Webinar resources and questions

ANROWS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research (CALD PAR)

ANROWS received a large number of questions during its webinar on "Prevention of violence against women and safer pathways to services for migrant and refugee communities". The following list provides responses to some of these questions and links to resources on the topics covered. More information about the initiative and its findings can be found in the CALD PAR Research insights report.

Q1:

In conversations around community engagement, I often hear that building trust with communities takes time and it is important to allow time for that. I wonder how the process actually looks like in practice? And what are the things practitioners/ organisations that want to engage with communities will need to do or consider in the trust-building process?

There are several factors to consider in the trust-building process and these factors will vary depending on the communities and local contexts involved. As explored in the CALD PAR Research insights report and during the webinar, we recommend taking an intersectional approach to learn more about what is important for earning communities' trust in your project's local areas. Ongoing critical reflection on practitioners' positions in power structures, in relation to community members, is also essential to building upon trust over time.

Our findings suggest that investing months, or years, in having honest conversations with community members, going to events and spaces where community members already gather and getting the right leaders and organisations on board before beginning project activities is important. In-language and in-culture engagement can promote greater trust. In the long-term, delivering on the benefits your project promised, maintaining clear communication and sharing outcomes from the project are crucial for keeping communities' trust.

Q 2:
What arrangements did you have with community members involved in your projects? Were they paid employees, volunteers (either receiving or not receiving something to cover expenses etc.) and what, if any issues did you have with these arrangements?

The reimbursement and recognition of community members who volunteered for CALD PAR projects' activities was an important topic of discussion during the ANROWS action research workshops. During discussion on this topic, recommendations were made to offer volunteers a level of payment, supermarket/credit card vouchers, pathways for career advancement/workplace experience or access to training opportunities. CALD PAR projects used these and other methods of compensating volunteers. Many projects issued certificates and documentation for completing training and workshops to recognise the time that volunteers and participants put into projects. It is best-practice to allocate a portion of the project budget to remunerating community volunteers at an appropriate rate for their time commitment and expertise in the project, but funding availability was an issue preventing some project teams from offering payment.

Q3:
Culture can be used as a smokescreen for violence against women - "that is how we have always done it". How do you manage this?

As project leaders suggested during the webinar, culture is not static and those who associate violence in CALD communities with traditional culture can be reminded of the ways in which cultural practices change and adapt over time. There is no current evidence indicating that any one cultural or ethnic community is more violent than any other. The perception of CALD communities as traditionalist and accepting of violence is a colonial stereotype with a long history, which family violence projects can challenge.

While not all community members shared the goals of CALD PAR projects, project teams found many key allies among community leaders and groups, who offered crucial support for project delivery. Projects' findings suggest that activities were most successful when they focussed on amplifying and extending communities' existing and evolving practices for preventing violence as well as their aspirations for a successful family life in Australia. Some projects found that the national primary prevention framework, Change the story (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth, 2015) was a useful tool for initiating conversations around the changing nature of gender roles and the gender and racial stereotyping that community members experience in diverse settings. Other projects found the adaptations and changes of the settlement period created a productive context to naturalise and explore progressive gender norms and family relationships.

Q4:
For those working in prevention projects, how do you maintain the focus on primary prevention when people by default tend to focus on crisis response? How do you define and explain prevention of family violence in accessible ways … we find this extremely challenging when prevention is not well-understood by many service providers?

The CALD PAR projects' approach to prevention was guided by the shared national primary prevention framework, Change the story. Project's findings suggest that delivering material on the gendered drivers of violence and actions to prevent violence in-language was an important part of increasing its accessibility. Working in whole of community and/or family settings enabled projects to explore and reflect on challenges related to gender roles and stereotypes and promote respectful relationships in a culturally safe and positive way. Often, a culturally safe approach included not using the language of family violence and only gradually building up to discussions of gender equality, for example, by focusing first on topics related to settlement and wellbeing.

Project staff's reflections during the initiative suggest that, due to the whole of community approach to prevention and the barriers to community members accessing mainstream services, prevention work in CALD communities is best understood as part of a continuum of work that cannot always be separated from early intervention and making referrals to and facilitating access to response services. Some Safer Pathways projects supported service providers in DFV response and other related services to build their capacity to understand and address the social systems and structural gaps, including visa entitlements; unrecognised overseas qualifications; lack of in-language information and stereotypical perceptions of 'culture', that make migrant women more vulnerable to experiencing violence and discrimination.

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Q5:
In the current climate with regard to COVID, there have been significant impacts on the business continuity of various organisations; particularly those providing support and services for family violence including men's behaviour change programs … How can we continue to monitor, provide support and continue to engage men and families that have been identified as vulnerable and at risk during this time?

The CALD PAR projects engaged in prevention activities and worked to create safer pathways to crisis and support services. As such, they did not engage in response activities or perpetrator interventions, including men's behaviour change programs. The lack of a face-to-face or community setting for prevention spaces with men in the COVID-19 climate does present many challenges. Successful men's shed and focus groups during the initiative involved face-to-face engagement and delivery. While the CALD PAR projects are reaching the end of their activities at this time, they are still staying in touch with community leaders through email, social media or online platforms. Some organisations are exploring options for future work involving online prevention spaces for men, created in partnership with service providers and local governments.

Many practitioners are using mobile apps, phone calls and email as ways of checking in directly with community members who are vulnerable to family violence at this time. Organisational messaging on social media emphasises that, while the additional pressures families and households are facing during the COVID-19 crisis are real, there is never an excuse for using any form of violence (whether physical, verbal, emotional and financial), and that family violence response and mental health services are still available during lockdown.

There are resources available about perpetrator interventions in the COVID-19 period, including insights from Rosanna Bellini and Nicole Westmarland on 'Initial Lessons Learned from using Video Conferencing Software to deliver Interventions for Men using Violence in Intimate Relationships' as well as practice guidance from Stopping Family Violence and No to Violence. You can also read ANROWS's summary of broader resources available during the social distancing period. ANROWS publications, including our Invisible Practices: Working with fathers who use violence practice guide and an upcoming report on Best practice principles for interventions for domestic and family violence perpetrators from refugee backgrounds are also relevant.

Q6
This idea that DFV equates with physical violence has come up more than once in ANROWS research, how do we shift the definition of DFV so the general public are more aware of other forms of violence?

Many CALD PAR projects informed community members of the different forms of DFV through their prevention workshops and information sessions. The key to the accessibility of this information was that it was often delivered in-language. During the third ANROWS CALD PAR workshop, speakers from Our Watch shared their Unpacking Violence resource, which also provided a key tool for raising awareness of other forms of violence. More information on forms of violence and control prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the website of the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Q7
Community leaders can also be the gate keepers of information and may be selective as to what information could be shared. Women may not necessarily feel comfortable to disclose family violence to them as this will draw stigma and shame to them and their family. How do you address this?

Creating genuine connections with community members enabled CALD PAR project teams to identify community leaders who could be allies to their work. Those projects who engaged with community leaders to facilitate safer pathways to services aimed to equip them with the right information about various forms of violence and local services so that they could pass this on to community members. Some projects supplemented work with established community leaders by investing in the leadership capacity of women and young people within communities who were able to share information to services. The CALD PAR Research insights report also explores approaches that created alternative, informal community spaces, whether in social clubs for women or in workshops for young people, that could foster a supportive environment with connections to support services, should women disclose violence. The creation and long-term funding of such informal spaces is a promising avenue for future work.

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Q8
What are some common visa-related fears and threats?

Current research highlights that migration status, and particularly the conditions of partner and other temporary visas, can increase the level of trauma of CALD women who experience family violence and affect their access to support (Maher & Segrave, 2018). For example, visa conditions can limit access to social support, crisis services and financial security, which impacts the safety of CALD women when reporting violence, as well as their capacity to seek family violence support. Temporary visa status can be used as a way of exerting power over visa holders, through partners and visa sponsors using threats of the withdrawal of sponsorship, or financial support, as a way to coerce and control visa holders (inTouch, 2020). Even when women access family violence provisions under migration regulations, they often undergo prolonged periods on bridging or temporary visas. Please see the CALD PAR Research insights report for more information on this topic.

Q9
Did the work cover an interfaith lens as well?

Many projects worked with leaders from multiple faiths to deliver project activities and they were crucial allies in bringing participants to projects, for example, the digital story from the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health project explores this topic (see also their Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Family Relationships resources). Research suggests that faith-based prevention and safer pathways work requires an in-depth understanding and negotiation of the faith context, its power structures and histories of exclusion, in order to advance gender equality (Poljski, 2011). Studies have noted that while faith leaders can sometimes act as a barrier to women accessing services, religious faith can also be a source of support and resilience to women experiencing family violence (Ghafournia & Easteal, 2019). CALD PAR project teams identified faith-based prevention work as an area for future work and research.

Q10
I am wondering if, in any of the discussions with community about gender equality, there was talk about contraception, choosing the number/spacing of children, and abortion? And if so, what were those conversations like and what did you find helpful?

There was some anecdotal evidence from project teams about the need for more accessible, in-language information about contraception and sexual rights. Staff in some projects noted conversations with women about restricted access to information and restricted use of contraception as a form of control over women, with some feeling overwhelmed by child-bearing and child-rearing responsibilities. Some project staff also noted indirect conversations about female infanticide, which was, at times, linked to dowry obligations around producing a male child. Project teams followed up these conversations by distributing information about sexual and reproductive rights and relevant support services.

Some project staff suggested that further research was needed into responses to sexual violence for CALD community members. Existing research on migrant and refugee women's experiences of sexual and reproductive health includes Multicultural Centre for Women's Health's Common Threads report.

Q11
Can you please speak more about the research basis of the PAR methodology that underpinned your project?

ANROWS supported CALD PAR projects to take an action research approach to their work. In this approach, project staff collected research data and evaluated their activities in an ongoing way, while using the results of their evaluation to improve project activities in real time. ANROWS's action research support is based on the adaptation of action research principles and methods for process-oriented, everyday evaluation practice (Wadsworth, 1991). The key principles of this form of action research are that it is cyclic, qualitative and reflective, and allows data to emerge rather than testing preconceived hypotheses.

This approach is distinct from a *participatory* action research approach, which involves the continual participation of the subjects of the research, including community

members, in all stages of research design and data collection. While ANROWS prioritises research approaches that involve the robust engagement and representation of research participants, the short timelines of the initiative did not allow for the continual and extensive community involvement required for participatory action research. More information and key references for ANROWS's action research approach and projects can be found on the ANROWS website and in the CALD PAR Research insights report.

Q12
How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the programs/ polices? How do we ensure assessment of particular success factors within culturally diverse contexts?

Projects used an action research methodology to carry out their evaluation of activities and outcomes. Project teams reflected that the advantages of using this approach to measure success factors in projects with CALD communities included:

- a focus on learning with communities and aligning measures of success with community strengths and aspirations

- an ability to adapt evaluation questions and methods to reflect community members' changing priorities

- flexibility to follow community members' lead with project timelines and activities

- the incorporation of evaluation and critical reflection into everyday work practice

- the use of quantitative methods, such as surveys, and the reflective use of qualitative methods, including focus groups and interviews, which enabled deeper understanding of experiences of safety and practices to protect families.

Related resources

Intersectionality matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee women in prevention of violence against women (Multicultural Centre for Women's Health)

A concise guide to evaluating primary prevention projects (VicHealth)

Factsheets from the ASPIRE project on promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia (ANROWS)

Evaluating interventions related to violence against women (ANROWS)

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