the various women’s support groups and other programmes provides an opportunity to share problems and concerns, including family conflict, emotional difficulties and financial struggles. The sharing and friendships bring significant relief. They may also lead to solutions. If there are financial problems, Umma Trust works collaboratively with employment-related agencies to help find employment for the client and in the interim provides support through the food bank. Umma Trust may help women learn to drive or improve their English so that they can have more independence. Women’s health is encouraged through physical fitness, and family safety, health and nutrition are supported through education. The purpose is to help the women become stronger in many different ways, and thus better able to assert themselves and protect their families.

Referrals of family violence cases

Most of Umma Trust’s work with family violence cases was through referrals – usually one or two each week – from CYF, Police and the Auckland DHB, organisations that are knowledgeable about Umma Trust’s capabilities.⁷ Sometimes these organisations will want specific supports for their clients. Sometimes, too, a doctor or the school may have concerns about a patient or student, but not enough to go directly to the authorities. They sometimes ask Umma Trust to explore the situation further.

A referral may result in a meeting of Umma staff and Board of Trustees members, all of whom work very closely together, to decide how best to proceed by working collaboratively with other NGOs and government agencies to address the case. Umma Trust has clear boundaries about what kind of

⁷ Umma Trust also receives two to five referrals from Citizens Advice Bureau, mainly family problems, housing problems, and Work and Income problems.

support they are able to provide, and situations of high risk are recognised as cases for the statutory agencies to manage.

“The other agencies will find out if there is abuse happening, like Child Youth and Family, like Health Department, like Police Family Safety Team, so usually our role is to support by providing emotional and spiritual help, and advocacy, by including the client in current programmes. We are a support agency.”

Umma Trust has found itself with increasing numbers of referrals. They take this as a reflection of their strong connections in West Auckland, East Auckland, and Central Auckland; their broad knowledge of refugee and migrant communities, including languages and cultural subtleties of communication; and their excellent track record in building trust and getting good outcomes.

Self-referrals

The staff (usually including a social worker) and volunteers of Umma Trust are trained to screen family violence calls, giving safety of women and children immediate priority. Women ring Umma Trust offices two to five times a week. Through the screening process referrals are made to an appropriate agency, eg Family Start (a support programme for new parents), Police, CYF and other relevant agencies.

Principles underlying Umma Trust’s work

The key elements of Umma Trust’s work are the interconnected approaches of empowerment, trust building, networking, cultural knowledge, and addressing the role of men in family violence.

Empowerment

The main focus of Umma Trust’s approach is the empowerment of women. This is accomplished in several ways. Firstly, Umma Trust models empowerment in the way it works with women, giving them choices at every possible turn, and encouraging them to be involved in decision making about Umma Trust’s own programmes, their children’s schools, their health, the way they live their lives and how their families operate. Secondly, Umma Trust’s programmes are designed to break down the isolation that refugee and migrant women experience when they leave their extended families behind to come to New Zealand. Thirdly, Umma Trust encourages the independence of these women by offering them opportunities to learn and grow.

“And then start empowering them by allowing them to decide what kinds of classes they want. Their decisions form the programme, enabling participation in the different health and physical activities, nutrition classes, social groups, positive parenting etc.”

“We teach them the Road Code. When they get their learner’s licence they become more independent. They take their children to school, [and go to the] shopping centre and parent–teacher interviews.”

Building trust

The women’s support groups play an important role in empowerment and they are also the locus of trust building. The groups’ main purpose is to provide the women with the opportunity to socialise and make friends. This allows them to talk frankly about their lives, experience the relief of sharing their problems and explore solutions together. These groups also serve the purpose of building a new social support network for the women.

“If you design a programme, and you say we are going to run this programme, they will never show up next time. You need to sit down and listen. The more they know you the more they trust, and the more they tell you their life story, so that is the way you can help. So we don’t design a programme, but we’re going to sit, we talk and ask ‘Oh what are we

going to do next week? To solve our main problem, what would you like to see?’ So one of them says ‘Ah! Wouldn’t it be better if we got cooking?’ This became the opportunity for lessons on how to prepare healthy meals for the family.”

Networking

Part of exploring options for solutions to the women’s problems involves making use of the networks of helping agencies that Umma is connected to. They talked about their relationship with Police, CYF, Auckland DHB, and the other NGOs as “teamwork”.

“There is teamwork between the agencies, to find the right kind of support for the victim, in the right place at the right time.”

At the time of the research Umma Trust was working collaboratively with New Zealand Ethnic Social Services, sharing family violence sector expertise, staff resources, skills and knowledge to address a range of issues for women clients. Also, they cooperated with other groups to cover different geographic areas and exchanged resources to have the right language or other skills for a particular client.

Cultural expertise

In their work with the refugee and migrant communities, Umma Trust draws on a substantial reserve of cultural knowledge of mainly (but not exclusively) Muslim groups from the Middle East, South Asia and Africa.

A holistic approach to preventing family violence

Umma Trust addresses the prevention of family violence in a holistic way, adopting the long-term strategy of strengthening the women who want to protect and nurture their families. In line with this holistic approach Umma Trust also takes into account the men in the family. The women-only activities are generally acceptable to traditionally minded husbands. In some situations Umma Trust members will confront men they see as dominating and controlling their wives. From time to time the male members of the Board of Trustees will make an effort to convince the men that they and their families benefit from strong, healthy, happy and independent women.

Discussions with men are focused on the wellbeing of their families, including the key roles of women. While participants agreed that no religion condones violence against women, it is the interpretation of religion as well as cultural traditions that allow some men to justify violence and control over women.

Outcomes

The workers and Trustees of the Umma Trust understood that they were working on a long-term strategy to prevent family violence, and that the outcomes were not always immediately visible. Nevertheless, they were confident of their effectiveness. Isolation is one of the key barriers for women struggling in violent relationships. Umma Trust recognises and responds to this by reducing isolation for these women, and it actively involves women in programmes that build social connectedness.

They gave the example of a woman who was used to being employed but had not found work in New Zealand. While busy caring for her family she felt isolated as she did not have any extended family in Auckland or social contact through work. She became aware of the Muslim Women Swimming Pool programme through the Umma Trust May Road Playgroup. Going to the swimming pool gave her the opportunity to have quality time for herself, enabling her to relax and meet other Muslim women at the pool. It also made her realise the importance of wellbeing for herself and how this benefits her family.

Key findings

That Umma Trust is a successful community initiative is clear from its respected position in the network of organisations addressing family violence in the refugee and migrant communities. To understand why it is successful it is necessary to analyse the principles on which they base their work. What we learned from this analysis informs the outline of good practice principles covered in Chapter 6. Umma Trust embodies the principles of empowerment, engagement with the community and a holistic approach.

The representatives of Umma Trust were explicit about the importance of empowerment and they modelled it in all their work, especially in educating people and encouraging choice. Empowerment was part of their engagement with the community, taking on board their clients' choices about programmes and services, and responding to their needs.

The depth of their support within the community was reflected in the self-referrals to Umma Trust and the quality of their staff and volunteers, who made a strong positive impression on the researchers. Their strong networking with other organisations allowed them to share these resources, and made additional resources available to them and their clients. Other organisations also referred clients to the Umma Trust.

Essential to their operational practice was a holistic approach to family violence. They worked to strengthen the women so that they could manage better in every aspect of their lives – health, welfare, children, social life, finances and independence – and stand up for themselves and their children. They also worked to help the men in the community to better understand and carry out the role they need to play in supporting a safe, healthy and prosperous family.

3 Case study: Second Chance

The Second Chance programme, developed by the Shakti Education Training & Advisory Company Ltd (SETAC), was chosen as a case study because it addresses a very important aspect of the dynamics of family violence in refugee and migrant communities: the experience of ostracism by the community, isolation, financial difficulties, and the loss of her social support network when a woman decides to leave her partner or husband, and goes to a refuge for help. Some of these women would have been entirely dependent on their relationship for financial and other support, as these are the mechanisms used by the perpetrator to maintain the ongoing control and abuse.

On leaving the refuge, the women are left with little or no financial resources of their own, and struggle to find employment, sometimes because of their precarious immigration status. According to Shakti, the ethnic women's refuge, almost 80 percent of women on their database were dependent on benefits, and a significant percentage of those were single mothers.

This case study provides an example of a successful initiative addressing the consequences of family violence in refugee and migrant communities in New Zealand.

Background

The Shakti Community Council Inc describes its beginnings as a support group set up in 1995 “by ethnic women for ethnic women to overcome the barriers that came with migration and the intergenerational bonds of cultural oppression”. Now, Shakti is a national umbrella organisation with several centres and refuges around New Zealand. It provides a 24-hour domestic violence intervention service and other social services for immigrant families from Asian, Middle Eastern and African backgrounds.

Shakti has been providing life skills training inside their refuges as well as three months home-based support on a case-by-case basis for clients after leaving the refuge. However, in the course of informal discussions, clients identified the need for an integrated, comprehensive and cohesive life skills programme to support them when they left the refuge. Many of them felt lost on their own, with limited knowledge of New Zealand society, culture and language. They did not know how to support themselves, so they became financially dependent on state welfare. Some were single mothers. Aside from language barriers, there might also be religious and cultural barriers that prevented them from enrolling for further studies, or working in a mixed-gender environment.

“Many of these women have never handled money since coming to New Zealand or even when they were back home [and so they come] from one dependency situation, that is with the husband, to move to another dependency situation, with the government benefits.”

Women indicated that they would like to find employment and be independent but felt they were lacking the support, confidence and/or the necessary skills.

“Women have accessed our refuge and afterwards are left to re-integrate into society with barely any support networks.”

To address these comments and concerns, Second Chance was developed by SETAC, which is an NZQA-accredited agency. Second Chance has been running on a trial basis since 2009 and Shakti is currently seeking accreditation for the programme to be able to offer it more widely to ethnic women.

What is “Second Chance”?

Second Chance is a 12-week programme offered free of charge to women leaving the Shakti Refuge. It covers life skills training in a wide range of areas, such as English language, health and nutrition,

finance and budgeting, positive parenting, learner and driver licensing, sustainable living, career development through further study and job-seeking, self-esteem and assertiveness. In addition, the programme offers counselling, group therapy and art therapy. The classes consist of lectures, group discussions, individual work, and field trips. There is a particular emphasis on visual learning to transcend language barriers.

Objectives

Second Chance aims to promote the acquisition of life skills in terms of employment and financial matters but also teaches about emotional wellbeing. Objectives include a reduction or elimination of short-term and long-term dependency on state benefits; empowerment of ethnic women through acquisition of skills and confidence; and ultimately a better integration into New Zealand society.

How it works

The programme's focus and purpose is to empower women. It does this through education and by offering them a pathway to employment and independence. To the extent that women were successful in finding work, it reduced their dependency on state welfare.

Students are initially assessed by trained staff and, with mutual agreement, enrolled at a level appropriate to them. The classes are taught for about five to five-and-a-half hours every weekday by 15 qualified and trained teachers or professionals. Some of these have been recruited from Shakti's in-house services (eg counsellors who provide therapy in the refuges also offer therapy as part of the Second Chance programme). For other subjects, Shakti has linked in with community organisations that come in and talk about particular subjects.

Second Chance is flexible and adaptable, using feedback from its students and refuge staff to evaluate and amend the programme. It is highly accessible in that it is free of charge. There is some residential accommodation available, as well as childcare, for the client-students and their children, to facilitate enrolment in the programme.

Outcomes

The programme's success has been measured in a variety of ways: Shakti follows up with women who complete the programme to see what happened once the programme ended, ie whether they enrolled in a course or found employment. Shakti also seeks feedback on the programme from teachers and counsellors involved in the programme.

At the time of the research, the programme had run three times, the third course ending in August 2010. On the whole, women completing this 12-week programme felt more empowered and confident, had better employment prospects and thus achieved better integration into New Zealand society. From the first batch of students, 10 out of 12 finished the programme. Two enrolled for further study, in social work and caregiving; five stayed on to extend their classes (they asked to have more English language classes, and this was made possible for them); one was employed straight away; and the remaining two registered with Work and Income to look for jobs.

"The one who is doing social work, she is [a teenage mother], but we finally got her to enrol for social work and she is very happy; she has lived here [since she was a child] so she is almost a Kiwi girl ... This is a very unfortunate case. She had to marry her own rapist because in her culture you have to marry the one who gets you pregnant. So she ended up having three kids eventually, and lost all interest in life, but we got her into the programme ... So now she is the one who is enrolled."

Third batch enrolment increased to 23 women, 19 of whom completed the programme. One is now employed, another one has enrolled for a bachelor's degree, and others are planning to start up a small business together.

Latest feedback included students wanting more time for English language, practical driving lessons and finance-related information. They found sustainable living and positive parenting most useful, and some wanted to gain more practical skills, such as gardening. Women also identified the need for computers so that they can work from home.

Some of the effects that Second Chance had on these women were less tangible, which is why Shakti also seeks feedback from support workers and counsellors who have known these women from the day they entered the refuge.

“Seeing them on the first day when they were crying, shoulders bent, don’t know what to do, wearing very traditional clothes – and then on the day of their certificate presentation they are all dressed up. It’s like their graduation ceremony, feeling proud and having that sense of achievement.”

“If you were to quantify it, it wouldn’t be a huge leap, it’s baby-steps, really, in terms of being more receptive of making goals, wanting to move on to the next goal, being more ready to move on.”

Some of the women went back to live in the refuge after the programme and changes observed included an increased response to cleanliness and nutrition, better interaction with the other women in the refuge, and less isolation. Women also started planning for the future: they clearly wanted to move on and felt more ready to move on. In addition, women who did the programme together often became a social support network for each other and helped each other out.

“They build their own support group for themselves, we don’t have to lead them into it.”

There were also learnings for Shakti through running the Second Chance programme. For example, lack of affordable childcare was an issue that was picked up in the first batch of students, so an agreement was made with a childcare provider nearby. Also, in the third batch, students were divided into elementary and beginners, with a focus on English language for the beginners. This was the result of earlier feedback that lack of English language knowledge was a huge barrier for some client-students, hampering their participation in other classes.

Key findings

The Second Chance programme provides a service for ethnic women who are victims of violence and have chosen to leave the relationship. Due to family and community dynamics in refugee and migrant communities, many of these women won't have any support when leaving the refuge. This is when women are extremely vulnerable, and some end up returning to a violent situation because they are not familiar with the New Zealand systems and processes. Second Chance provides vital support in these circumstances.

Second Chance works because it is consistent with principles of good practice outlined in Chapter 6, eg empowerment through education, upskilling and participation, and being culturally sensitive. An important aspect is also that the need for the programme was identified through written feedback and focus group discussions with the clients of the refuge, ie the programme filled a perceived gap and was not imposed on the women.

One of the most valuable aspects of Second Chance is that it supports integration into New Zealand society and it allows continuity of assistance after a woman leaves the refuge. This breaks down the

isolation that many refugee and migrant women experience, and facilitates access to a paid job or further study.

4 Types and features of community initiatives

In the course of interviews and discussions with community groups and service providers, the researchers came across a variety of community initiatives that were linked to a network of refugee and migrant groups and government services that referred clients to each other for specialist assistance. Learning about these initiatives helped develop the understanding of good practice discussed in Chapter 6. Many of these initiatives could have served as case studies and are well worth exploring.

This section of the report describes some of the working realities faced by community initiatives and the network they function in. It provides an overview of the types of initiatives found, with some examples to better understand their nature, and describes the developmental arc sometimes found in community initiatives, which may start as small social networking groups and eventually become service providers to their community. The key findings are summarised at the end of this chapter.

We defined community initiatives as any type of programme, group or organisation set up by individuals within the community to address concerns or needs, and that filled a perceived gap. The community initiatives explored in this report include:

- service providers taking a preventive approach to family violence
- women’s refuges devoted to ensuring the safety of the victims of family violence
- women’s networks and social groups that work toward reducing isolation.

The working realities of community initiatives

All of the initiatives studied depended on volunteers. They received varying levels of funding to support their efforts and employ professional workers, like social workers and counsellors, but even paid workers typically volunteered a lot of their time.

Participants praised the many excellent front-line workers in the community who were not always qualified professionals. Some argued that there needed to be greater input from academics and professionals to help train these people to know risk factors and crisis management. As one participant put it, “You can’t just base this on intuition.” Some argued that there also needed to be leadership in setting standards and maintaining quality for community services – that one should expect different philosophies from the various cultures, but there needed to be some standard of quality. Others cautioned that over-emphasis on professionalism could result in losing touch with the community.

The community initiatives operated in the context of many government agencies also working in the area of family violence. The local, regional and central government agencies – the city councils, the Auckland DHB, the Police Ethnic Liaison Officers and Family Safety Team, Family and Community Services’ Settling In programme, CYF, schools, etc – played an important role in providing services⁸ and supporting community initiatives. They did this as part of a network of people and organisations, both government and NGO, helping each other to address family violence, and exchanging resources and referrals to help their clients. The very great trust between the people in these networks was evident.

⁸ For refugees in particular, when they first arrive in New Zealand, they receive information on issues related to family violence as part of the orientation programme at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre. They are also asked questions about family violence as part of routine health screening.

The Family Safety Teams and Settling In are examples of central government programmes that allow locally sited teams to develop operating styles appropriate to their particular context. They support community initiatives in their local areas, cooperating and networking with them to progress their common goals.

There were also individual entrepreneurs whose business initiatives addressed women's isolation. For example, one woman ran a successful catering business and driving school for Muslim women. Driving lessons by a female instructor helped Muslim women become more independent and less isolated because it was culturally inappropriate for them to take driving lessons from a man. Although such initiatives may not have been set up to address family violence specifically, they made a useful contribution to the communities by helping women to become more independent.

The different types of initiatives are discussed below. Examples of each type illustrate the work that they do, and provide a flavour of the range of work undertaken by refugee and migrant communities to address family violence. The service providers tended to take a preventive approach in contrast with the intervention focus of the refuges. The social networking groups might not have an explicit focus on family violence, but their work to break down isolation may expand over time as the needs of members emerge, and some eventually become service providers themselves.

Service providers

Many service provider organisations grew from small networks and social groups. They provide a range of services to different parts of the refugee and migrant communities. Most of their work is preventive in nature. An important aspect of service providers' work is relationship-building, in particular: developing trust with members of their communities; networking with other organisations to encourage sharing of resources and client referrals; and attracting and keeping the best volunteers and professional staff.

The community initiatives studied made the safety of victims their paramount concern. Within the refugee and migrant communities, an approach to family violence that is family-oriented and couched in terms of the family's safety, health and development seems to be particularly acceptable, perhaps especially to the traditional elements of these communities. This works well with an emphasis on empowerment, focused on education and acquiring the skills and knowledge to make good choices, and providing information and other services to help families cope with the various stresses of their lives. Despite their preventive focus, they will also be involved in direct interventions in family violence cases, either through referrals or self-referrals and will find a resource to refer them to.

Finally, two aspects of their environment are particularly salient to the work of these community initiatives. Firstly, their clients often have problems that are related to their immigration status. Secondly, mainstream services are not always provided in a culturally sensitive manner. Community groups often have to mediate with these services on their clients' behalf, or even provide alternatives that work better for members of the refugee and migrant communities.

NZ Ethnic Social Services Trust (NZESS)

NZ Ethnic Social Services Trust (NZESS) was set up in 2000 as a one-stop shop for "Ethnic people from all round the world" who have migrated to New Zealand, emphasising confidentiality and recruiting staff who are themselves migrants. Despite the great variety of cultural organisations in New Zealand, the founder of NZESS, who came to New Zealand as a skilled migrant in the 1990s, felt that there was a gap in terms of social service provision for new migrants who found it hard to settle in.

NZESS provides information on family issues, including domestic violence and related legal issues, working within VDV Immigration Policy. NZESS provides bi-lingual educative programmes around relationships and parenting as well as Learners License courses. NZESS receives referrals from

CYFs, Police, Health Boards and others to work with members of the ethnic community. NZESS uses in-house resources and expertise, including qualified social workers, or refers clients to an expert from its networks. NZESS works alongside the New Zealand Ethnic Budgeting Service.

NZESS works hard to build trust and change mindsets within communities. Some migrants come from countries where there are no social services, so the notion of a service provided for free can be quite alien. New migrants can be easily exploited by people charging for services such as accompanying them to agencies like Work and Income or Immigration.

“It takes time for people to realise, we are here to help them – we had only one client per month when we started, or one client every two months – and as soon as you build up that trust, people come all the time.”

From its beginning NZESS has been involved with domestic violence and NZESS has worked towards having family violence expertise in the agency, in which the safety of women and children is paramount. NZESS works alongside victims to ensure that they obtain Protection Orders and do Police complaints, and NZESS staff carry out risk assessments and safety planning for victims. While these issues are being dealt with, NZESS will continue to work with the family in family violence prevention.

NZESS representatives discussed the dynamics of family violence in refugee and migrant communities. Men’s control over women in these communities is often based on entrenched patriarchal beliefs and attitudes. As in any other community, this control underpins all family violence. However, there are particular stressors contributing to the emergence of violence in families in refugee and migrant communities, frequently related to immigration and integration into New Zealand society. NZESS stated that it was relatively easy to deal with the stressors, but much harder to get traction trying to change male attitudes towards women.

NZESS emphasised the difficulties of coming to New Zealand under the partnership immigration policy and not being able to access training or education. Eighty percent of partners coming to New Zealand under the partnership policy are women. These women may not be eligible for a work visa or residence until they have been with their partner for at least 12 months.⁹ Residence applications under partnership policy take a variable amount of time to process to a decision, and women cannot access publicly funded training or education until residence is approved.

“But in this period, she may have one or two kids anyway and that’s why we see women ten years on who aren’t speaking English.”

The following illustrates the dynamics of family violence in refugee and migrant communities, including how men control women, in particular through exploiting precarious immigration statuses, and how social workers work with women under these circumstances to try to keep them safe within their relationships, developing safety plans and arranging to meet them.

“We were asked to give this woman a ring because she was able to talk because her husband wasn’t at home, so we immediately phoned and kind of got the bare minimum off her, ascertained that he was the kind of guy who’d check the phone, so went over safety stuff with her, how to delete phone numbers so when he checks the numbers aren’t on the phone and then we found out that she was allowed out once a week to the library ... so we organised to meet her at the library ... we’re still in that initial phase, doing a safety and risk assessment, getting the facts and details ... working out a safety plan for her ... This is a

⁹ The Department of Labour advises that this immigration policy requirement seeks to provide assurance for New Zealand that the relationship is stable and genuine.

*situation where she is waiting for her PR [permanent residency] and so she doesn't want to do anything. So he is assaulting her ... and you know, this is what I find difficult, leaving a woman in a situation like that, where she is being assaulted, just so she can get her PR.*¹⁰

NZESS gets cases through referrals from other agencies, but also through word of mouth and self-referrals. They work closely with the Umma Trust to help each other out but they are also linked in with a wider network of service providers and agencies addressing family violence in the Auckland area.

Chinese Mental Health Consultation Service Trust

The Chinese Mental Health Consultation Services Trust (CMHCS Trust) is a non-profit-making charitable organisation founded by a group of mental health professionals to promote mental health, individual wellbeing and good family relationships in a violence-free family environment. CMHCS Trust has no funding and its members carry out work for it outside working hours for their day jobs.

CMHCS Trust has family-oriented initiatives for Chinese migrants and International Students that include:

- an anti-family-violence action group
- helping young Chinese people with the challenges of growing up in a non-Chinese country
- assisting young Chinese settlers / students (who are born overseas) to overcome the potential cultural conflicts in their new life in New Zealand
- mental health assessment and intervention.

One of CMHCS Trust's representatives described their involvement with family violence as including primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. The service started as part of the "It's not OK" campaign with the Ministry of Social Development in 2007. CMHCS Trust and the Auckland DHB Mental Health Services started promoting ways to address family violence in clinical and day-to-day work.

"We [members of CMHCS Trust] have prepared a number of pamphlets. We set up websites about family violence for Chinese people. We have done posters, videos, DVDs, parenting programmes, you name it. We have done a lot of this work [promoting family harmony] at the primary level, which is to look at prevention and raising awareness. And at the secondary and tertiary levels – as a Ministry of Justice approved programme provider for respondents of protection orders. We have also worked with Police and Manukau City Council in setting up programmes for victims and perpetrators of family violence."

The service's model of addressing family violence, the "PEIS" model, includes four points:

- P: psycho-education: acknowledging the bravery of asking for help, and educating people about the impact of abuse, including verbal abuse, on children
- E: empowerment
- I: intervention
- S: support.

CMHCS Trust representatives felt that generally there was a lot of work going on in the area of family violence but that "post-vention" efforts were lacking. In the context of Chinese migrants, post-vention means helping the family if they get back together after the event, which is what the great majority of Chinese migrants want to do, so they don't lose face in the community.

¹⁰ The Department of Labour advises that the Victims of Domestic Violence immigration policy was introduced in 2001 and changes made to it were implemented in March 2009 to provide a residence pathway for women in this sort of situation.

“The issue is shame, for the sake of the children, ... very few Chinese, except younger ones ... want to divorce. [In one case] they are divorced already but living under the same roof, to the outside they are still a couple but they row all the time, live in separate rooms ... there are more opportunities for violence.”

CMHCS Trust representatives also discussed the need for cultural appropriateness in mainstream services’ response to ethnic communities.

“I still question whether the mainstream community has the ability to cope with the cultural needs of the Chinese/Asian people in the community ... While we can use interpreters to deal with these people who speak English as a second language, we cannot deal with the cultural subtleties behind it ... Domestic violence is heavily shaped by our culture ... I insist that the mainstream people work with us to give the best to our community ... In certain cultures, it is alleged that the patients/clients do not respect interpreters that much and therefore, what a shameful thing, how can you divulge something so shameful to someone who you don’t respect that much?”

For members of the Chinese community, understanding the impact of abuse on children was found to be especially motivating. Thus educating them about this impact empowered them to do the right thing.

“It could be hard to engage with Asians, so education and empowerment are particularly important.”

The service gets lots of visitors to their website, as well as referrals from other Chinese community agencies.

Shanti Niwas

Shanti Niwas Charitable Trust Inc. provides and promotes culturally appropriate Positive Ageing programmes and social support services for the wellbeing and enhancement of quality of life for senior citizens living in the Auckland Region. The organisation was founded in 1994 by a qualified social worker, now Trustee and Project Manager. At the time she was associated with the Methodist Mission and credits them with supporting Shanti Niwas for nine years until the organisation became financially independent.

Shanti Niwas deals with senior citizens of Indian and South Asian origin. These people came to New Zealand with their families and were dependent on them. Many never learned to speak English, and were often very lonely, with no knowledge of the support services available to them through government and community agencies.

Shanti Niwas currently has two social workers to cover the Auckland region. They said that they were addressing increasing numbers of cases of elder abuse and neglect, and that in their community family violence was not talked about. Especially with senior citizens, it was a sensitive issue, with a lot of stigma attached to it.

“If you are a woman or anybody in a violent situation, it is your destiny, you suffer. That is the culture we come from, but that is what we are trying to change ... People are not ready to come and talk and by the time they want to come and talk it is too late.”

The social workers looked at elder abuse as a facet of the wider problem of family violence in the community and believed that it needed to be addressed holistically, dealing with the elders and the rest of the family as a unit. However, this was difficult because often people did not come to them for help until the situation was so extreme that they were determined to leave the family home entirely. In such cases it might only be possible to work with the families just to buy time until the elders could apply to Housing New Zealand and move into their own accommodation. They made the point that

there was no refuge for older people, thus nowhere to place older people if they were at risk in their home situation.

Shanti Niwas was also getting calls from younger people, “I am having problems, I am separated from husband, I’ve been beaten, things like that.” Although the social workers said that they did not have the resources to deal with younger clients on top of their caseload of elders and regular programme of Positive Aging activities, they also said: “I never say ‘no’ to anyone because people are in desperate situations. So I will always spare my time for them.” They would meet with the younger people and sort out the best resources to refer them to.

They felt they were able to make a difference, trying to empower the people who came to them for help.

“At least now they can come and talk to us and they can talk in confidence.”

Refuges

A refuge needs to incorporate physical, psychological and cultural safety. Cultural safety has emerged as a difficult feature to deliver when, for example, a refuge is not set up specifically for women from refugee and migrant communities, but then finds itself receiving requests for help from this quarter. The National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges (NCIWR) identified a need for specialised training for refuges to help them provide appropriate services for the women from refugee and migrant communities who approach refuges for help.

In general, refuges have to work hard keeping their premises safe from the perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Refugee and migrant women are sometimes faced with a trade-off between physical safety and cultural safety because leaving their unsafe home can displace them from their community. This may create difficulties in procuring appropriate food and opportunities for prayer while they are in the refuge, accessing their usual help with childcare, and maintaining their place in the ethnic community.

Refuges helping migrant and refugee women placed importance on networking and on a holistic approach. Good networking allows the refuges to share resources and refer clients. A holistic approach means the refuge will understand the social situation that the client comes from and allow the refuge to help the client more effectively. A holistic approach may also mean, for some refuges, that in addition to helping women to be safe, they may work toward changing men as well.

Eastern Refuge

The Eastern Women’s Refuge (EWR) in Pakuranga, founded in 1987, is a mainstream refuge that has learned to work well with refugee and migrant women. Since the early days of their organisation, its workers have been dealing with migrants, particularly from the former Eastern bloc, including refugees from Kosovo. Later on, Middle Eastern and Asian women began coming to them for help, too.

“Aside from Māori and Pacific Island women, we are the only refuge that takes other ethnicities, other refuges won’t touch them ... cause often they are in the ‘too-hard basket’ ... they don’t have Permanent Residence, they don’t have access to benefits ... it basically costs us as an organisation because we have to carry these women while they are here and we don’t mind doing that but there has to be some kind of provision for these women.”

In the current case of a woman in the refuge who didn’t speak a word of English, EWR was able to draw on resources, such as an Asian lawyer and a Mandarin-speaking Police officer and another resident in the refuge, to help with translation and meeting her needs.

“If it doesn’t happen that way, it is actually incredibly difficult for us, ... and we have had other Asian women in the refuge in the past who we taught to speak English as well.”

The women who managed the refuge described the refugee and migrant women who came to EWR as exceptionally traumatised in that they remained in a crisis state much longer than Pākehā, Māori or Pacific women. In particular, they found it difficult to make decisions. This was understood in terms of both the stressful situation they were in and the controlling relationships they were coming from, where the husbands may have made all the decisions themselves.

“For migrant women, there may not necessarily be a lot of physical violence involved in their stories, but there’s a helluva lot of psychological violence. And these women are often ready to snap, because they’ve just taken as much as they can possibly take, and they can’t take any more ... She isn’t able to make a decision about anything, and hasn’t been allowed to, to be fair, and so she doesn’t know how the hell she is going to make a decision because it’s never been left up to her before. So they’re having to learn to be independent when that hasn’t been a right that’s been afforded them before.”

EWR is working in cooperation with ethnic organisations. For example, EWR is currently assisting the New Zealand Sikh Women’s Association to obtain approval to eventually provide a safe house for women from their community.

EWR is sensitive towards other cultures and has established a network of external people to draw on for support when dealing with migrant and refugee women. Internally, EWR workers try to make sure that women’s needs are met, whatever culture they are from.

“We have a utilities coordinator and she makes sure that any women who come in and might be of a different ethnicity, she’ll check with them what their needs are, for example, do you need different cooking utensils, do you need to know where you can buy halal meat... she knows all of those things and will direct them to the right places and even take them there.”

EWR also differs from other refuges in that it has a philosophy of working with men. EWR has a men’s caucus attached to the refuge and works with it to stop men’s violence against women. The refuge would like to provide a men’s house for perpetrators that men are in charge of, as well as developing a men’s programme for perpetrators that can be used, and culturally adapted, by other agencies. The women who run EWR want to do this because in their experience women frequently returned to their partners, and they concluded that men needed to be part of the solution to the problem of family violence.

“Eventually the women whose partners are looking for assistance can get it through our men’s services as well ... She’s done all this work and he’s done nothing. So ... the violence sometimes elevates, because he doesn’t understand why suddenly she’s saying this is not what she wants anymore, and she won’t accept his behaviour. So we need the men to be doing that stuff with the brothers and challenging their behaviours, in order to understand the work that we’ve done with her and why we’re trying to keep the family safe. Because it’s not about tearing families apart, it’s about making sure they can be safe if they choose to stay together.”

The resulting holistic and inclusive approach to addressing intimate partner violence is very compatible with the philosophies expressed by members of the refugee and migrant communities.

Shakti Wellington

The Shakti Community Council Inc. runs several refuges set up especially for refugee and migrant women across New Zealand. Shakti also established an office in Wellington in 2008 with the sole

purpose of doing advocacy, lobbying and policy work. Since the opening of the office in Wellington, it has been overwhelmed with women asking for help. These women were mostly referred from other agencies and refuges, including some from the Indian High Commission.

“In Wellington, specifically, we didn’t go out of our way to advertise because we weren’t providing services, and yet, they found out about us.”

The gap in services for ethnic women in the Wellington area who are victims of intimate partner violence was temporarily filled on an ad hoc basis by Shakti Wellington’s Organisation and Policy Development Coordinator with the help of a volunteer social worker. They were kept busy organising counselling, legal advice and emergency accommodation at the expense of some of their planned advocacy and policy work. Because of this demand for emergency accommodation for ethnic women, Shakti is working to establish a refuge in Wellington and this demonstrates how an initiative can grow to respond to a demand or perceived gap.

“We have to start providing services, really, in the Wellington region because there is quite a need for it.”

Women’s networks and social groups

Women’s networks are a simple and effective way of breaking through the isolation that makes women in refugee and migrant communities vulnerable to intimate partner violence. Women in these groups share their experiences, support and friendship, gaining each other’s trust so that their needs can be understood and met. The networks are supported by Settling In and other agencies to disseminate information with guest speakers. Such groups are often the seeds of bigger things to come, such as the Umma Trust, Shanti Niwas and Shakti. These groups are entirely run by volunteers and even a small amount of government support makes it possible to expand their role from coffee meetings to supporting community education and empowerment.

Korean Women’s Network

One example of a recently established women’s group is the Korean Women’s Network New Zealand (KWNNZ). It started out as the North Shore Korean Women’s Coffee Club in 2009 after some Korean women identified issues for women in their community, such as isolation and depression, and difficulties in trying to settle down in New Zealand. Some Korean women also suffered from low self-esteem, a lack of confidence and difficulties with learning to speak English. They felt separated by language and culture from mainstream society and not connected with each other. KWNNZ has grown from the five members who initiated the coffee club to close to 60 registered members. They have weekly meetings and also organise events with guest speakers from organisations such as Work and Income, ACC and DHB.

The main purpose of KWNNZ was to be a bridging organisation between the New Zealand government and the Korean community. While all the women work for KWNNZ on a voluntary basis, KWNNZ has received some support from MSD’s Settling In programme and lottery funding through the Department of Internal Affairs to cover venue costs and costs for events.

As in many other cultures, intimate partner violence is seen as a private issue among Koreans: they do not want to talk to friends about it and find it very embarrassing and shameful. As a consequence the woman becomes more and more isolated, and this happens very frequently.

“I know a friend, they came all together to New Zealand, her husband comes from a wealthy family so he has no difficulties to live in Korea but here in New Zealand he has no job, first, and then he wants to be a man still, so, like bossing around, very conservative, and they are used to being served by the family, especially the wife, but he has no job ...

so he just hangs around, stay at home, sometimes go out, play golf with a friend, but they just feel kind of small ... if the same happens in Korea, they just ignore it, but here in New Zealand if the wife complains ... he is easily upset and it's very hard to control his feelings ... so finally it happens ... domestic violence."

"In Korea they just call the police and ask for help, but here in New Zealand they don't know where to go."

To encourage women to attend presentations, KWNNZ often "sandwiches" talks about topics, such as budgeting, in between fun classes, such as yoga or salsa, and English language classes. This seems to work well in attracting participants. KWNNZ also linked in with the North Shore Women's Centre to organise a more ambitious and challenging event on domestic violence in November 2010. The organisers found the event to be so useful, that they planned another for 2011. Further, KWNNZ has taken the first steps in the process of becoming a trust.

Other examples of women's networks are:

- Punjabi Women's Group
- the Korean mothers' support group for single mothers
- Afghani Women's Group.

These are multiplied around the Auckland region and throughout New Zealand.

Key findings

The community initiatives studied in this research tended to support community engagement and cultural sensitivity, which are the elements identified in the research literature as most important when working in the area of family violence in refugee and migrant communities. These aspects of the initiatives made them most valuable to the central, regional and local government agencies that came to them for help and referred their clients to them (and vice versa). Together, the government agencies and community initiatives made up a cooperative network providing services, reducing isolation and protecting the victims of family violence.

Community initiatives depended on volunteers and paid professionals, but even paid workers tended to volunteer a lot of their time.

The initiatives fell into the categories of social groups, service providers and refuges. Social groups focused on overcoming isolation, an extremely valuable role in refugee and migrant communities. Sometimes they added an educational dimension to their activities by inviting guest speakers.

Service providers tended to focus their family violence work on community education, empowerment and awareness-raising. Often this was couched in terms of family health and safety in order to be more acceptable to traditional cultures. They also responded to referrals and self-referrals, and the safety of victims was the agreed priority in all the groups studied.

Refuges that accepted clients from the refugee and migrant communities needed to provide a culturally safe environment, including appropriate food and opportunities for prayer. Sometimes women who left their partners for the safety of the refuge were ostracised by their communities and this made it difficult for them to access their usual help with childcare.

Networking was an effective way of providing additional services for clients, but sometimes responding to community needs resulted in shifts in a community initiative's agenda. Occasionally social groups expanded their range of work and became, over time, more like service providers. Eastern Women's

Refuge created a Men's Caucus to facilitate changing men's behaviour. When Shakti's Wellington office was opened to support advocacy and policy work, it needed to expand its operations to accommodate the community's need for a refuge for migrant and refugee women.

Further discussion of the context in which these initiatives work appears in Chapter 5, next. Then Chapter 6 covers the principle of good practice that emerged from studying the initiatives.

5 Family violence issues in refugee and migrant communities

This section summarises the key issues concerning family violence in refugee and migrant communities that emerged from the research.

The researchers identified two general themes. One was that there was a spectrum of complementary approaches to addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities, ranging from prevention at one end to intervention at the other end. The second theme was the importance of acknowledging the diversity among the refugee and migrant communities. In addition to these overall themes, several systemic issues regarding family violence in these communities emerged from the research, including immigration issues, isolation, the position of men, unemployment and other stressors. Community participants consistently raised these issues as significant to their communities and to their work. These issues were also identified in the literature on family violence in refugee and migrant communities.¹¹

Prevention and intervention

There were two main approaches that needed to be explored when looking at case studies of community initiatives addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities: the preventive approach and direct intervention in family violence situations. These two approaches address different needs in the community. The preventive initiatives educate the community, empower its members and support families under stress; interventions work to protect the women and children who have been victimised.

Prevention

Targeted family violence education and awareness-raising in the community aims to prevent family violence in the long term. In refugee and migrant communities, this work will typically be framed as family safety, health and development. These initiatives sometimes develop organically, beginning as social groups, purely aimed at overcoming isolation, and gradually incorporate educational elements. Such initiatives, often supported by community development work, cover a wide range of programmes, including social activities that bring people together without any explicit connection to family violence. Groups such as women's knitting circles or coffee meetings serve to connect people in the community, reduce isolation, and encourage individuals to share their problems and concerns. These groups can also be the vehicle for speakers on topics of interest to the community, such as government services, safe families, good parenting, citizens' rights etc.

One powerful aspect of a preventive approach, and of framing the work as family safety, is that it is not stigmatising or threatening for the community or its members. It is a way of easing their engagement in the difficult issue of family violence.

Key informants and community participants commonly referred to the fact that some refugees and migrants claimed there was no family violence in their community. They said that these people must be in denial, or were unaware of what was really going on, or had very different definitions of family violence. Research participants agreed that among many community members there was great shame attached to the idea that family violence might exist in their community and these community members

¹¹ B Nam, J Waldvogel, G Stone, M Levine (2011) *Family violence in migrant and refugee families and successful models of prevention and intervention: A summary analysis and annotated bibliography*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington, pp 9–15.

worried that bringing it out into the open would break up their families and threaten their community. Framing the discussion as family safety, health and development, made it possible to address family violence with community members in a way that was more acceptable to them.

Most participants voiced the opinion that attitudes toward family violence were becoming more in tune with reality, initiatives addressing family violence were having a useful impact, and in some communities family violence was no longer the taboo subject that it used to be.

Intervention

Family violence interventions are aimed at keeping safe the victims of family violence. These interventions tend to be urgently motivated and focused on the shorter term. For example, women's refuges are concerned with the immediate safety of women and children.

Very few refuges are specifically set up for women in refugee and migrant communities, and some that were set up for the mainstream have learned to adapt their services. Refuges were acknowledged and praised as a crucial resource by all the interviewees.

The work of refuges sits at the opposite end of the family violence response continuum as prevention. Some services, like counselling, mental health and social work, can be seen as somewhere in between. Some initiatives (such as Umma Trust) that began as purely preventive have over time added the services of social workers and other professionals who are able to intervene in crisis situations. They build on the trust gained over a period of community development in order to incorporate needed services that may once have seemed too sensitive to include on their agenda.

Diversity within the diversity

Participants agreed that the various ethnic communities can work very differently from each other – that there was diversity in the diversity – and some groups worked in isolation because of cultural divisions. Thus people addressing family violence may have to work quite separately with different sub-groupings of people within the same religion or nationality. In addition, different cultures will have different settling priorities. In 2004 Settling In¹² conducted extensive needs assessment workshops in Auckland. Although there could be no doubt that family violence existed in these communities, it did not come up in any of the focus groups. Nevertheless, in 2006, four male refugee community leaders initiated strengths-based family violence projects. Settling In took this to indicate that different groups were operating at different levels, and that addressing family violence needed to be understood in context, as happening faster in some communities than others.

Immigration issues

Immigration issues emerged as a risk factor for women in this research and in the research literature.¹³ Many women in refugee and migrant communities have precarious immigration statuses. If their temporary visa or residence visa status has a requirement that their partner supports their application, the women will be strongly motivated to put up with an abusive relationship to avoid jeopardising that support by leaving the relationship. Where there are children, the woman could be required to leave the country and may be forced to leave her children in New Zealand if their partner has some form of legal custody of the children. If the partner has taken out a parenting order for the woman's children

¹² As mentioned in Chapter 1, Settling In is a programme run by Family and Community Services (FACS), which is a service of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Settling In is a strengths-based community development initiative that works directly with refugee and migrant communities to help them find solutions to meet their own needs.

¹³ B Nam et al (2011) p 10.

from previous relationships, the partner may make a court order that those children remain in New Zealand as well.

Men use revoking their support of the women's applications as a threat to keep women in the relationship. This has proven an effective tool to maintain the abuse. Women may be reluctant to end the relationship because of fears about their ability to support themselves and their children, or being forced to leave New Zealand. To ensure these women have the ability to leave an abusive relationship and keep themselves and their children safe, immigration and welfare systems need to adequately protect them. Internationally this is being recognised.¹⁴

The Victims of Domestic Violence (VDV) immigration policy¹⁵ was introduced in 2001 and changes to it were implemented in March 2009 to respond to these issues. It enables victims of domestic violence, whose partners are New Zealand residents or citizens, and who are not yet residents themselves, to be issued a residence visa or a special temporary work visa. These victims of domestic violence can apply for these visas without needing the support of their partner as an immigration policy requirement. The policy ensures that women can receive an immigration status that enables them to have access to assistance and financial support.

The VDV policy is also a deliberate deterrent to perpetrators of domestic violence. If a woman gains residence under VDV policy, this impacts on the ex-partner's ability to sponsor further partners for residence.

While the VDV policy exists, not all refugee and migrant women will see themselves to be in a position to make best use of it. This may be because:

- they are unaware of the policy
- they are not eligible because their partner is not a New Zealand resident or citizen (that is, the partner may be on a student or work visa)
- they may not be willing to go to the people or organisations competent to make a statutory declaration that domestic violence has occurred.¹⁶

Isolation

Isolation, especially for women, was considered a risk factor for family violence, so any initiatives targeted at breaking the isolation, as trivial as they may sound (eg coffee circles), may make a huge contribution towards women's empowerment and independence and, ultimately, freedom from violence. Isolation was also identified as a risk factor in the research literature.¹⁷

Women in refugee and migrant communities are more vulnerable to violence from their partners because of their isolation, which may take several forms.

¹⁴ The United Kingdom has made a commitment that, from June 2012, migrant spouses who are destitute will be given access to benefits while their indefinite leave to remain claim is being considered. See HM Government (2011) *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Action Plan*.

¹⁵ <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/operationalmanual/>

¹⁶ These are social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, counsellors, and staff from approved women's refuges.

¹⁷ B Nam et al (2011) p 9–12.

- Separation from their families of origin, left behind when refugee and migrant women come to New Zealand, means the loss of their social support network when women need someone to stick up for them against abusive partners, or someone to share their concerns and problems with.
- If abusive partners keep them housebound and dependent, women can neither participate in their ethnic communities nor find support there.
- Lack of contacts in the mainstream community, unfamiliarity with the host culture and inability to speak its language, means some refugee and migrant women will not be able to ask for help from their neighbours, workmates or many other potential supporters.
- If refugee and migrant women are unaware of mainstream services, or they do not trust them this will isolate them from protection that would otherwise be available to them. Coming from authoritarian or corrupt regimes certainly made some women fearful of the New Zealand authorities (until they learned differently) and thus they were less likely to go to the Police or other government agencies for help.

Women's isolation was put forward as a rationale for educational television programmes on the topic of family violence to be made in the languages of the refugee and migrant communities. Women at risk are often confined to their homes, perhaps available to watch television during the day, and the television may be the best point of access to them.

Any woman who leaves a violent relationship may find herself at greater immediate physical risk regardless of the community she comes from, but this risk is exacerbated by the isolation experienced by many refugee and migrant women, as identified in the research literature and by our research participants. In refugee and migrant communities, a woman who leaves her husband may face the additional problems of being ostracised from the community, losing support and her sense of belonging. A woman with children, cut off from her community, may not be able to find employment due to not having anyone to look after her children and not being able to afford childcare.

The position of men in refugee and migrant communities

The research found that the traditional role of men in ethnic cultures was an important influence on family violence in refugee and migrant communities. This was supported by a review of the literature, which concluded, "men's domination and adherence to traditional values about women have been shown to be risk factors".¹⁸ This point was also made in one of the few examples of New Zealand research in this area.¹⁹

Participants agreed that there were men in their communities who would argue that their culture or religion gave them the right to dominate their families. They said that these men used religion, culture and notions of honour as a smokescreen for their coercive behaviour, and expressed concern that mainstream services might be taken in by these specious arguments. Male community participants believed that, as men, they could play an effective role in dealing with these perpetrators.

Sometimes men who have been in New Zealand longer may be controlling a whole group of people in their family through their greater knowledge and experience of the host culture. They may be wealthy, too, or there may be other factors, like high status in the community, that make them able to wield power. A woman may be trapped in a relationship with such a man because of her fear of repercussions on extended family members back home, including attacks on her family members by her husband's extended family. Another way of using culture and religion to control women was the fact that in some groups men had more power than women to obtain a divorce.

¹⁸ B Nam et al (2011) p 9.

¹⁹ S Tse (2007) "Family violence in Asian communities, combining research and community development" *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Issue 31:170–194.

Financial problems and unemployment

Poverty and unemployment were identified as important stressors for refugee and migrant families, the cause of arguments and unhappiness in their homes. The issue of men losing their role as the family's breadwinner has been covered in the literature, too.²⁰ One participant described how it caused strains in his own family, but ended on the positive note that at least it was no longer a hidden shame, but accepted as a community-wide problem that would be addressed collaboratively.

“Unemployment is a big problem. People coming – they want to get a better life – and this is happening between the mother and the father: ‘Oh, you brought me here’ ‘You brought me here.’ And this is not healthy for the children ... This thing is damaging the whole family. My young son now is 15. When he was young, sometimes when he would hear something in the house, suddenly he would jump up and try to change the subject. He was three years old, he just wanted to change it ... nobody wanted to hear. That was not really healthy. Now we accept that something is there, but what to do? And how to do it? Compared to 20 years ago, no one was talking about this. Now at least we are talking about it. It means something good is happening. We are working together, we are part of the group and things will be better, hopefully.”

Influence of the host culture as a family stressor

Participants identified the influence of the host culture on young people in the family as a source of family conflict. Young people brought the host culture into their homes, with huge impact, at every stage of their lives, including what they learned at school, getting into trouble, and bringing home partners that their parents did not approve of.

²⁰ B Nam et al (2011) p 11.

6 Principles of good practice

This chapter highlights the principles of good practice that emerged from focus groups with community members and interviews with key informants and representatives of community initiatives, in accordance with the research objective, “to identify criteria for success, elements of good practice and conditions that support success when addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities”. We define good practice in the context of this paper as principles that are seen as successful in prevention of, or intervention in, family violence situations in refugee and migrant communities. The good practice principles cover the following areas: approaching holistically the issue of family violence in these communities; empowering communities and individuals; and engaging with different ethnic groups in a culturally sensitive way.

The emerging good practice principles were compared to those found in the literature.²¹ Not all of the indicators in the literature are relevant for every initiative and organisation discussed in this report, but they were found to be largely consistent with the good practice principles identified during the interviews and conversations with participants in this research.

Good practice: A holistic approach

As noted in Chapter 5, family violence in refugee and migrant communities may be a taboo subject, so that it is not talked about, or it may be justified on grounds of culture or religion, so that it is normalised or not acknowledged as family violence. In addition, it may be seen as a private matter, there may be a lot of shame and stigma for the whole family or community attached to it, and women who decide to leave their family may be ostracised and isolated from their community and support networks.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the immigration experience itself may create additional stressors for refugee and migrant communities, such as financial problems and unemployment, inability to communicate, unfamiliarity with the host culture and its system and processes, and isolation. In addition, women also have more freedom and rights in New Zealand compared to other, more patriarchal societies, which may add to the pressures on the family.

A holistic approach to family violence in refugee and migrant communities therefore needs to be sensitive to the particular dynamics and context of family violence in these communities, and deal with the aforementioned stressors *as well as* with the issue of family violence. It also needs to address the issue at every level – individual, community, societal and government – in accordance with the ecological model.²² It is vital to take the time to build trust and good relationships as this may enable community members to talk more willingly about difficult and sensitive topics. One way to build trust is by attending community events, which can also be used as platforms to raise the issue of family violence. In addition, establishing good networks with community groups, health providers, government agencies and New Zealand Police sometimes seems to be the only way to gain traction and helps overcome the fear of authorities that some communities may have.

²¹ C Humphreys, G Hague, M Hester and A Mullender (no date) *Domestic violence good practice indicators*, The Centre for the Study of Well-being, University of Warwick. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/shss/swell/dv_gpi_booklet.pdf, accessed 1 June 2010

B Nam, J Waldvogel, G Stone, M Levine (2011) *Family violence in migrant and refugee families and successful models of prevention and intervention: A summary analysis and annotated bibliography*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington, pp 9–15

²² The World Health Organisation (WHO) has proposed the use of an ecological model to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the nature and causes of violence, including violence against women. Ecological models consider that behaviour does not take place in a vacuum, and address the relationship of the individual to their environment, including interpersonal relationships, community and societal influences. The WHO report uses this model to explore risk factors for different types of violence, including violence by intimate partners and sexual violence (EG Krug et al (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health: Summary*, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland).

Furthermore, it is crucial to involve men and male community leaders in prevention and intervention efforts because men will often listen more readily to other men. At the intervention end, representatives of the community groups that participated in this research considered helping the perpetrator as important as helping the victim and children: while ensuring victim safety is always paramount, family violence should ideally be addressed in co-operation with the perpetrators by helping them to change their behaviour.²³

Good practice: Empowerment of communities and individuals

Community empowerment means that the community has ownership of the problem and its solution. Thus, rather than adopting a top-down approach it is crucial to assist and support communities to address family violence in their own way, and involving them in decision-making wherever possible by providing several options and letting the community decide. This way is neither threatening nor stigmatising, and so any initiatives emerging belong to the community and are relevant and useful to community members.²⁴

Up-skilling and educating communities can be done through mentoring programmes by established organisations in the field of family violence, or through train-the-trainers initiatives, whereby trained leaders within the community will pass on the knowledge to other members of the community. It was pointed out, however, that communities need the space and time to start conversations about the issue of family violence, which means that education also needs to take place in a culturally sensitive and non-intrusive way.

Most participants in this research seemed well trained and showed awareness of the dynamics of family violence. They also repeatedly emphasised that a woman's safety in family violence situations was paramount – even if that meant taking her away from the family. This is important to note as the emphasis in refugee and migrant communities is often on keeping the family together, which means that some women remain in dangerous and potentially life-threatening situation so as not to inflict shame upon her and her family. Making the judgement whether it is safe for the woman to be in her relationship requires special skills and knowledge. Being aware of this demonstrates the positive impact that training and education can have on communities.

Empowerment of individual community members, particularly women, is also hugely significant. Participants saw education and training as the key to empowerment. In particular, they identified the importance of education about:

- what constitutes family violence
- relevant New Zealand laws
- the impact of family violence on children and their future.

In particular, the potentially devastating impact of family violence on children was seen as a powerful incentive for families and communities to start having a conversation about family violence, and to instil the idea that victims' safety must be paramount.

²³ This was a theme that emerged strongly in the literature, see Ministry of Women's Affairs (2010) *Speak Up, Seek Help, Safe Home: A review of literature on culturally appropriate interventions for intimate partner violence in ethnic communities*, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Wellington, p 4.

B Nam, J Waldvogel, G Stone, M Levine (2011) *Family violence in migrant and refugee families and successful models of prevention and intervention: A summary analysis and annotated bibliography*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington, pp 16-18.

²⁴ Ministry of Women's Affairs (2010).

B Nam et al (2011).

Women from refugee and migrant communities can be upskilled and educated in a variety of ways and settings, some of which are discussed in this report, eg women’s networks and social clubs, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Good practice: Culturally sensitive engagement with communities

Another area of good practice principles concerns the engagement of service providers with communities.²⁵ By engagement we mean the way we communicate, approach and work with people different from the mainstream culture. Research participants generally felt that mainstream providers needed to be more culturally sensitive, which does not only signify overcoming a potential language barrier. It is rather an awareness of other cultures’ customs and traditions; a simple example would be providing halal food when catering for a workshop with Muslim communities.

Cultural sensitivity also includes having a sense of where the community is at in terms of family violence, ie is it talked about, is it hidden or normalised, and how much shame or stigma is attached to the issue? As mentioned in previous chapters, when working with refugee and migrant communities, it is therefore useful to keep in mind that they may prefer to talk about “parenting skills” or “family safety” rather than family violence.

Using an interpreter to provide “culturally appropriate services” when dealing with refugee and migrant communities may be of limited use. Ways of offering a more culturally appropriate response to improve communication include targeted recruitment, hiring bi-lingual / bi-cultural workers or linking in with other organisations and networks that can provide cultural expertise. The use of appropriate media for connecting with the target audience is also of significance, eg using Facebook to get the attention of young people or creating radio and television programmes in community languages.

In terms of location, research participants felt that it would be useful to choose a neutral location or a religious venue (involving religious leaders) for conversations on family violence. This may be seen as less threatening or more comfortable than a mainstream environment and may help deal with the difficulties of addressing the topic of family violence.

Finally, service providers need to be mindful of the variety of communities and cultures.²⁶ What works for one community may not work for another, as pointed out in Chapter Five. This makes it all the more important to be sensitive and open to learning from communities about their culture.

²⁵ Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2010) p 5.

B Nam et al (2011) pp 16–19.

²⁶ Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2010) p 4.

B Nam et al (2011) pp 16–19

Conclusions

The research literature consistently supports the value of community engagement and cultural sensitivity when working in the area of family violence. Engagement and sensitivity come naturally to the community initiatives that were studied for this research, and were the elements that made them so useful to the central, regional and local government agencies working in this area.

The key informants for this study identified a number of community initiatives that were particularly good value in addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities. From studying these initiatives the researchers learned about how they operated and the issues they encountered in their work. From this, and from the key informant and focus group interviews, the researchers were able to identify certain principles of good practice for work in this area, which were supported by the findings highlighted in the literature reviews. Based on this work, the researchers selected two case studies that demonstrated the dynamics of family violence in refugee and migrant communities and the complexity of prevention and intervention as approaches to addressing this problem.

The community initiatives covered a range of preventive work and interventions: social networking to reduce isolation; services to educate and empower the community; and providing a safe haven for the victims of intimate partner violence and family violence in general. Some groups that saw their focus as preventive were also able to respond to the immediate needs of members of the community in violent relationships. One refuge was beginning to reach out to the men in the community to educate them and encourage changes in their behaviour. Another refuge was helping their clients to live independently after they left the refuge.

Participants pointed out that there was diversity within the diversity of refugee and migrant communities. Those working in this area needed to accept that different communities might require different approaches, or need more time to come to terms with the realities of this problem. Explicitly addressing family violence might happen faster in some communities than others.

There were several issues regarding family violence in refugee and migrant communities that emerged consistently from this study and these were also identified in the research literature. Immigration status was a risk factor for women who depended on an abusive partner to support their immigration application. Isolation was also identified as a risk factor. Separation from their families of origin, lack of contacts in the ethnic or host community, fear that leaving their abusive partners will get them ostracised by the ethnic community, unfamiliarity with the host culture and language, and fear of mainstream services, robbed the victims of protection and support. The dominant position of men in some traditional cultures was another risk factor for women. Poverty and unemployment were a stress for many refugee and migrant communities and the focus of conflict in their homes. Another stressor was the influence of the host culture on young people in the family, a particular focus of conflict if young people got into trouble or brought home a partner their parents did not approve of.

The research identified three principles of good practice for addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities: a holistic approach, empowerment and community engagement. Taking a holistic approach means understanding family violence in the context of the community as a whole, and addressing it at the individual, community, societal and governmental level. It also means involving men in this work, in their roles as family members and community leaders. Empowerment of communities and individuals means that they have ownership of their problems and get to make decisions about how to address them. Education is an important part of empowerment, and teaching people about the impact of family violence, on their children, in particular, was a powerful motivating

force. Finally, cultural sensitivity and engagement with the community was essential to addressing family violence in refugee and migrant communities.

Appendix: Research approach

The research explored a range of community-based initiatives addressing family violence²⁷ in refugee and migrant communities. Two initiatives were selected to be developed into full case studies.

The research was staged. The first stage was in-depth interviews with key informants who were the main stakeholders for the research in central government and national-level NGO sector. The second stage was group and individual interviews with a wide range of stakeholders with direct involvement in community-level initiatives working to address family violence in refugee and migrant communities. Using the knowledge gained from these interviews, the researchers selected the two case studies, the development of which comprised the final stage of the research. The researchers drew on the FACS community coordinators to provide advice on cultural sensitivities and customs.

Methodology

The interviewees were chosen for their knowledge in the field of family violence and/or for their experience in working with refugee and migrant communities on sensitive topics. They came from a wide range of national, regional and local government agencies, service providers and community groups. In-depth individual and group interviews continued, using snowball sampling, until a saturation of themes on family violence in refugee and migrant communities was achieved. A full list of interviewees is appended.

The interviews were semi-structured, generally lasting two to three hours, focusing mainly on people's knowledge of family violence, help-seeking patterns, approaches to family violence and recommendations for particular initiatives. The key informant interview guide is appended. The questions were adapted to the particular interviewees and used flexibly to explore emergent issues.

Criteria for choosing case studies

The following set of criteria for choosing the case studies was developed based on the literature²⁸ and interviews with key informants.

“Must have” criteria

- acceptance/endorsement by the community
- parameters
 - definitions are inclusive of different types of abuse and different impacts; gender and power and control issues; and acknowledge wider effects on children and others
 - providing New Zealand context, eg law on domestic violence
- strength-based approach

²⁷ The use of the term 'family violence' in New Zealand is broadly equivalent to the term 'domestic violence'. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 1995 defines violence as including physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse, against any other person with whom that person is, or has been, in a domestic relationship. According to the DVA a person is in a domestic relationship with another person if:

- is the spouse or partner of the other person or
- is a family member of the other person or
- ordinarily shares a household with the other person or
- has a close personal relationship with the other person.

²⁸ C Humphreys, G Hague, M Hester and A Mullender (no date) *Domestic violence good practice indicators*, The Centre for the Study of Well-being, University of Warwick. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/shss/swell/dv_gpi_booklet.pdf, accessed 1 June 2010

- looking at what's working well and using the strengths of individuals/groups
- good networks
 - embedding the programme/project in the wider context of work going on in this area
 - ability to develop and use networks to progress objectives
 - using networks to feed information back and to inform follow-up actions
- well-planned, clear objectives and timeframes
 - initiative is underpinned by a project plan or rationale detailing objectives (milestones, timeframes), where applicable
- cultural sensitivity
 - initiative is sensitive towards different cultures, ethnicities and different understandings of the issue
 - using plain English and/or interpreters

“Would be nice to have” criteria

- strength of the organisation
 - adequate staff and financial resources to see projects through, commitment, engaged staff
- appropriate training and supervision
 - good quality training, including attention to equality issues, definitions, understandings and awareness-raising
 - supervision is provided for everyone working on this project
 - ability to deal with disclosures
- evaluation
 - Ideally, evaluations will be carried out by independent third parties with an understanding of the complexities of the subject issue and knowledge about relevant international literature.
- inclusion of survivors' views, empowerment, safety and confidentiality
 - Survivors' views are included at all stages in the development of the project/initiative.
 - Survivors' safety needs are identified and taken care of.
 - Attention is given to issues of confidentiality, and to obtaining permission and agreement from survivors.

Interview Guides

Key informant interview guide

1. Family violence in ethnic communities
 - What do you know about family violence in ethnic communities?
 - Is it the same as in other communities?
 - Are there particular differences?
2. Help-seeking
 - What do you know about ethnic victims getting help?
 - What are the barriers?
 - What about silencing of women?
 - Who do they go to?
3. Service responsiveness
 - What are the issues for service providers?
 - What do you think are the key elements of effective services?
 - Are there any particular conditions that support successful interventions?
 - Is it the same for ethnic-specific services?
 - What is your knowledge around service providers for ethnic communities?
4. Migrant vs new migrant communities

- Do you make a distinction between “migrant” and “new migrant” communities?
 - If so, do you have a view on whether it is preferable to look at migrant or new migrant communities?
5. Approach to family violence
 - What do you think about services that work directly with victims as opposed to services that work with families?
 6. Recommendations?
 - Is there any particular service or initiative that you would recommend for case studies?
 - If so, why?
 7. What would you like to learn from the research?
 8. What types of outputs from this research would you find useful?
 9. Is there anything we haven't covered that you think we should know?

Interview guide for community groups

1. What do you do that is related to family violence in ethnic communities?
 - Service provision? Networking? Information gathering?
2. What is your history (as group or individual) of getting involved in addressing family violence in ethnic communities?
3. What are your links to other people or groups in the community that are relevant to this work?
4. What makes a community initiative effective working in the area of family violence in ethnic communities?
 - What do you think are the key elements of effective services?
 - Are there any particular conditions that support successful interventions?
 - What are the issues for community initiatives?
 - What are the differences between ethnic-specific and mainstream services?
 - What circumstances or conditions allow community initiatives to flourish?
5. What can you tell us about family violence in ethnic communities?
 - What are the particular issues for these communities?
 - What differences are there between ethnic communities?
 - What differences are there from the host community?
6. What do you know about refugees and migrants getting help for family violence?
 - Where do they go for help?
 - What are the barriers? (Probe for “silencing of women”)
 - What works for newcomers as opposed to 1st & 2nd generation?
7. Do you see different approaches to family violence?
 - What do you think about services that work directly with victims as opposed to services that work with families?
8. We will report on a handful of community initiatives as inspirations for others.
 - Is there any particular service or initiative that you would recommend for this?
 - Why? What made them successful? Can you tell us their story?
 - Did they have any especially good ideas?
 - What were their problems?
 - Contact details
9. What kind of presentation or style of reporting would be most useful?

Interviewees

Representatives of the following agencies and organisations:

Family and Community Services, Ministry of Social Development

Child Youth and Family, Ministry of Social Development

New Zealand Police

Auckland Regional Public Health

Auckland District Health Board (DHB)

Northern DHB Support Agency
Waitamata District Health Board
Human Rights Commission
Manukau City Council
National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges
New Zealand AIDS Foundation
Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand
Chinese Mental Health Consultation Service
Diversity Trust
Eastern Women's Refuge
Korean Women's Network in New Zealand
New Zealand Ethnic Social Services
Punjabi Women Network
Refugees as Survivors
Shakti
Shanti Niwas
Te Whare Ruruhau O Meri
The Asian Network Incorporated
Umma Trust