

The Blueprint Project

Generating Knowledge and Action to Address
Violence Against Women

**Blueprint for Action Forum
Discussion Paper
May 16, 2013**

Prepared by:

SNmanagement

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A. INTRODUCTION

After several years in decline, rates of domestic violence have flat lined, and in 2009 the rate of self-reported spousal violence was the same as in 2004. In terms of service delivery, violence against women issues can be complex due to the multi-sectoral nature of the issues. Conflicting policy responses at the system level can end up limiting a woman's access to the services that she needs to create safety for herself and her family. Often, women end up in situations where they need to make a choice between safety (leaving the perpetrator) and community belonging (staying at home).

Services providers, having to navigate these complexities, have recently brought to light, through a variety of reports and forums, the policy intersections and contradictions that negatively impact women experiencing violence who are trying to create increased safety in their lives. They document how women's situations are affected and often exacerbated by conflicting policies, and how inadequate policy design and responses at the system and organizational levels create unintended safety risks for women.

Despite the work undertaken by violence against women allies, a comprehensive review of the impact of contradictory and intersecting policy decisions upon women's safety has not yet been undertaken. Further, indicators of safety for women who experience violence, beyond those that address physical space, also have not been articulated in this context.

This report summarizes the groundwork laid by earlier reports and refocuses on the policy intersections that inadvertently put women who experience violence at increased risk, while also proposing a framework for assessing the determinants of women's safety. The report catalogues many of the services, interventions and innovations being undertaken by various service providers to address the front line realities experienced by women, and to advance women's safety and equality. Looking towards the future, the report provides a map of potential areas of focus for service delivery and policy design.

B. THE BLUEPRINT PROJECT

In May 2011, WomanACT, the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and Elizabeth Fry Toronto were funded by Status of Women Canada to undertake the Blueprint Project. The project sought to carry out a gender-based analysis of the impact of policy and systems on women's safety and to develop recommendations and actions to promote the integration of gender considerations into decision making processes on the issue of women's safety, with a focus on the experiences of women living in Toronto. The project was supported by an Advisory Committee of service providers, researchers and advocates, whose collective knowledge was sought to frame the project issues and to inform the planning and implementation of project activities. Please refer to the Appendices for the list of Advisory Committee members.

The objectives of the Blueprint Project were:

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- To identify and develop solutions to the key policy issues that affect women who have experienced violence and who are trying to create safety in their lives, with a focus on newcomer/immigrant women;
- To enhance collaboration among organizations serving women who are experiencing violence by piloting an initiative that addresses one of the priority policy gaps;
- To enhance communication and collaboration with diverse service provider sectors to address the diverse issues impacting women experiencing violence.

In order to achieve these objectives the project undertook the following key activities:

- Conducted a gender-based policy analysis and needs assessment to identify institutional and other barriers to women's safety, particularly for newcomer/immigrant women, with an emphasis on involving the women most at risk in the process and addressing the different types of violence they face;
- Organized and co-ordinated a focused discussion with the organizations that support women who experience violence to develop solutions that address priority issues related to women's safety within the policy context in Toronto;
- Developed a "Blueprint for Action" that provides VAW stakeholders, including service providers and policy makers, with a roadmap of current and potential initiatives that address policy issues;
- Identified collaborative projects to pilot with organizations that work with women who experience violence;
- Engaged the service provider community in the learning process;
- Undertook activities to enhance communication and collaboration with partners in the broader human services systems including criminal justice, child custody and immigration in order to strengthen women's safe access to legal services.

The Blueprint Project included a significant evaluation component. In order to carry out the evaluation, two framing documents were developed; the Theory of Change and the Logic Model. These can be found in the Appendices. The final evaluation report will be available upon project completion.

C. POLICY REVIEW

The policy¹ review consisted of two main activities. First, federal, provincial and municipal legislation and policies impacting women who experience violence, as well as the procedures and practices that flow from these, were collected, summarized and analyzed at a general level. Second, an annotated bibliography of the literature (e.g., previously published reports and grey literature which provide an analysis of the impact of policies/practices on women who experience violence) was developed.

¹ In the context of the Blueprint Project, the term "policy" is used broadly and includes federal, provincial or municipal legislation, regulation, policies and programs as well as the procedures, guidelines and practices that flow from these.

While this review is not exhaustive, it compiles in one document the most relevant legislation, policies, procedures and practices and the most recent research, including emerging trends regarding safety risks for women who experience violence. It highlights the significant analysis that has been undertaken by violence against women allies and describes how policies often intersect and contradict each other to have unintended negative consequences for women who are seeking to establish safety.

A list of policies and literature referenced for the review can be found in the Appendices.

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

Policy regarding violence against women is becoming increasingly neutral on the one hand and punitive on the other. This is seen in the discourse and use of terminology such as ‘domestic assault’ whereby victims of violence – women – are rendered invisible. This is also reflected in the penalization women experience when, in trying to create safety in their lives, they are required by intersecting and contradictory program and eligibility requirements to, in effect, give up their homes, their communities and sometimes their children.

Gender-based analysis is a process that examines the differences in women’s and men’s lives, and identifies the potential impact of policies and programs in relation to these differences. Gender-based analysis also examines the intersection of gender and sex with other identity factors such as income, race, age, religion, etc. The Blueprint Project applied a gender-based analysis to its activities to produce gender-based information about the impact of policies and programs on women who experience violence. The aim is that this information will support more informed decision-making by both policy makers and service providers, resulting in efficient and effective programs and services that are responsive to the realities of women’s lives.

SAFETY INDICATORS

While the literature regarding violence against women cites numerous indicators and measures of violence against women (e.g., rates/measures of prevalence, incidence, severity, impact, etc.),² little has specifically been written regarding the indicators or measures of safety for women who experience violence. There are, however, a number of useful international documents³ to draw upon, such as the Millennium Development Goals,⁴ the World Health Organization’s Prerequisites for Health,⁵ and the Global Indicators for Women, Peace and Security,⁶ which identify indicators and/or dimensions that contribute to women’s health, wellbeing and safety. Throughout the policy review, similar dimensions of health, wellbeing and safety were referenced, including:

² United Nations, Indicators to Measure Violence Against Women, October 2007. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/IndicatorsVAW/IndicatorsVAW_EGM_report.pdf

³ <http://www.theindex.org.au/IndicatorListingByCategory.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/47/43041409.pdf>

⁵ http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/ottawa_charter_hp.pdf

⁶ http://www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/indicators#The_Global_Indicators

- Income security/employment, access to training
- Safe and affordable housing/shelter:
 - Proper rooms in shelters
 - Transitional housing for women leaving correctional facilities
 - Access for people with disabilities
- Freedom:
 - from racism and discrimination
 - from persecution/criminalization
- Access and Custody of Children
- Access to supports and services (e.g., legal representation)

In the absence of safety indicators, these dimensions can be used as proxy indicators for women's safety. Gender-based analysis identifies how policies create barriers to the determinants of safety for women.

- **Income security:** Income security is a key determinant of health and wellbeing for individuals, families and communities. In the context of violence against women, income security may include access to savings, employment, social assistance and child support. Economic security is often the primary factor that influences a woman's decision to leave an abuser and/or to not return to an abusive situation. Women leaving violent relationships struggle to re-establish themselves and their children and face dramatic financial barriers in doing so.
- **Safe and Affordable Housing:** As with income security, the right to housing is recognized in a number of international human rights instruments. In cases of violence against women, housing security may include access to the matrimonial home, access to affordable housing, shelter supports, or being able to afford living in a safe community. Planning for appropriate housing for herself and her children is an important step for a woman who is making the decision to leave a violent situation. However, finding affordable housing that can provide women with safety is very challenging.
- **Freedom from Discrimination and Persecution:** Newcomer and immigrant women, particularly those without permanent resident status, are especially vulnerable to abusive relationships. Dependent upon their partners and employers for immigration status and economic support, these women face threats of withdrawal of work contracts, difficult access to legal representation due to economic and language barriers, communication and cultural roadblocks.⁷ Further, immigrant/refugee women who experience violence and seek support often end up being re-victimized or criminalized.
- **Child Access and Custody:** Access and custody issues are significant considerations that can be complicated to navigate for women experiencing violence. Women who experience violence

⁷ <http://criaw-icref.ca/ImmigrantandRefugeeWomen>

are often making decisions not only for their own safety but for that of their children. While they are worried about the violence that their children may have witnessed, they also worry that their children will be removed from them and taken into care if they report violence to the authorities.

- **Access to Supports:** One of the reasons women choose not to leave or to return to a violent relationship is because of a lack of access to supports and services. Maintaining caring relationships with children and community are important safety indicators; however, for many women, leaving their home to go to a shelter is often the only course of action available, which means that many women leave behind their connection to their community. This can leave a woman isolated, making it difficult to access community services and social support networks like friends and neighbours.
- **Access to Legal Representation:** An overarching issue for many women is the lack of access to legal representation and/or legal aid. Retaining the services of a lawyer is prohibitively expensive for most women and not an option for those without savings, income or property. As a result, access to legal representation has been identified as one of the three most significant pressures on the services provided to women who experience violence.

POLICY INTERSECTIONS

In addition to the themes of safety highlighted throughout the literature, all of the documents reviewed touch upon policy intersections and contradictions, and the impact of these on women. Although social policies are developed with the public good in mind, the political nature of the policy development process means that policies are often developed and assessed according to a narrow risk/benefit framework that does not take into account the complexity of women's lives or their environment. As a result policies often "bump up" against each other to create conflicting policy responses that negatively impact women who experience violence and perpetuate unsafe situations for women. In addition to policy development that is undertaken in 'silos', the lack of consistent policy implementation and the lack of coordination at the service delivery level means that women's journeys to safety vary considerably. The quality of services received can often depend on the individual service provider. For example, the application of mandatory charging by police is an area where discretion is too widely used and one where there needs to be a more standard application of protocols so as to avoid practices that vary between individuals.

The ecological model⁸ is considered by the Domestic Violence Advisory Council as the model that best reflects the paradigm shift required to address policy contradictions. The model has two central starting points: all people and systems are interconnected, and each can influence and impact the other. Individual behaviours, including how a woman will respond to violence, are determined in part by

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_ecological_model; <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>

external factors: the family dynamics, the response from public services, government policies and available community services. Each of these circles is interconnected, and everyone has a specific role to play in both addressing the immediate issue and in being a part of the transformation to healthy non-violent relationships. When individuals or systems do not work in a collaborative way that responds to a woman's needs the risk of the violence escalating or remaining present in her life is increased. It is not surprising, then, that almost all of the documents reviewed call for improved coordination within and across systems that affect women who experience violence to address the complexity of women's lives and the intersectionality of the policy environment. Examples of policy intersections can be found in the Appendices.

D. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The themes highlighted in the policy review were brought forward for discussion with diverse stakeholders, including women with personal experiences of violence, service providers (e.g., shelters, health service organizations, counseling services), policy makers and violence against women advocates. In total, five semi-structured focus groups and eight interviews were undertaken.

Overall, the consultations validated the following themes:

- While policies can be neutral or benefit women, the way that they are implemented often prevents women from creating safety in their lives.
- Policy makers work in silos and develop policy and programs that bump up against each other in a way that disadvantages women. Further, policy and programs are not consistently implemented and/or appropriately resourced; therefore, women's journeys to safety vary considerably.
- There is a lack of coordination at the service delivery level that mirrors policy silos and further impacts women's ability to achieve safety; for example the health and VAW sectors are not consistently coordinating efforts at the local level.
- The quality of services a woman receives is often dependent on her individual service provider. Lack of training for service providers and the lack of practice standards means that services vary from organization to organization and from provider to provider.
- There are specific groups of women that are highly marginalized and experience significant service access barriers and difficulty navigating the system. These are:
 - Immigrant women, particularly refugee and non-status women;
 - Women with disabilities;
 - Women with mental health and addictions issues.

The consultations also identified three priority areas of work that can address the impact of policy and policy intersections on women. There was agreement that both short and long term initiatives aimed at the service delivery and policy levels need to be developed and implemented in each of these areas. The three priority areas were:

- Improve access to services and improve system navigation for women;

- Promote the consistent delivery of services to women by enhancing the knowledge and skills of service providers;
- Reduce silos that result in policies and practices that continue to disadvantage women.

INITIATIVES BEING UNDERTAKEN TO ADDRESS POLICY ISSUES

Organizations addressing violence against women issues, like many not-for-profit organizations and community-based organizations, are working hard to deliver services in an increasingly competitive environment where they are required to do more with fewer resources. The consultations show that while there are often resources for initiatives that address service delivery improvement through research, service redesign and/or service provider training, policy level work (e.g., advocacy) has been and continues to be under-resourced and negatively received by decision makers. Therefore, while there may be a multitude of systemic issues to address, the capacity of service providers and advocates to address these is limited.

Nevertheless, violence against women organizations and allies have worked and continue to work to counter the negative impact of policy and negative policy intersections on women. For examples of initiatives that are underway to address negative policy impacts please refer to the Appendices.

E. BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

In response to the findings of the Policy Review and Stakeholder Consultations, the Management Team sought to develop a strategy that could extend the impact of the Blueprint Project beyond its lifespan and engage violence against women allies to collectively identify and implement actions in response to policy priorities.

As a result, the Blueprint for Action was conceived. The Blueprint for Action is an electronic tool that diverse stakeholders can access for information about policy impacts and intersections and for examples of policy-related initiatives being undertaken to address these impacts. The Blueprint for Action was designed with the following objectives in mind:

- To recognize the initiatives already underway and working to address policy impacts;
- To consolidate in one place the information that has already been documented regarding policy impacts on women who experience violence;
- To create a living document that illustrates, over time, what is being done by different players, and/or at different tables and/or in different sectors to address violence against women issues;
- To provide suggestions or directions that different players, sectors or tables can adopt to move forward on these issues;
- To provide short term, practical suggestions that may involve changing service delivery processes or a specific training program;
- To provide longer term suggestions that call for sustained effort to affect policy change or legal reform;

- To enhance communication and collaboration among violence against women allies to address diverse issues.

As of July 2013, the Blueprint for Action will be available via the Woman ACT, Schlifer Clinic and Elizabeth Fry Toronto websites.

F. PILOT PROJECTS

From the outset the Blueprint Project sought to embody an action component in addition to its research focus, in order to extend its impact beyond its lifespan. As the project unfolded, and as the project partners continued to deepen their working relationship, ideas for projects that could address key policy impacts emerged. Two pilot projects were initiated during the course of the Blueprint Project. These are described at a general level in the Appendices and will be featured in the final evaluation report.

G. CONCLUSION

The Blueprint Project was undertaken during a period which saw significant legislative changes occurring at all three levels of government. It is hoped that this project will facilitate the continued efforts of policy makers and service providers to address the negative impact of policies on women who experience violence.

1. THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

Community initiatives are sometimes planned without an explicit understanding of the early and intermediate steps required for long-term changes to occur. Therefore, many assumptions about the change process need to be examined for program planning or evaluation planning to be most effective. A TOC creates an honest picture of the steps required to reach a goal. It provides an opportunity for stakeholders to assess what they can influence, what impact they can have, and whether it is realistic to expect to reach their goal with the time and resources they have available. The TOC was used as a tool to develop the Blueprint Project activities and for the project evaluation.

1. *The Context that Creates Policy Intersections that Negatively Affect Women*

In Year 1 of the Blueprint Project, the policy review and consultations identified several overarching themes related to the negative impact of policy and policy intersections on women:

- In the absence of evidence-based safety indicators specific to violence against women, these dimensions can be used as proxy indicators for women’s safety. These are:
 - Income security/employment
 - Safe and affordable housing
 - Freedom:
 - from racism and discrimination
 - from persecution/criminalization
 - Relationships:
 - with children
 - with community/social support systems
 - Access to services (e.g., legal representation)
- While policies can be neutral or benefit women, the way that they are implemented can prevent women from accessing the prerequisites for safety.
- Policy makers develop policy in silos resulting in policies that bump up against each other to further disadvantage women.
- There is a lack of a consistent or standard approach to the implementation of policy and therefore women’s journeys to safety vary considerably. A woman’s experience is often dependent on her individual service provider. The impact of policy and the quality of services received by women is highly variable.
- There is a lack of coordination at the service delivery level that mirrors policy silos and further impacts women’s ability to access prerequisites to safety; for example, the health and VAW sectors are not consistently coordinating efforts at the local level.
- There are specific groups of women that are highly marginalized and experience significant service access barriers and difficulty navigating the system. These are:
 - Immigrant women, particularly refugee and non-status women;

- Women with disabilities;
- Women with mental health and addictions issues.

2. Who We Are Working With

Women

While policy intersections impact all women who are trying to create safety in their lives, the policy review and consultations undertaken in year 1 of the Blueprint Project identified two groups of women:

- Women with mental health and addictions issues
- Immigrant and refugee women

Service Providers and Program and Policy Developers

Further, the Year 1 Report identified system coordination, service provider training and the development of service delivery protocols as priority areas of work. The target groups that these strategies should focus on are service providers and decision makers who deliver services or create policies/programs that impact women who experience violence. Through implementation of the strategies, we expect to see:

- Improved communication and coordination among service providers;
- Increased knowledge and skills among service providers.

We also expect that changes among service providers and decision makers will lead to changes in behavior among women, including:

- Increased ability to access programs and services;
- Improved ability to navigate the services and programs in order to meet safety needs.

3. Rationale

Year 1 of the Blueprint Project demonstrated that there is agreement among stakeholders that this is an opportune time to create a Blueprint or an Action Plan that can engage violence against women allies in coming together to identify and implement actions in response to policy priorities identified through this and other projects.

Stakeholders envisage that the Blueprint will:

- Recognize the initiatives already underway and working to address policy impacts;
- Consolidate in one place the information that has already been documented regarding policy impacts on women who experience violence;
- Act as a living document that illustrates, over time, what is being done by different players, and/or at different tables and/or in different sectors to address violence against women issues;
- Provide suggestions or directions that different players, sectors or tables can adopt to move forward on these issues;
- Provide short term, practical suggestions that may involve changing service delivery processes or a specific training program;

- Provide longer term suggestions that call for sustained effort to affect policy change or legal reform;
- Enhance communication and collaboration among violence against women allies to address diverse issues;
- Include a monitoring component so that progress on addressing the Blueprint’s priorities/actions can be monitored, measured and reported and shared with diverse stakeholders.

Further, Year 1 of the project also identified three priority areas of work that can address the impact of policy and policy intersections on women. There was agreement that both short and long term initiatives can be developed and implemented in each of these areas:

- Improve access to services and system navigation for women. Potential actions might include:
 - Create hubs (virtual or physical) where service providers from diverse sectors (e.g., VAW, settlement, health) work collaboratively to provide the services women need
 - Create centralized VAW teams to work with groups of allied service providers 24/7 in order to support access to the services women need
 - Increase case management approaches to service delivery
- Promote the consistent delivery of services to women by enhancing the knowledge and skills of service providers. Potential actions might include:
 - Provide training to professionals/service providers within and beyond the VAW sector (e.g., health, policing, legal and shelter workers)
 - Promote the development of guidelines for professionals across sectors working with women who experience violence (e.g., screening guidelines)
- Reduce silos that result in policies and practices that continue to disadvantage women. Potential actions might include:
 - Continue to advocate for legal reform, 2nd stage housing, restorative justice programs and violence against women legislation
 - Engage the United Way in conversations with policy makers and funders

4. Pilot Projects

In Year 2 of the Blueprint Project, we set the stage for achieving an impact beyond the lifespan of the project by engaging in projects that address policy intersections and contradictions. The projects below are two examples of initiatives that emerged during the Blueprint Project.

<p>Name: Coordinated Access for Women</p>
<p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide crisis/emergency counseling, support, information and referral services to women when they are required

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve service pathways for women who need crisis/emergency counseling, support, information and referral services
<p>Phase 1 Priorities Addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service access and pathways Women with mental health and addictions issues Service provider training/skill development
<p>Description/Rationale:</p> <p>AWHL provides free 24/7 counseling services in 154 languages and has the capacity to take additional calls. The Schlifer Clinic provides legal and counseling services. The Toronto Women’s Mental Health and Addictions Working Group has approached the LIHN to develop a common access point for women. Through this pilot, AWHL and Schlifer Clinic will work with the Working Group to towards the development of a common access point. This may include the Schlifer Clinic and AWHL coming together to develop systems and collaborate on staff training to promote the delivery of consistent information and services.</p>
<p>Next Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with AWHL – they are waiting to hear back from us Sonja to attend the next Working Group meeting Develop a project plan, determine available resources, etc.
<p>Name:</p> <p>Supporting Refugee Women in Detention</p>
<p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide legal information and counseling support to women who are in detention
<p>Phase 1 Priorities Addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service access and pathways Immigrant and refugee women
<p>Description/Rationale:</p> <p>Refugee women who are victims of violence and in detention face numerous challenges related to the intersections in the justice system. Many are facing charges as a result of dual charging police practices. Further, although not yet well understood, changes to IRPA mean that refugee women will have considerably less legal protections. This pilot will provide accurate summary legal advice to women in detention, as well as opinion letters to LAO on the need for Certificates to be approved on an expedited basis, and will make immediate referrals to lawyers. It will bring together immigration and justice service providers to develop a better understanding of Bill C11 and its implications as well as a collaborative service protocol. It will provide education on the new law to agencies assisting newcomers and women victims of violence involved in the criminal justice system.</p>
<p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WomanACT to organize a community meeting

- Develop a project plan for Schlifer Clinic and Elizabeth Fry Toronto to move forward with provision of legal advice

5. Defining Success in Your Project

See Blueprint Program Logic Model

2. LOGIC MODEL

Goal: Women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence have access to the supports that they need to be able to move forward in their lives

Strategies/Approaches	Activities	Outputs (2012- 13)	Intermediate Outcomes (2013 – 14)	Impacts (2015 and beyond)
Objective 1: To identify and develop solutions to key policy gaps that affect women who have experienced violence, with a focus on immigrant and refugee women				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a gender-based analysis and needs assessment to identify institutional and other barriers to women's safety, particularly newcomer women, with an emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ involving the women most at risk in the process ○ addressing the different types of violence they face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how physical, policy and systemic issues intersect to contribute to issues of safety by carrying out the following activities: • Literature search going back 10 years regarding the impact of policies on organizations serving women who experience violence • Identification of key policy issues and gaps • Establishment of a reference group to inform key findings/activities • Prioritization of the key issues through stakeholder consultations: • Council and Committee meetings • Focus groups/interviews with other stakeholders (3 – 4 groups and 10 Interviews) • Focus groups with women/community members (2 – 3) • Survey • Development of a gender-informed participatory evaluation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review completed • Literature review report submitted • Key issues in the literature and in policies identified • Priorities identified by broad range of stakeholders • Stakeholder consultation report submitted • Reference group established • Reference group meets 4 times over the course of the project • Participatory evaluation process developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy barriers gathered and articulated so that they are understood by organizations serving women who experience violence • Organizations serving women who experience violence have a clear understanding of the policy related barriers faced by women • Policy barriers contextualized so that organizations serving women who experience violence can more effectively use the tools developed 	

Strategies/Approaches	Activities	Outputs (2012- 13)	Intermediate Outcomes (2013 – 14)	Impacts (2015 and beyond)
Objective 2: To enhance collaboration among service providers committed to addressing issues impacting women who experience violence by piloting an initiative that addresses one of the policy gaps/priorities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize and co-ordinate a focused discussion with organizations committed to addressing issues that impact women who experience violence, to develop solutions that address priority issues related to women’s safety within the policy context in Toronto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and consult with potential project allies Provide workshop sessions Develop actionable recommendations for key/priority safety areas that can be implemented in the short term (1 year) and medium term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective co-ordination efforts Project allies engaged Recommendations developed Council more engaged in this project than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement among service providers regarding actions/recommendations related to the project Some stakeholders move ahead with some of the recommendations Council better poised to carry out work of mitigating the policy factors that negatively affect women Council ready to move on policy windows as they come up Ad-hoc committee of strategic policy thinkers among service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each woman who accesses services gets her service needs met

Strategies/Approaches	Activities	Outputs (2012- 13)	Intermediate Outcomes (2013 – 14)	Impacts (2015 and beyond)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the recommendations, identify one collaborative project to pilot with organizations who work with women who experience violence (service providers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage allies in a session to identify a collaborative pilot project Develop an implementation plan for the pilot project Discuss with and seek endorsement by Council members Implement the pilot Monitor implementation Develop regular communications with key stakeholders Evaluate the implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers undertake a collaborative initiative Partnership agreement Implementation plan Pilot related tools/resources Product verified Product refined Evaluation report on piloting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced collaboration among organizations committed to addressing violence against women issues Service providers shift the way services are provided to women to deliver information and services in the ways that are needed 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the broader community of organizations working with women who experience violence in the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to disseminate findings Routine communications and networking among organizations Develop best practices guide that incorporates the literature review as well a pilot tools/resources Disseminate the best practices guide: Training sessions Resource materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination Plan Best Practices Guide Training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council identified as a convener in the? Organizations serving women who experience violence? Enhanced knowledge of gender informed tools among organizations that work with women who experience violence Knowledge generated through the project moves the whole sector forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced use of gender informed tools/resources among organizations that work with women who experience violence
<p>Objective 3: To enhance communication and collaboration with diverse service provider sectors to address diverse issues impacting women who experience violence</p>				

Strategies/Approaches	Activities	Outputs (2012- 13)	Intermediate Outcomes (2013 – 14)	Impacts (2015 and beyond)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Blueprint for action with a focus on enhanced communication and collaboration with partners in the broader human services systems, including criminal justice, child custody and immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflecting on the priorities to develop a communication plan Plan for and launch the findings from this project Identify and engage a broad group of allies in a workshop to discuss findings and work to date Engage allies in coming together to identify and implement recommendations/actions in response to priorities Convene collaborative table to implement recommendations Create and disseminate a Blueprint for change to address policy issues impacting women experiencing violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop proceedings Multi-sectoral action plan/Blueprint for addressing policy priorities New funding source to move this work forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service providers and policy makers have a Blueprint for action Service providers have a collaborative table to identify on-going solutions to problems as they arise Successful pilot programs have begun to identify solutions to service and policy problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations serving women who experience violence proactively and formally inform policy makers based on the recommendations of this project Policy makers use a gender responsive informed decision making process Women immigrants/women without status who experience violence have their international human rights respected in Toronto’s service environment Women who experience abuse are not being charged by police

3. LIST OF POLICY IMPACTS RELATIVE TO THE DIMENSIONS OF SAFETY

Policy/Dimension of Safety	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001	X			X	X
Bill C-11, The Balanced Refugee Reform Act, 2010				X	X
Bill C-31, An Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Protection Act, the Marine Transportation and Security Act and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act, 2010				X	X
Bill C-4, Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act, (formerly Bill C-49), 2011					X
Divorce Act			X		X
Criminal Code of Canada					X
Children's Law Reform Act			X		X
Bill 22, Children's Law Reform Amendment Act, 2010			X		X
Child and Family Services Act		X	X	X	X
Family Law Act			X		X
Bill 133, An Act to Amend Various Acts in Relation to Certain Family Law Matters And to Repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000			X		X
Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan					
Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan					
Bill 168, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters, 2009	X			X	X
Social Housing Reform Act		X	X	X	
Bill 53, An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2006) with respect to domestic violence, 2010		X			

Ontario Housing Policy Statement, Housing Services Act, 2011		X			
Ontario Works	X				
Mandatory Charging/Dual Charging	X		X	X	
Legal Aid	X	X		X	
The Ontario Safe Schools Act, 2003				X	

4. EXAMPLES OF POLICY INTERSECTIONS

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
Income Security	<p>The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act may negatively impact a woman’s employment security. The legislation states that if an employer is aware or ought to be aware that domestic violence is likely to expose a worker to physical injury that may occur in the workplace, the employer must take every reasonable precaution to protect the worker. It does not define domestic violence and does not specify what constitutes reasonable precautions on the part of the employer. The government has yet to launch a public awareness campaign regarding the law.</p> <p>The Family Responsibility Office only enforces child support by order. Without</p>		<p>If a woman is on OW she may be pressured to go to family court and ask for support. In cases where there has been DV and in Toronto, this should not be the case; however, if a woman has not told her worker about the abuse, has not realized that she was/is being abused, or does not know that abuse is relevant to family law matters, she may not know that she does not have to request support.</p>		<p>Recent policy changes at OW indicate that when a woman goes to a VAW shelter she must apply for social assistance. Being in receipt of social assistance may deem her inadmissible on the grounds that she is non-self-supporting, thereby jeopardizing her immigration application.</p> <p>A woman without status who has only an H&C Application in process is not permitted to work in Canada, but can qualify for OW. In DV cases, the woman may need to access OW, making her financially inadmissible from the perspective of immigration; on the other hand, if she works illegally, she can be penalized for breaking an immigration rule, and she is also at risk of institutional violence.</p>

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
	access to income a woman may not be able to afford to hire a lawyer to get an order. In many cases child support may not be enforced for up to six months. This impacts a woman's ability to afford proper housing, daycare, etc.				
Housing Security	To qualify for affordable housing a woman needs to give up equity/savings.	<p>A woman who does not charge her partner for behaviours that are in breach of contract risks eviction under the landlord and tenant act (tenancy breach of contract).</p> <p>In order to access affordable housing, a woman is required to get proof that her relationship is estranged and that she does not have access to her partner's income. In DV cases, the partner is not always willing to come forward with such proof.</p>	<p>A woman's access to appropriate housing is taken into consideration in custody and access decisions. For example, if a woman is the access parent, not having the appropriate number of rooms may be a consideration in the access outcome.</p> <p>If a woman leaves a DV situation and is in a shelter on and off for a long period of time with her children it may affect her custody outcome.</p> <p>If a woman leaves a DV situation and leaves her kids behind with her</p>		Non-status women with an outstanding immigration application are eligible for subsidized housing and for priority access due to DV. However, there is no definition of social assistance in the Immigration Act. Therefore, being in receipt of subsidized housing may be interpreted as social assistance for the purpose of immigration cases and may make a woman in subsidized housing financially inadmissible.

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
			partner as the sole caregiver for a long period of time while she is in the shelter, it may affect her custody outcomes.		
Custody and Access	Many women cannot afford legal representation or may not qualify for legal aid. As a result a woman may end up using what income she has in family court/custody disputes that last for years.		Under provincial legislation (Children’s Law Reform Act) violence must be taken into consideration regarding custody decisions in so far as it is relevant to the person’s ability to parent as per the “best interest of the child” requirements. However, the law also states that the court must take into account the principle of maximum contact with parents as per the best interest of the child. This can lead to problematic judgments that may not fully take into account how DV impacts parenting by the abuser, and/or how it is unsafe for a woman to stay engaged with an abusive partner. Further, some advocates fear that the term “parental alienation” may be used to	Under the Child and Family Services Act, a woman who seeks help by calling the police triggers an automatic review by child welfare. The threat of involvement of child welfare is enough to keep women from accessing services, including calling the police. Many women end up in family court without legal representation, which impacts her custody and access outcomes. Even if a woman successfully gets an order for sole custody, she may (and probably will) be exposed to further abuse through the access clauses. Sole custody does not solve all problems; the access plan must also be safe for the woman (mentally as well as	In the Family Court System most applications consider what is in the “best interest of the child”. When a mother has precarious status or faces imminent deportation, she or the Family Court Lawyer has to present a plan that is in the best interest of her child in Canada and in the other county. In the immigration system, the same woman needs to argue that it is not in the best interest of the child to go back home in order to defend against deportation, and this undermines the plan submitted to Family Court. The Department of Justice often monitors and follows these cases and may see information that is contradictory.

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
			undermine child custody determination and sole custody results.	physically safe).	<p>If immigration officers think that a woman is delaying in Family Court to stay in Canada she may be punished with deportation before the Family Court decision is reached.</p> <p>If a woman is deported before custody is determined, she needs the consent of the other parent or a custody order in order to travel internationally with the child. If these are not forthcoming the children may be left with the woman's abusive partner, and the child is vulnerable to being taken by Children's Aid.</p>
Access to Supports, including Legal Representation and Legal Aid	The financial eligibility criteria for Legal Aid are very low. To qualify for Legal Aid a woman must have an income of \$14,000 or less. Most women would need to give up their financial security/savings to gain access to a lawyer.	<p>Going to a shelter or affordable housing requires a woman to leave the support of community and to give up her matrimonial home.</p> <p>Without access to a lawyer a woman who is married to her partner may not be</p>	<p>A woman who has been dependent on her spouse may not be able to afford a lawyer to represent her custody case.</p> <p>If there is joint custody and the woman is trying to access supports for her child (e.g., child</p>	Drastic cuts in legal aid funding means that merit analysis is being carried out more strictly. Therefore, if a woman does not have a good case she may not be funded or may have fewer hours for her case.	

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
	While cases are in progress or in conference, judges will not issue a custody order unless it is on consent, which is seldom forthcoming. Without an order a woman may go without child support/income for months. Similarly, without access to a lawyer, a woman may not have access to spousal support.	able to fight for her right to exclusive possession of the matrimonial home.	counseling) she may need her partner's approval, which may not be forthcoming. While the child custody case is in progress the court may not issue an order for support, which may leave the woman without access to income to secure a lawyer to argue her case.	Most women do not meet financial eligibility criteria for legal aid, and therefore increasingly women do not have access to legal representation in the family, criminal or immigration courts.	
Discrimination, Re-victimization and Criminalization	To apply for a claim under H&C grounds a woman needs to demonstrate economic stability, but she is not permitted to work in Canada without authorization. Many women cannot afford legal aid to support them through the immigration/H&C process. PAR programs do not provide childcare. A woman who is in a PAR and who cannot afford childcare may not be able to participate which may		There is pressure for a woman to use mediation to resolve custody/access issues, leaving her exposed to her abuser. Joint custody orders leave women exposed to abusers because it is rare that a woman can hide her address, etc. In addition, the woman is in a position where she is required to negotiate with a violent partner regarding all matters concerning her children.	Many women do not qualify for legal aid or cannot afford legal representation to support them through immigration/H&C processes. While waiting for an H&C decision, a woman from a designated country does not have access to health care under the Interim Federal Health Program, etc. This is problematic for a woman in a DV situation. Increasingly, women are being charged as a result of	Under the Criminal Code, a breach of a restraining order is a criminal matter. Procedurally, judges are less likely to order a restraining order because they know that a breach will result in criminal prosecution. This leaves a woman at risk of repeated violence from her abuser. Procedurally, mandatory charging is resulting in dual charging and, increasingly, sole charging of women by some police divisions. Women without

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
	<p>impact the outcomes of her case. Gender analysis suggests the program has not been set up to address women’s participation needs.</p> <p>Mandatory charging in DV cases may result in a woman loosing access to income if her partner goes to jail. Gender analysis suggests the policy has not given consideration to the implications for women resulting from its implementation.</p>		<p>Women who end up in court for child protection matters are typically marginalized women, because child welfare typically does not find cause to investigate a woman who has the resources to look like she is providing for her children.</p> <p>A woman whose H&C claim is not approved and who is being deported may lose her children to her partner.</p>	<p>inconsistent application of the mandatory charging policy. However, the offence is not considered serious enough to qualify for Legal Aid and women end up without access to representation.</p> <p>To qualify for Legal Aid one needs to be at risk of incarceration. While this may be a sound policy, from a gender perspective, it discriminates against women who tend to be charged for less serious offences than men.</p> <p>Transgendered issues have not been considered in policy. In international human rights law there is beginning to be recognition of persecution; in Canada this is an emerging area of law and practice.</p>	<p>permanent resident status who are charged risk deportation.</p> <p>If a woman commits a criminal act outside of Canada that carries a penalty of 10 years in Canada (e.g., International Child Abduction), she is excludable from making a refugee claim in Canada. A woman who is abused in her home country and comes to Canada with her children, without her partner’s consent, to claim refugee status could be excluded from making a claim because she allegedly committed a criminal offence that carries of penalty of 10+ years.</p> <p>As of Oct. 25, 2012, a new regulation imposes a two-year condition on all permanent residents who come to Canada as a sponsored spouse. The regulation applies to all sponsored spouses who at the time of the</p>

	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination/Criminalization
					<p>sponsorship application have resided for two years or less with their sponsors, and do not have any children in common. Once they arrive in Canada, the sponsored spouse must continue to cohabit with her sponsor in a conjugal relationship for at least two years, or risk losing her permanent resident status and ultimately be deported. Although the rule could endanger the lives of women in abusive relationships, women in violent relationships must “prove” that they are subject to abuse or neglect. Fear, shame, lack of income and lack of a place to go as well as the risk of deportation pose enormous barriers for abused sponsored immigrant women.</p>

5. EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES ADDRESSING POLICY ISSUES

Initiatives	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination /Criminalization
The 25in5 Network, comprised of the YWCA Toronto and other organizations, has undertaken a multi-pronged poverty reduction strategy that includes a focus on social assistance reform	X			X	
The 25in5 Network is also addressing policy issues impacting refugee women by a) advocating with the province to address the impact of the changes to the Interim Federal Health Program, and b) advocating with the Municipality to address the loss of the Personal Needs Allowance on women with precarious status	X				X
YWCA Toronto is launching a Homes4Women campaign and is calling upon the violence against women sector to join this effort, in recognition that violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women		X			
The CAS/Violence Against Women (VAW) initiative arose from the Domestic Violence Advisory Council. The Children's Aid Society and VAW agencies are working together to develop strategies to promote meaningful collaboration between the violence against women and child welfare sectors. Specific initiatives include training CAS and shelter staff on the intersections between VAW and child welfare and developing knowledge exchange tools and forums			X	X	
Several VAW organizations, including the Schlifer Clinic and METRAC, provide training for judges and law students in order to improve women's ability to navigate the justice system				X	
The Schlifer Clinic, Elizabeth Fry Toronto and WomanACT are collaborating to assess the impact of changes to immigration law upon refugee women and devise responses to protect refugee women in the face of these changes through access to legal advice				X	X
The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses is working with the Violence				X	

Initiatives	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination /Criminalization
Against Women Network (VAWN) to provide training on violence, mental health and substance use for shelter workers					
Springtide Resources has identified that dental care workers, while in a unique position to see women’s injuries, have not had training or protocols to support the provision of referral information or safety plans. Springtide has developed an on-line course for dental hygienists and will provide training to dentists and dental assistants				X	
METRAC’s Justice Program manages the flow of legal information on 14 topic areas related to family law. It disseminates legal information through Service Ontario and delivers webinars for women and service providers based on the topic areas				X	
The Family Court Support Worker Program provides support for women who have experienced violence, are going through family court process and do not have access to legal representation. The program also provides training to court house service providers, engages with judges and carries out joint training with other sectors that are also involved with women in family court such as Child Welfare	X	X	X	X	
Springtide Resources has developed an on-line course to support organizations in implementing the AODA Customer Service Guidelines				X	X
<i>Making Connections: When Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Substance Use Problems Co-occur</i> – this initiative provides training for service providers to work more effectively with women who experience co-occurring mental health, addictions and domestic violence issues. It seeks to improve the care that women receive, regardless of how they enter the system, by breaking down sectoral silos, sharing information and developing a common language among service providers				X	X
OCASI, the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and YWCA Toronto are working together to address a new regulation that imposes a two-year condition on all permanent residents who come to Canada as a sponsored spouse. The legislation requires that, upon arrival in Canada, the sponsored spouse must continue to cohabit with her sponsor in a conjugal relationship for at least two years, or risk losing her permanent					X

Initiatives	Income Security	Housing Security	Custody and Access	Access to Supports	Freedom from Discrimination /Criminalization
resident status and ultimately be deported, Exemptions exist only for women who can “prove” violence					
The Violence Against Women Network (VAWN) is also working with other organizations to address issues of safety and access to legal and health services as a result of changes to immigration legislation				X	X

6. BLUEPRINT PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Harmy Mendoza, WomanACT
- Amanda Dale, The Schlifer Clinic
- Michelle Coombs, Elizabeth Fry Toronto

7. ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Pamela Cross, Consultant
- Wendy Komiotis, METRAC
- Robin Mason, Women's College Hospital
- Marsha Sfeir, Springtide Resources
- Margarita Mendez, Toronto Region Shelter Representative and Council Member
- Sheryl Lindsay, Sistering
- Sharlene Tygenson, Ernestine's Women's Shelter
- Deborah Sinclair, Consultant

8. CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Women with Lived Experience

More than 20 women participated in two sessions that were held for women who have personal experiences with violence:

- Women's Voices for Action
- Women Speak Out

Service Providers and Networks

WomanACT Health Committee:

- Registered Nurses Association of Ontario
- Mt. Sinai Hospital
- Toronto Public Health
- Women's College Hospital

WomanACT Shelter and Support Services Committee:

- Juliet's Place
- Children's Aid Society
- Korean Canadian Women's Association
- The Schlifer Clinic
- Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Centre
- Flemingdon Community Health Centre
- Tropicana Community Services

- Interval House
- Scarborough Women’s Centre
- Family Services Association
- Abrigo
- Catholic Family Services Association
- Robertson House
- OISEE
- Housing Connections
- Jewish Family and Child Services

WomanACT Council:

- Child Development Institute
- Springtide Resources
- Native Child and Family Services
- Elizabeth Fry Toronto
- Women’s College Hospital
- Catholic Family Services Association

In addition, a consultation was held with the VAW/CAS Network and with the Board of Directors of WomanACT.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with:

- Greg Rogers, John Howard Society
- Beverley Wybrow, Canadian Women’s Foundation
- Barb MacQuarrie, University of Western Ontario
- Barbara Kane, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- Sue Kaiser, City of Toronto
- Kathleen Rideout, Assaulted Women’s Helpline
- Sharlene Tygeson, Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter

9. FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW GUIDES

Women with Lived Experience

1. How did you become involved in this group?
2. Where are you at in the process of creating safety in your life?
3. Which policies have been helpful in your process?
4. Which have created challenges for you in your process?
5. What changes/improvements do you think are needed so that women can create safety in their lives?
6. Do you have recommendations for:

- Service providers (shelters, immigration, children’s services)
 - Lawyers
 - Police
 - Employers
 - Politicians
7. Do you have any other thoughts that you would like us to consider or anything that you would like to share before leaving today?

Service Providers/Policy Makers

1. What is your role in the system of service providers who work with women who experience violence?
 - Which sector do you work in? Which groups of women do you work with?
2. What are the different policy issues that impact women’s ability to create safety in their lives?
 - Which policies are beneficial to women?
 - Which policies are negative or pose challenges for women?
3. Which policies impact your ability to effectively support women?
4. Which policies impact your ability to collaborate with other service providers to support women’s safety?
5. What changes/improvements to policy would be required for women to get the services/supports they need to create safety?
6. What services/service models are needed to support women to create safety in their lives?
7. What are resources or tools that would assist service providers to address policy impacts?
8. Are there additional documents that we should review for the Literature Review?
9. Other thoughts?

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