



Transformative Resilience through Migrant Collective Action

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Building migrant resilience in *Canadian* cities | Immigration et resilience en milieu urbain

Gender, Civic Engagement, and migrant resilience

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SSHRC  CRSH



Tkaronto | *"Where the trees meet the water"* (Mohawk)
Mural from First Nations House, University of Toronto

Outline

Research and advocacy goals

Who did we speak to?

What did they say?

Lessons on transformative migrant resilience



Migrant Organizing in Toronto

- Long history of grassroots organizing and mutual aid in migrant communities
- City's Motto "Diversity is our Strength"
- > 50% population born outside of Canada
- "Three Cities" = racial & economic segregation
- ↑ income inequality and precarious work

Individual Resilience

Individual capacity to cope with, adapt to and recover from adversities towards improving well-being.

Community Resilience

A community's capacity to draw on individual and collective resources to respond to and recover from adversities towards improving individual and community well-being.

Transformative Resilience

Capacity within communities to resist systemic inequity and envision and bring about changes in social, economic, and political systems towards increasing inclusion, equity, and well-being for all members of society.

Research & Advocacy Goals

- To bring visibility to migrant communities' concerns regarding structural inequality
- To enable migrant communities to build networks
- To document the history of community organizing for the next generation
- To practice solidarity with other communities
- To show the contributions of migrant communities' understanding of structural inequalities in Canada and transnationally
- To show the transformative dimensions of migrant collective action, going beyond assimilation/civic engagement



Tibetans in Parkdale

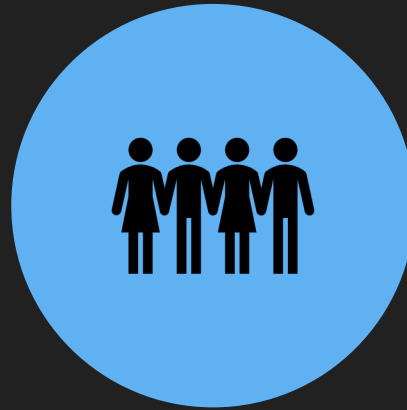


**South Asian Women
in East Danforth**

Who did we speak to?



TIBETAN FOCUS GROUP



SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S
FOCUS GROUP



KEY INFORMANT
INTERVIEWS

Key Concerns for Each Community

Tibetan Diaspora in Parkdale

- Chinese occupation of Tibet
- Cultural & language preservation
- Psychological toll of displacement
- Protection of community center
- Precarious immigration status

South Asian Immigrant Women

- Underemployment
- Precarious work
- Gender discrimination
- Islamophobia
- Social isolation & stigma

Why People Come Together

Origin Stories & Motivation

- Lived experience
- Individual benefit
- Empowerment and recognition
- Interconnectedness and shared responsibility
- Better future for the new generation

"In recent years, there has actually been a spike in Tibetan involvement in their own politics, not just about Tibet, about in Canada, about workers' rights, about tenants' rights..."

People started to realize that 'hey you know I can make a noise and not be punished for it'"

- Tibetan Focus Group

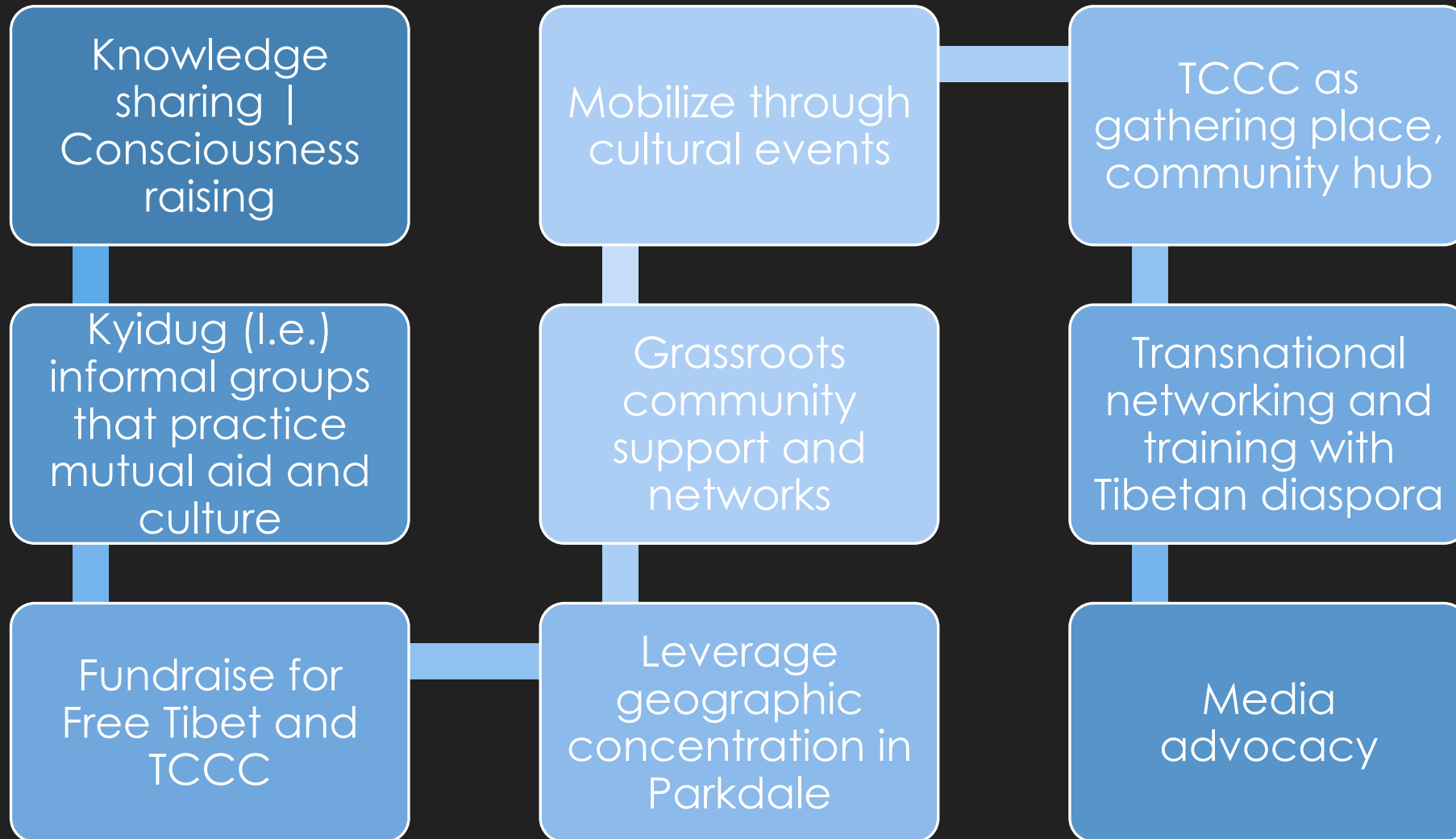
Organizing Strategies

"Working as a group to identify, from shared experience, to see similarities between our stories, "What's good for us, what would be better to do for our future"

~ South Asian Immigrant Woman Organizer



Organizing Strategies (Tibetan Community)



Linking Goals to Activities – Tibetan Community



Students for Free Tibet

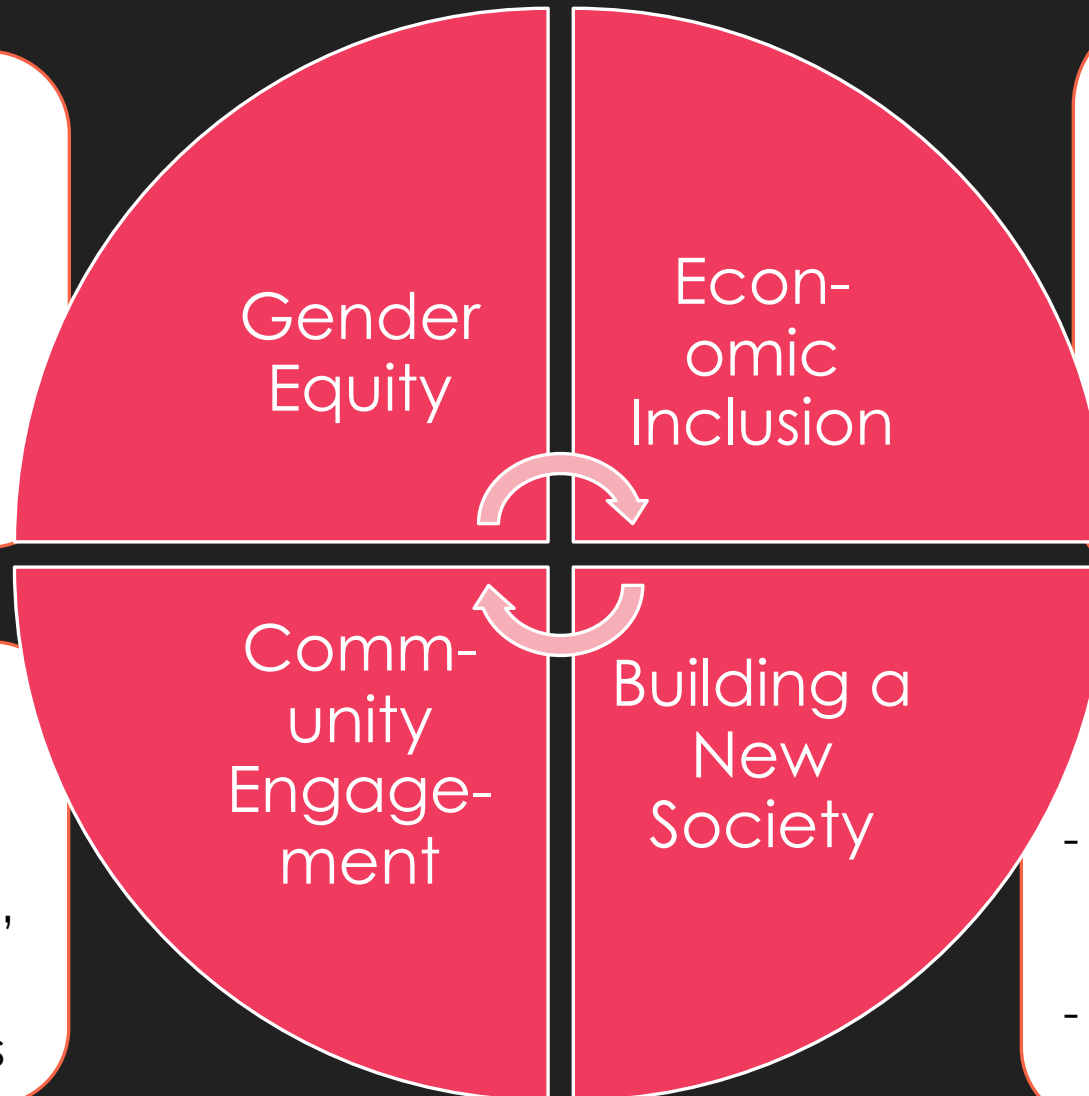
- mobilize students
- provide training
- take actions to bring positive change in Tibet

Advocacy to assist stateless refugees resettle in Canada

Door-to-door fundraising for Tibetan community center

Participate in rent strike; support food terminal workers' strike

Organizing Activities – South Asian Immigrant Women



- Develop local women leaders
- Campaign for full day kindergarten
- IWD March
- STEM workshops for girls
- "I am a Muslim girl and I'm not a zombie" video

- Conduct needs assessment surveys
- Help women find jobs & childcare
- Perform skits on precarious work
- Campaign for \$15 minimum wage
- Organize with Unifor

- Door to door organizing
- Women's circles
- Debriefing with women, before attending a rally, "why are we doing this?"
- Community gardening
- Intergenerational groups

- Deputations on child care, precarious work
- Network with community organizations and other migrant rights groups
- Organize International Mother's Language Day

Impacts: Consciousness raising and Empowerment

"People when they participate in these collective actions, they see the power of many. They see that if we all stand together and we are all together, whether it's occupying somebody's office or blocking traffic or sealing off the Chinese consulate, there is power in numbers, there's strength in numbers and it would not be the same if it was just one person, whatever the issue is. So, I have seen people, almost joyful after actions. We laugh, we joke around, you know, you can visibly see people feel empowered, if there's such a thing you can see it. And when you come together you realize that we are all connected, we are all affected by the same issues so, I think it makes a huge difference when people do participate in collective actions."

-TIBETAN COMMUNITY LEADER

What can government and non-profit organizations do to foster migrant resilience?

Fund

Fund grassroots initiatives for migrant-led organizing

Provide

Provide space for in-person or online gatherings

Organize

Organize trainings for grassroots leadership

Amplify

Amplify community identified concerns to policy makers and the public

Lessons on Transformative Migrant Resilience

- Migrant-led organizing addresses **immediate needs while working towards systemic change**
- Working together **creates a sense of belonging**
- Draws upon **shared sense of responsibility** for community well being and future generation
- **The way people come together matters.** It's important to create space for community sharing, to link the history to the past, and nurture and provide opportunities for shared leadership
- Intersecting oppressions lead to **burnout, lack resources, and not feeling heard**
- When migrant communities come together to address shared concerns they build **individual, community, and transformative resilience**

Community Partners

Tibetan Women's
Association of
Ontario

South Asian Women's
Rights Organization
(SAWRO)

Access Alliance
Multicultural Health
and Community
Services

Caregiver
Connections
Education and
Support Organization
(CCESCO)

Kababayan

Monumental

Ontario Council of
Agencies Serving
Immigrants (OCASI)

Working Women
Community Centre



Thank You

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