Intimate partner violence in Australian refugee and immigrant communities: Culturally safe strategies for practice

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Intimate partner violence in Australian refugee communities

Child Family Community Australia
Dr Alissar El-Murr

Ethics approval for this research was obtained through the Australian Institute of Family Studies’ human research ethics committee.
Who are we talking about?
Research design

This project brings together two pieces of work:

1. Comprehensive scoping review of the available literature, which provides an overview of the underlying issues and relevant factors associated with IPV in Australian refugee communities.

2. Qualitative stakeholder consultations with organisations of importance to refugee communities in Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria to contribute to the emerging body of literature on promising practice.
Forms of IPV and underlying, intersecting factors

Main forms of IPV:
• Physical & sexual violence
• Financial abuse
• Reproductive coercion

Intersecting factors:
• Acculturation stress
• Traumatic pre-arrival experiences
## Barriers to help seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Identified issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration status</strong></td>
<td>Precarity of temporary visas; access &amp; eligibility for services; FV provisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited knowledge of rights and services</strong></td>
<td>Distrust of authorities; concerns about consequences; lack of language appropriate information.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Language barriers**                | English language skills less developed than their partner; lack of language appropriate information; social isolation.  
**Issues with interpreters:**  
• Limited number/availability  
• Limited number of female interpreters  
• Fears regarding confidentiality. |
### Barriers to help seeking (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Identified issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cultural safety</td>
<td>Reluctance to report due to legal and social understandings of IPV in country of origin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear and distrust of authorities</td>
<td>Past traumatic experiences with authorities (e.g.: systemic violence and persecution) can be exploited by those who use IPV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and community factors</td>
<td>Informal networks of community leaders and friend/family preferred over formal systems of support for IPV; fear of social isolation is a major factor in decisions to report IPV.</td>
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## Promising practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Practical examples from services</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Community involvement and leadership** | • Training about family violence delivered to CALD communities  
• Training for staff from CALD community leaders  
• Support for women’s empowerment activities  
• Community co-design for research and evaluation  
• Community advisory groups  
• Bicultural workers act as ‘cultural brokers’ for mainstream service providers |
### Cultural safety

- Safety planning underpinned by a strengths-based approach
- Apply discretionary strategies (often used in family violence services) to mitigate risk of disclosures and support client privacy
- Address and support the needs identified by CALD women in a culturally safe way as opposed to imposing a service agenda
- Training provided to workers on how to respond to disclosures from women
Promising practice (cont.)

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<td><strong>Integrated, trauma-informed care</strong></td>
<td>• Coordinate with other community services to provide outreach to women at various locations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Address and support the needs identified by CALD women in a culturally safe way as opposed to imposing a service agenda</td>
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<td>• Staff draw on culturally safe and empowering strategies in safety planning (underpinned by a strengths-based approach)</td>
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<td>• Address and support the needs identified by CALD women in a culturally safe way as opposed to imposing a service agenda</td>
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<td>• Training provided to workers on how to respond to disclosures from women</td>
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Adele Murdolo
Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health (MCWH)
Community involvement and leadership
Cultural safety and trauma-informed care
Primary prevention strategies
Implementing culturally safe practices and building capacity
Cecilia Barassi-Rubio
Immigrant Women’s Support Service (IWSS)
Working with women from migrant and refugee backgrounds in regional/rural areas
Training and capacity building
Applying cultural safety in practice
Intimate partner violence in Australian refugee communities

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decisions in policy and practice
aifs.gov.au/cfca

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