

A Gender-Based Approach to Settlement and Integration Support

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Methods overview

- A research team based at the IMRC carried out:
 - **Two workshops** on gender-responsiveness and gender, sexuality and refuge were held to engage community organizations serving temporary migrants and refugee claimants
 - **Focus groups and semi-structured interviews** with more than **70 migrants who entered Canada on temporary permits**
 - **Interviews with 20+ service providers**



Gendered realities pose challenges to migrant resilience

- **Structural:** Fewer pathways available/accessible for women, relegating more to temporary categories
- **Ineligible for social supports:** Temporary migrants not eligible for **settlement support, child care subsidy**, delays in eligibility for child tax benefit, creating disproportionate burden on women
- **Gender-based violence** was a cause of migration, and experience during/after migration for several participants. Frustrated male partners can become violent or abandon spouse.
- **Parents fear being reported to Family and Children's Services** because of differences in parenting styles or expectations
- **Language acquisition:** women lagging behind men in language acquisition yet, it is women (especially mothers) who interact with Canadian institutions (e.g., attending parent-teacher school meetings, doctor visits, meeting with social workers, etc.) (Kimani-Dupuis et al 2021)
- **Health care:** Access to culturally sensitive sexual and reproductive health services continues to be a challenge
- **Work:** Labour exploitation, deskilling, channeling into care work, housekeeping and cleaning
- **Poverty:** Risk of social isolation, homelessness, food insecurity

N., computer engineer, graduate student from Iran & widowed mother

- “I have **lost my husband** two years ago unfortunately. After this I was in shock for one year, and I started to think about **making a new life** for myself, and this was the path (coming to Canada)... I thought that okay in Iran **my child will have no rights just like me and all the women in Iran...** **I did not want my child to be raised in a conservative country**, and I **did not want to [endure] the embarrassing and disappointing little things after the loss of my husband**. I thought okay **I know a little bit of English...** **I should go to some schools** to remember more, after that **I should search**. I searched about so many places and I thought that Canada is good, because of the good communities, English speaking country, and that immigration is possible-USA is not like this now, especially for Iranians. [Also] it (Canada) shows that it has a **better future for a single mother** and for raising a kid. Then I asked so many people how I can go to Canada, and **all the doors were closed to me, except coming in as an international student...** So no refugee, no tourist, and no express entry, the only choice was this one. I thought I am a little bit too old for this, but I said to myself that this is not a bad opportunity for me to be upgraded a little bit.”

K., PhD student from Nigeria & mother of four

- *“I wanted my husband to come also, but I got my study permit earlier and he didn’t get his work permit until 6 months after. The situation was stressful and difficult without my husband. For me, going back home to Nigeria was not an option as I had come here to study. The financial challenges, and lack of good job opportunities were factors that did not appeal to my husband to live in Canada. He has his own business back home and is a professional. When he came to the House of Friendship and saw the Food Banks, he found it very difficult. It hurt his pride. Now I am here in Canada alone with four children trying to balance life with my PhD studies, and it is very challenging, especially with one who has special needs.”*

Spectrum of Gender-Responsiveness

LEVELS OF GENDER RESPONSIVENESS



Gender + Migration HUB

IRCC-funded web portal with information and resources on making migration policy and governance practices gender-responsive (currently under construction).

How well does our settlement system recognize and respond to these challenges and problems?

- Some gender-responsive programming exists, but it must be made more accessible and relevant.
- Gender-responsive programming on **reproductive health at community centres** reached many women as it was **scheduled to coincide with children's after-school activities**.
- **Employment programs** existed for women, but often **reinforced stereotypical gender norms**.
- Organizations are **innovating and adapting** to meet needs:
 - **E.g. Muslim Social Services** has expanded from mental health services, to offer outreach & social assistance, cultural bridging between different communities and mainstream agencies, and public education.

The invisible linchpin: unpaid (or underpaid) gendered labour

- **Community volunteers and deskilled migrant women themselves are filling in the gaps**

“J. is my person to go when I have temporary people who need clothing or household items and she is so resourceful. She get this through the community. She doesn’t have any government help or funding or budgeting but the way that she works it’s just so important and so valuable in our work and our area....To be honest, I think it should not be her job to do these things. She’s doing it out of the passion but I feel it’s kind of taking advantage of a good heart of the people in a community when they decide to cut off on funding or stop a program because they say, “Oh, someone will pick up from the church.” – F., community centre outreach worker

- **Faith groups run conversation circle programs and subsidized summer camps for kids:**

“Parents are basically studying but kids during the summer they need program, they need to go to places. They can’t apply for subsidy; they can’t apply for Jump Start or other funded programs. The church camp was a place I could refer these families to go and get a subsidy because they don’t have a condition of their status in Canada.”

Collectively building capacity on gender

Settlement sector and other immigrant-serving organizations have important experiences to build on, and can be brought together to collectively build capacity on gender.



Gender, Sexuality and Refuge in Canada

Let's talk about it!

What are we aiming for?

- **National approach:**
 - Government of Canada committed to gender-based analysis in policy cycle and all government-funded initiatives, including immigration and settlement.
- **International guidance:**
 - Gender-responsiveness is a guiding principle in the Global Compact for Migration





The Gender + Migration Hub aims to support governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to ensure that **migration policies are gender-responsive and align with the guiding principles of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)**.

We seek to provide concrete guidance and resources on how to design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender-responsive migration policies and practices. [Learn More](#)



Capacity-Building Resources

We offer a variety of resources for enhancing gender responsiveness:

- Guidance documents and key reference documents (on policy design, implementation)
- GBA+ capacity building resources
- Gender and evaluation



Interactive Maps

Discover our maps of gender-responsive migration governance

- practices from gender sensitive to gender-irresponsive
- summary of the practice, relation to GCM objectives and SDGs, suggestions for enhancing GR



Evaluative Tools

Take our online quiz to discover the next steps you can take to develop more gender-responsive migration practices. We also offer:

- GBA+ migration tool
- Gender-responsive actions checklist



How to build on these experiences to create a gender-responsive integration infrastructure?

- Participation and consultation:
 - Gender-responsive solutions can be created in consultation with organizations, including migrant women and their grassroots initiatives
- Data:
 - Gender-responsive data are needed to identify needs, design programs, monitor and evaluate
- Capacity building:
 - Build capacity of immigrant-serving organizations by completing the federal government's [Gender-Based Analysis \(GBA+\)](#) training
- Provide gender-responsive programming:
 - Outreach workers and community centres can create safe spaces for all, regardless of status, to discuss sexual and reproductive health, parenting, gender identity, and gender-based violence.
 - Make programming accessible to women by providing children's programming in parallel with community-based services.
- Social services:
 - Increase the housing stipend for all households receiving social assistance; consider additional support for single-parent households. Expand access to social assistance for families with children by waiving the 18-month waiting period for the CTB and expanding childcare subsidy (Bangay and Petrozziello 2021, BMRC Research digest).

Take-away points

In order to support the resilience of newcomers, policy and programming must be ***responsive*** to their needs.

If needs and experiences are gendered, the ***policy and programmatic response must be gender-responsive in order to foster migrant resilience.***

There are opportunities to:

- ***Learn from existing experiences*** of immigrant-serving organizations, women and gender-diverse migrants
- ***Build capacity to do gender-based analysis*** of all organizations, but esp. those receiving federal funding