WomanACT
WOMAN ABUSE COUNCIL OF TORONTO

POLICIES MATTER:

ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN THROUGH REFLECTION, KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION **JULY 2013**

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Policies Matter Project undertook a significant gender-based analysis of policy and the impact of policy intersections on women who experience violence, and as such the project constitutes a remarkable contribution to the violence against women (VAW) sector. The iterative nature of the project resulted in a process that achieved, among other things, significant consultation across the sector, consensus-building and learning interactions across the human services system.

This report presents the key activities and outcomes of the Policies Matter Project. It 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.

A strong commitment from a core group of leaders throughout the Policies Matter Project produced a new and innovative web-based tool, the Blueprint for Action, for visualizing the diversity of conflicting policy and legislation that impede women's ability to achieve safety in their lives and the work of those who serve them. The Policies Matter Project incubated two pilot projects that were implemented to support marginalized immigrant and refugee women and women with mental health and addictions issues. The project culminated in the development of an Action Plan that identifies public policy priorities and provides a roadmap that will inform the work of WomanACT and the VAW sector over the coming years. At completion, this project leaves a centralized knowledge bank which is key to creating new opportunities for communication and collaborative action on policy issues that negatively impact women who experience or are at risk of experiencing violence.

B. BACKGROUND

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).

Service providers, who must 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.

C. THE POLICIES MATTER PROJECT

In May 2011, WomanACT, the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and Elizabeth Fry Toronto were funded by Status of Women Canada to undertake the Policies Matter 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 Management Team contracted with SN Management to provide research and project management services and Eko Nomos to carry out an evaluation. 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 Appendix 13 for the list of Advisory Committee members.

The objectives of the Policies Matter Project were:

- 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; and

- 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 and

- 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 Policies Matter Project included a significant evaluation component, which is discussed in Section H of this report.

D. POLICY REVIEW

The policy[1] 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.

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.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for the detailed policy review and to Appendix 2 for the annotated bibliography.

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

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1 In the context of the Policies Matter 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

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 Policies Matter 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 documents[3] 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: 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.

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

- **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 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 either 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 model[8] 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 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 relative to the dimensions of safety can be found in Appendices 7 and 8.

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7 http://criaw-icref.ca/ImmigrantandRefugeeWomen
8 http://en.widipedia.org/wiki/Social_ecological_model; http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html

E. 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, counselling 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.

Please refer to Appendix 9 for detailed consultation notes.

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 Appendix 9.

F. 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 Policies Matter 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 a web-based 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.

The Blueprint for Action can be found on the Policies Matter website:
http://womanabuse.ca/policiesmatter/home.html.

G. PILOT PROJECTS

From the outset, the Policies Matter Project sought to embody an action component in addition to its research focus. 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 Policies Matter Project. These projects will extend the impact of the Policies Matter Project beyond the current phase. Each is described at a general level in the Theory of Change (Appendix 3) and they are also referenced in the Evaluation Report (Appendix 11).

H. COMMUNITY FORUM

On May 16, 2013, the Policies Matter Project hosted a Community Forum which brought together more than 50 representatives from diverse organizations that address violence against women. The Forum had four objectives for the day:

- Share information about the Policies Matter Project

- Learn about community initiatives that are addressing policy impacts

- Collectively identify policy priorities

- Collaboratively develop action plans for priority areas

Following the welcome and a presentation of the project activities and findings to date, the forum participants were introduced to the Blueprint for Action. The feedback to the web-based tool was highly positive and participants expressed a strong interest in using the tool to communicate in visual and compelling terms the complexity and often harmful impact of policy intersection on women.

The Forum featured a panel discussion which highlighted advocacy initiatives currently underway to address some of the key policy issues impacting women in Toronto, including poverty reduction, housing security and changes to immigration and refugee legislation.

Sheryl Lindsay, Sistering: Sheryl spoke to the the grinding effects of poverty, homelessness and inadequate and very unsafe housing on women with serious mental health and addiction issues, many of whom have significant histories of violence and trauma. Sheryl spoke to the need for small wins that accumulate through sustained advocacy work over the long-term, and drew on examples of Sistering's advocacy work in housing and income security throughout her presentation.

Sarah Blackstock, YWCA Toronto: Sarah conceptualized poverty as a form of violence that in and of itself is inextricable from the violence that women face at the hands of their abusers. As such, she suggested that poverty reduction work should be the focus for violence against women advocates. The province is currently working on its second poverty reduction strategy and there is an opportunity for women's advocates to mobilize to ensure that the focus of this strategy be placed on women.

Caroline Sand, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic: Caroline spoke to the impact of recent changes to immigration and refugee legislation on women. Most notably, since the changes were introduced last spring, there have been 70% fewer refugee claims made in Canada. As a result, the Clinic is examining and changing its practice to better support women with experiences of violence to make successful gender-based claims. The Clinic is also working with partners to collect women's stories and more fully document the impact of these changes.

Debbie Douglas, OCASI: Debbie spoke to the cumulative impact of the legislative changes imposed by the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (PCISA) and the need for advocates to engage with governments to address these impacts and create safe conditions for women. She cited the passing of Access without Fear in Toronto as a key win for women and urged the violence against women sector to work collaboratively with immigrant serving groups to strengthen its focus on immigrant and refugee women's issues.

Beth Jordan, Moderator: Beth summarized the themes expressed by the presenters. She highlighted how important it is for violence against women advocates to form alliances in order to act strategically and be effective. Beth expressed the need for immediate action and identified the poverty reduction strategy as an opportunity for women's organizations to advocate for gender informed policy.

"Nothing happens unless we make it happen"

Beth, Panel Moderator

During the afternoon session, Forum participants engaged in exercises to collaboratively identify policy priorities for violence against women advocates and develop action plans for moving forward in each priority area. The following tables present the priorities and action plans at a general level.

POVERTY REDUCTION

- Sector coordination/align with poverty reduction advocates:
    - Raise the Rates
    - Social Assistance Review
    - Colour of Poverty
- Identify opportunities and lobby for specific outcomes – ACT NOW
    - Tax incentives for companies to hire marginalized women
    - Increased funding for women-led households
    - Universal minimum income
    - Access to education/training for women-led households
- Link with corporations & religious organizations (for funding to lobby)
- Develop positive narratives
    - Survey women survivors about poverty reduction strategies that work
    - Include women's voices
    - Include mental health
- Use social media to advocate and to share/disseminate knowledge and best practices
- Develop social enterprise
- Support women to access supports/programs
    - Résumé preparation, bridging programs, mentoring, financial literacy, employment training

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Develop a web-based housing coalition and/or coordinate with different sectors/housing advocacy groups to strengthen the focus on VAW policy issues
    - Rent controls
    - Increases to social housing
    - Dedicated low rent units/units for women who experience violence in all new developments
    - Rent-to-own initiatives
    - Extend the grace period regarding special housing priority
    - Dedicated city-owned property for women and children
    - Unit allocation within the Toronto supportive housing sector
    - Expand income cut off for SSP housing
    - Rent supplement programs
    - Expand second stage for HSG funding
    - National Housing Strategy
- Develop a long-term pilot project to develop communal housing for women
- Develop a long-term pilot project to recruit women into trades
- Use social media
- Carry out a Charter Challenge

- Improve referrals to services
    - Improve 211
    - Centralized database
    - Telephone app with VAW services
    - Newcomer information at the airport
    - Central intake process at CAS
- Carry out or review research undertaken with newcomer women – what helped them; including women without status
- On-line and in-person peer support groups
- Include participation of women in services (e.g., as Board members, staff, volunteers)
- Use social media to advertise to women and to share best practices
- Link with existing networks/campaigns
    - Right to Healthcare
- Create integrated service delivery models

I. PROJECT EVALUATION

EVALUATION PLANNING

The Policies Matter Project proposal to Status of Women laid out the broad strokes of the project, but there were many unanswered questions about the scope of the project, and the population of women on which the project would focus.

In any project, it is important to develop a clear theory of change, logic model and outcomes and indicators for evaluation planning. These together provide a clear picture of what the project is aiming to achieve so that the evaluation work remains focused and relevant. Eko Nomos facilitated a series of meetings with the project team to develop these documents. Sonja Nerad from SN Management provided coordination and research services throughout the project.

The literature review and consultative research conducted by Ms. Nerad provided valuable information that was used by the team. The team engaged in ongoing collaborative analysis of research data and other learning. This allowed the project to evolve and decisions to be made along the way to strengthen the outcomes. For example, the Theory of Change that was developed in the fall of 2011 was reviewed and revised in the summer of 2012 to better reflect and guide the project toward its successful conclusion.

Please refer to Appendices 3, 4, 5 and 6 for the Logic Model, the Theory of Change, Indicators for Evaluation Planning and Outcome Evaluation Priorities respectively.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT

The following chart provides a summary of the evaluation activities, timeline, approach and summary notes on when the activities were completed.

ACTIVITY AND DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE	APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES	NOTES
Briefing and Detailed Work Planning	July/August 2011		Completed by August 2011
Liaison and Meetings	Throughout	• During Phase 1 • During Phase 2	Consultant attended all but 2 meetings of the Management Committee and 1 meeting of the Advisory Committee
Develop Project Theory of Change and Logic Model	October 2011	• Meetings with Management Team and SN Management • Preparation of Theory of Change, Logic Model and Evaluation Plans • Finalize Documents	Completed by December 2011
Evaluation framework and work plan finalized	December 2011	• Developed using base documents produced by the team	Completed by December 2011
Focus group evaluation design and analysis	February 2012	• Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis	Completed as events were held
Priority Setting Workshops and evaluation design	May 2012	• Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis	Completed as events were held
Output Monitoring Completed	April 2012	• Quarterly Review at Management Meetings	Done throughout
Year 1 Evaluation Report	May 2012	• Evaluation documents included in report	Completed May 2012
Forum Evaluation	April 2013	• Design • Data Collection by coordinator • Analysis	Completed May 2013
Interviews with Management Team	June 2013	• Interviews with the management Team	Completed June 2013
Final Meeting with the Advisory Committee	June 2013	• Final Meeting with Advisory Committee Members and Management Meeting	Completed June 2013

CLOSURE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Towards the end of the Policies Matter Project, the evaluation consultant collected information about the Launch Forum, documented the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Group, and conducted third-party interviews with members of the Management Committee and the consultants. The following provides a summary of the results from these three final activities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the Blueprint Forum survey, the interviews and the discussion at the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Committee demonstrates that the Policies Matter Project has made a remarkable contribution to the VAW sector. A strong commitment from a core group of leaders has produced a new and innovative web-based tool – the Blueprint Tool – for visualizing the diversity of conflicting policy and legislation that impact the lived experience of women, and the work of those who serve them. This centralized knowledge bank is key to creating new opportunities for communication and collaborative advocacy about policy issues that negatively impact women who experience or are at risk of experiencing violence.

The iterative nature of the Management Committee's work resulted in a process that achieved, among other things, significant consultation across the sector, consensus-building and learning interactions across the human services system, and a very effective tool. These are all strong outcomes for the project.

It is clear, however, that the work begun by this project is not finished, and indeed requires ongoing management, facilitation and sector-wide consultation. Most importantly, the methods by which the Blueprint Tool will be managed in the future, and who shall be responsible for ensuring its continued accuracy and efficacy, remain to be determined. Further, there is a clear need to ensure, as work continues, that more stakeholders are engaged. While the core leadership of this project to date has resulted in a clear and effective illustration of priorities for the sector, these priorities must now be developed into a strategic action plan and communicated to key decision-makers in government, and throughout the VAW sector and the human services system. Please see Appendix 11 for the full Evaluation Report.

J. RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Drawing upon the evaluation findings, this section presents the recommended next steps for the Policies Matter Project. These recommendations are presented for consideration to the three member agencies of the management team, and in particular to WomanACT. As the project trustee and the only organization in Toronto with an exclusive mandate to address policy issues regarding VAW, WomanACT is uniquely positioned to reconvene the Action Plan and facilitate communication and collaborative action on policy issues that impact women who experience violence. As such, as an immediate next step the recommendations discussed below will be reviewed at WomanACT's upcoming strategic planning process and will help to shape WomanACT's work over the next three years.

WEB BASED BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Short Term (0 – 3 Months)

1. Finalize the web-based Blueprint for Action and house it on WomanACT website

2. Determine a name for the web-based Blueprint for Action

3. Plan and implement a soft launch for the Blueprint for Action

Medium Term (3 months – 1 year)

4. Develop a long-term solution for the web-based Blueprint for Action. Key activities include:

    a. Secure funds/resources to curate the Blueprint for Action:

        i. To further develop the Blueprint for Action as an interactive, on-line tool that is continuously updated to reflect current legislation and policy, and

        ii. To enable and facilitate broad communication and collaboration in the stakeholder community on policy development

    b. Develop an accountability and management structure for the Blueprint Tool

5. Publicly launch the web-based Blueprint for Action at a Community Forum in November. In order to ensure that the web-based tool remains relevant to stakeholders and to continuously engage the user community in the Blueprint for Action, hold an annual Community Forum, beginning with a Forum in the fall of 2014

SERVICE DELIVERY/PUBLIC POLICY ACTION

Short Term (0 – 3 Months)

6. Share the Policies Matter Project Report and the Action Plan with project stakeholders

7. Ensure that the priority areas for action identified at the Blueprint Forum are considered by the WomanACT Board of Directors during the upcoming strategic planning exercise. Develop a strategic action plan and an operational plan for WomanACT that incorporate these priorities into the organization's work over the coming years. This may involve WomanACT restructuring its internal operations (e.g., convening dialogue and action on public policy via on-line forums).

Medium Term (3 months – 1 year)

8. Engage a larger group of stakeholders in reviewing the Action Plan (e.g., at the Community Forum discussed in #5 above) to further define, prioritize and develop a concrete action plan for operationalizing service delivery activities

9. Engage a larger group of stakeholders in reviewing the Action Plan in order to define public policy priorities and opportunities for immediate and longer term action and to identify key partners to assist in leading strategic policy initiatives

10. Develop a dissemination plan, develop communications tools (i.e., fact sheets, briefing notes) and disseminate information about the Policies Matter Project and web-based Blueprint for Action widely:

    a. To policy makers, government agents and agencies

    b. Leaders and workers in the VAW sector and the human services system serving women at risk of or who have experienced violence

    c. The media and the public at large

K. CONCLUSION

The Policies Matter Project was undertaken during a period which saw significant legislative changes occurring at all three levels of government. Stakeholders representing a range of sectors have been highly involved in this project and the development of the policy priorities, action plans and recommendations put forward. People involved in this work have placed confidence in this project and its process, and are eagerly awaiting the findings in this report. They have voiced their expectations that based on their input, actions will be undertaken to address the negative impacts of policies on women who experience violence. It is hoped therefore, 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 and as a starting point, impact the proposed recommendations.

APPENDICES

1. POLICY REVIEW

Methodology

The literature review consists of two main sections. The first is an overview of federal, provincial and municipal legislation and policy as well as the procedures and practices that flow from these that impact women. The second is an annotated bibliography of the literature analyzing the impact of legislation, policies, procedures and practices on women.

The approach to the review of the literature consisted of the following:

- Google search of terms
- Google Scholar search of same terms
- Search of Ontario Legislature website for relevant terminology in government legislation
- Review of source documents (Acts), related government documents and reports
- Review of discussion and analysis documents from other experts/stakeholders in the field

The review is not exhaustive in identifying, describing or analyzing all of the policies that impact services for women who experience violence, but focuses on the most relevant policies.

Policy Context

This section describes the federal, provincial and municipal acts, guidelines and policies as well as the procedures and practices that flow from these relative to their impact on women experiencing violence. The policies included in the review are:

Federal:

- Bill C-31/Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act
- Divorce Act
- Criminal Code of Canada

Provincial:

Family and Child

- Children's Law Reform Act
- Bill 22, Children's Law Reform Amendment Act, 2010
- Child and Family Services Act
- Family Law Act

Violence

- Domestic Violence Protection Act (Repealed 2009 – Bill 133)
- Bill 133: An Act to Amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act 2000
- Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan
- Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan
- Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

Health and Safety

- Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009

Housing

- Social Housing Reform Act 2000 (Repealed 2011)
- Escaping Domestic Violence Act 2010 - Bill 53: An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2006
- Ontario Housing Policy Statement – Housing Services Act 2011

Economic

- Ontario Works Act
- Ontario Budget 2012

Judicial/Legal

- Mandatory Charging Practice (Solicitor General – Ontario Policing Standards Manual 1994)
- Bail Safety Program
- Legal Aid Ontario Policies

Educational Policies

- Safe Schools Act

Equity

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- French Languages Services Act

FEDERAL POLICIES

Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act ("PCISA")

On June 29, 2012, the PCISA, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, the Marine Transportation Security Act and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act, was passed into law. Numerous concerns have been expressed with the provisions of the new legislation. In the context of violence against women, the new law contains provisions that will result in the arbitrary detention, intimidation, failure to protect, and ultimate re-victimization of women who seek asylum in Canada. For example, under the new legislation, a refugee claimant will have 0-15 days to provide a written statement detailing the basis of her claim, and should the claim be denied she will have 15 days to appeal the refusal. In practice, we know that most women will not be able to complete a full application or to prepare an appeal in this short amount of time, given that most women will need to acquire legal aid, retain legal counsel, gather supportive evidence and communicate the basis of her claim, in itself a lengthy, painful and often traumatic process. In effect, a woman's legitimate claim will not be properly presented and thus subsequently denied. Women refugee claimants from certain countries designated as 'safe' by the Minister will have no right of appeal to a decision of the refugee protection division. Their only recourse will be to apply for judicial review at the Federal Court. However, she could be deported from Canada while such an application is in process. Further, a woman claimant whose application is joined with an abusive partner is additionally affected by changes to the system. If a woman leaves her abusive partner after a final determination by the appeal division of the refugee board, the new legislation removes the ability of the protection division of the Board to reopen that case. If a woman leaves her abusive partner after a final determination by the Federal Court, the new legislation removes the ability of the protection or appeal divisions of the Board to reopen that case. After a negative refugee board determination, claimants are ineligible for a pre-removal risk assessment for 12 months, or for 36 months if they are from a designated country.

Changes to the Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (H&C) applications are extremely problematic for women and families. H&C applications have historically functioned as a safety net for women who experience violence and who do not fit into the traditional refugee definitions prescribed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In addition, H&C applications have often been used to prevent the separation of a mother (facing deportation) and her children. However, women can no longer submit an application under H&C at the same time as a refugee claim, nor can they submit applications under H&C for a period of a year after a refugee claim is denied (subject to

exceptions for applications involving the best interests of a child or a medical condition that would result in a risk to life if the applicant is deported). Further, the new legislation imposes restrictions on the discretion of enforcement officials to delay deportation orders, which was previously another remedial avenue for women whom the system had failed. The drive to remove failed claimants from Canada as soon as possible means that many women will not be in Canada long enough to have access to a fair refugee determination process or an H&C application.

Under the new legislation, any person detained by immigration authorities may have their detention extended if the Minister has a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed. Women's organizations have witnessed women being criminalized due to false reporting by abusive partners, and the new legislation has the potential to place further power into the hands of abusers and lead women to be detained as a result of attempting to flee abusive partners.

The new legislation introduced by the PCISA also grants discretion to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to designate certain migrants as "irregular", based solely on the circumstances of their arrival in Canada, and curtails the rights of those migrants. Irregular migrants, over sixteen years of age may face immediate imprisonment. If a person is detained as an irregular arrival, they will remain in detention for 14 days without an independent review. After the initial detention review, the detainee will not be eligible for another detention review for six months, and, unless her refugee claim is granted in the meantime, the detainee's detention will only be reviewed every six months thereafter. The physical and psychological effect of confinement on women (and children) who have experienced violence, rape, incest and torture will be compounded.

Considered cumulatively, these legislative changes greatly impede the ability of women who come to Canada with abusive partners and who rely on the abuser's refugee claim to have their own risk of persecution assessed. From a gender perspective, the new legislation will have a disproportionately greater impact on women and children. For more information please refer to the Submission of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Immigration regarding the Committee's review of Bill C-31 (April 2012).

Divorce Act

Section 16 (9) of the Divorce Act prevents courts from considering the past conduct of parents when making a custody or access order, except when that conduct is relevant to the person's ability to act as a parent to the child.The provision was intended to prevent marital misconduct evidence from being involved in custody and access matters. However, as many divorces proceed on a no-fault basis, the provision has become controversial because it can exclude consideration of certain family history information in the custody and access proceedings, including a history of violence between spouses/partners (Douglas). Until recently it was generally considered that spousal violence did not necessarily impact an abuser's ability to be an effective parent (Douglas). While violence towards children was considered relevant in custody and access decisions, intimate partner violence was often not considered applicable. In 1989 a judge found that abuse during a marriage was related directly to the father's ability to parent his children full-time, and since then it is frequently argued and demonstrated that witnessing family violence or abuse has an impact on a child's well-being and is relevant to the ability of an abuser to parent (Douglas). Only recently did Ontario introduce legislation that takes violence into consideration at custody and access hearings, but the federal legislation has not been changed to reflect this shift in understanding or judicial precedent.

Section 16(10) of the Act, known as the friendly parent rule, sets out the principle that "a child… should have as much contact with each spouse as is consistent with the best interests of the child," and requires that the court take into account the willingness of each parent to facilitate contact between the child and the other parent. The provision reflects a general assumption that the needs and interests of a child following separation and divorce are best met when the child maintains significant contact with both parents. Many commentators have argued that the friendly parent rule operates unfairly and dangerously in the context of violence. First, women who fear abuse from spouses may remain silent for fear of jeopardizing their chance of obtaining custody. Second, it is not uncommon for an abusive man to continue or escalate abuse upon separation, including using the family court process and access visits as vehicles to control and harass his partner.

Criminal Code of Canada

Due to recent changes in legislation, any breach of a restraining order and/or bail conditions given under the family courts is enforced under the Criminal Code. The enforcement of restraining orders and bail conditions is an important step in protecting a woman whose abuser may seek revenge or continue abuse after the woman has taken steps to create safety in her life. Statistics have shown that violence often escalates for at least several months post-separation. Women are often murdered by their former partners at the point of separation or while family court proceedings, especially those involving custody and access, are underway.

PROVINCIAL POLICIES

Family and Child:

Children's Law Reform Act and Bill 22, the Children's Law Reform Amendment Act (2010)

As a result of changes made in 2006, judges in Ontario courts are now required to consider family violence in custody and access cases. The Act now states that "In assessing a person's ability to act as a parent, the court shall consider whether the person has at any time committed violence or abuse against, a) his or her spouse/partner; b) a parent of the child to whom the application relates; c) a member of the person's household; or d) any child (Children's Law Reform Act, 24(4 & 5) 2006, c.1, s.3 (1). Precedent has also been set that dictates that where parents are not able to communicate (i.e., as a result of a restraining order due to abuse charges), joint custody is not appropriate. Critics consider the language in the act to be well-chosen in that the language cites "violence and abuse", indicating that consideration is not restricted to physical violence but also takes into account emotional, verbal and sexual abuse. The implications of this policy are that women who have been abused should be able to successfully apply for sole custody. The Ontario Women's Justice Network applauded the changes, saying that "this change will make an immediate and important difference for women who want to raise the issue of violence against them in a custody dispute" (OWJN, 2009) One criticism of the policy is that "some judges are reluctant to use the new restraining order provisions because of the criminalization of breaches and are, instead, using section 28 of the Children's Law Reform Act (Powers of the Court) to make orders requiring good behaviour. These orders, which are enforceable under the Provincial Offences Act, present the same enforcement challenges that the reforms were intended to address" ("Justice Done" 2011)

Child and Family Services Act

The Child and Family Services Act is relevant to a woman who has been abused and has children. The Act states that children who may have suffered abuse cannot be returned to the person who was responsible for their care at the time of the possible abuse until the case is reviewed. The language in the Act does not specify that children cannot be returned to the accused, but rather to the person responsible for them at the time during which the abuse was alleged to have happened. This can be interpreted to mean that a mother who has been abused will not be granted care of her children until a review process has taken place. A woman therefore risks losing her children to temporary care when she calls the police on a violent partner. While these measures are there for the protection of the children, they often serve to unnecessarily punish the mother and cause further trauma and confusion for children who end up being removed from both parents without necessarily understanding why.

The Child and Family Services Act Section 59.2, Restriction on Access Order, also takes into consideration whether the parent has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada that involves violence against either a child or the parent of the child (Child and Family Services Act, 2006, c. 24, s. 1). As above, here too it may be ruled that the child cannot be returned to his or her parents until a review or hearing takes place and recommendations are issued that allow the child to return home.

Family Law Act

The Family Law Act was recently amended to better protect women who have lived with their abuser for less than three years. These women are now eligible to apply for a restraining order against their abuser, and as breaches of a restraining order are now treated as an offence under the Criminal Code, an abuser can be prosecuted for violating the restraining order. In addition, under the Family Law Act, the court now considers "any violence committed by a spouse/partner against the other

spouse/partner or the children" in determining whether to give an order for exclusive possession (Family Law Act, R.S.O. 1990, C. F.3, s.24 (3).

Child Protection:

A number of protocols and procedures have been developed in response to the Child and Family Services Act. The Toronto Children's Aid Society has a specialized team that responds to cases involving violence and child protection concerns. However, critics suggest that many CAS workers continue to demonstrate a lack of understanding about violence and its impacts.

Violence:

Domestic Violence Protection Act (Repealed 2009) and Bill 133: An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act 2000

The Domestic Violence Protection Act was repealed in 2009. Bill 133 amended various Acts including the Family Act. The Bill introduced the ability for restraining orders to be applied for and issued in the same application as a custody order if a parent or child is in danger (this used to be a separate application process). In addition, the Bill introduced confidentiality measures that consider whether an order "could cause physical, mental or emotional harm" to any party. Several pieces of legislation have been developed to replace the Domestic Violence Protection Act, and the Ontario government launched a Domestic Violence Action Plan in 2005 to address issues of domestic violence in the province.

Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan

The Ontario government released the Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan in 2004 to commit money for community services, improvements to coordination in the justice system, and training for front-line workers and the public on issues related to recognizing, assisting with and finding help for domestic abuse. The plan included recommendations for the development of targeted approaches for groups with diverse needs (e.g., Aboriginal, francophone, settlement, etc.). The policy was applauded for its awareness of the need for a holistic response to violence and its recognition that coordination across service delivery sectors is necessary.

The plan has also been criticized. It presented some promises as new when in fact they were old promises that had been recycled, and in other cases, it resulted in money being removed from one part of the public sector to make way for new priorities. In addition, some critics were unhappy that the plan failed to give shelters core funding. Further, there was some concern that the Plan's focus on education indicated an attitude on the part of the government that women do not leave abusive situations because they "don't know better", when in fact there are many complex reasons why women – including, educated and socially connected women – do not leave abusive relationships ("Justice Done"). Critics argue that for many women the problem is not a lack of awareness of their options but rather the inadequacy of the public services available to help them. Not only are most organizations underfunded and therefore not able to provide services fast enough for women who are in crisis; there is also often a lack of appropriate action taken by front-line staff when approached by a woman who is in an abusive situation. "Despite training of front-line staff, there are still serious concerns that there is a lack of substantive analysis of violence against women by many of the professionals who play a role in custody and access determinations or provide support for families after" ("Justice Done"). The Plan included a specific recommendation to train Ontario Works staff to better understand and be prepared to deal with the complex issues that women escaping domestic violence face and to more effectively serve victims of abuse adequately as they try to establish independent economic security.

In 2007, the provincial government released an update to the Plan, recommitting to efforts for another four years, and in 2012 released a second update of its progress against the Plan and a commitment to continue building on the Domestic Violence Action Plan.

Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan

The Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan was released by the Ontario Government in 2011. It addresses crimes such as sexual assault and sexual exploitation through human trafficking, as well as other acts including sexual harassment and sexual exploitation through the use of technology and the internet. It is very similar in content and strategy to the Ontario Domestic Violence Action Plan: its priorities include an education strategy for the public, training for front-line and community services, and a strengthening of the justice system. There has been some question as to how much of the funding, programs and policies specified in the recommendations of the plan actually constitute new money or new programs given that the priorities and funding commitments are so similar to the Domestic Violence Action Plan.

Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) is a multi-disciplinary advisory committee of experts that was established in 2003 in response to recommendations made from two major inquests into the deaths of Arlene May and Randy Iles, and Gillian and Ralph Hadley. The mandate of the DVDRC is to assist the Office of the Chief Coroner with the investigation and review of deaths involving domestic violence with a view to making recommendations aimed at preventing deaths in similar circumstances and reducing domestic violence in general. In 2010 18 cases were reviewed involving 36 deaths, 24 of which were homicides and 12 of which were suicides by perpetrators. The top risk factors identified in the cases reviewed were: actual or pending separation, history of domestic violence, obsessive behaviour displayed by the perpetrator and a perpetrator that was depressed. The 2010 Review resulted in 14 new recommendations aimed at police services, colleges and universities, lawyers and judges, health care providers and the Ontario Women's Directorate. The recommendations focus on strengthening systems and processes for information sharing, domestic violence reporting, and risk assessment; training to improve knowledge and skills; and public education campaigns.

Health and Safety:

Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009

Bill 168 deals with violence and harassment in the workplace, requiring all employers of five or more employees to have a policy to deal with incidents. The Act states that "if an employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace, the employer shall take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker." This indicates that an awareness of domestic violence threats spilling over into the workplace is now the responsibility of the employer. Whereas in the past an employer may have ignored issues that appeared to be an employee's "home life issue", they now have the responsibility to assess the threat and become aware of whether or not the violence could impact their workplace, and to take action to protect their employees. Bill 168 stems from jury recommendations after a coroner's inquest into the Lori Dupont case and which recommended that the Occupational Health and Safety Act be reformed to address violence and harassment in the workplace and protect employees. While the Act is promising, many concerns have been raised about the lack of support being provided to employers to support its full implementation. It is feared that employers' lack of understanding regarding their responsibilities and liabilities under the legislation may result in women being laid off/terminated.

Housing:

Social Housing Reform Act 2000 (Repealed 2011)

The Social Housing Reform Act (2000) included a Special Priority Program with provisions that gave priority to victims of domestic violence. This program also enabled Ontario Housing Service Managers to allocate a number of housing units for domestic violence victims, and to prioritize victims of domestic violence on the waiting list for housing. Public housing quality, especially in cities like Toronto, is often reported to be very poor, and there are very long wait lists for non-priority applicants (e.g., as much as ten years) and even for priority applicants, the wait list can be six to twelve months long. The Act was repealed in 2011 and is no longer in effect.

Escaping Domestic Violence Act 2010 - Bill 53: An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2006

Bill 53: An Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2006 (short title: "Escaping Domestic Violence Act 2010") is currently referred to a standing committee on social policy and is not yet in effect. The proposed Act includes provisions for landlords to release victims of domestic violence (or persons whose children are victims) from all tenancy agreements/leases with notice of at least 28 days. The Act would allow a victim of domestic violence to avoid being charged for breach of contract; however, this would require police documentation of a domestic violence investigation. Women who do not charge their abuser or involve the police cannot take advantage of the policy.

Ontario Housing Policy Statement – Housing Services Act 2011

The Ontario Housing Policy Statement – Housing Services Act 2011 will be replacing the Social Housing Reform Act. It states that the province is committed to a Special Priority Policy which helps victims and families escape abusive and unsafe situations. The Act requires that Ontario Housing Service Managers prepare local housing and homelessness plans that address matters of provincial interest and that are consistent with policy statements issued under the Act. Service Managers must continue to make available a certain number of units for victims of domestic violence. In addition, Service Managers must ensure that support services are coordinated and linked to new supportive housing units.

Economic:

Ontario Works Act

This Act has several provisions that are relevant to victims of abuse. Children and young women who are forced to leave home because of abuse can receive social assistance. The program guidelines do not require women to pursue child support if violence is a possible consequence. However, these are not consistently applied, and sometimes women are not eligible for social assistance unless they have previously sued their spouse/partner for child support. Further, as welfare/social assistance rates are inadequate, women often decide to return with their children to abusive situations in order to survive financially ("Walking on Eggshells"). In addition, Ontario Works has a number of other provisions and regulations that can especially harm victims of abuse (e.g., an abuser can call a Welfare Fraud Hotline and accuse a woman of defrauding the system, thereby sabotaging her attempt to establish herself independently).

Ontario Budget (2012)

In its most recent budget, the provincial government ended the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) as of January 1, 2013. CSUMB helps people on assistance with costs like first and last month's rent deposits, buying or replacing furniture, deposits for utilities, overdue utility bills, and other similar expenses. Currently, about 16,000 OW and ODSP recipients rely on CSUMB every month to pay for costs like these. This move will have a large negative impact on many people, in particular on women trying to move from transition shelters into permanent homes after experiencing violence.

Judicial/Legal:

Mandatory Charging Practice (Solicitor General – Ontario Policing Standards Manual 1994)

In Ontario, the police are required to lay charges when called to a domestic violence incident if they have reasonable cause to believe that violence took place. The Mandatory Charging policy was intended to take the onus off of the victim to charge her abuser, especially in situations where police would ask if she wanted to lay charges while she was still in the presence of her abuser. In reality, it led to an increase in dual charges where police arrested both parties. Some critics have termed this "lazy policing". "Despite the mandatory charging policy not all police offers lay charges appropriately, and increasingly, women face the risk of also being charged if they call the police during an assault by their partner" (Cross, 2004). The execution of this policy is dependent on police discretion and is therefore open to interpretation and misuse. As a result, many women do not call the police because they know charges may be laid against them. Further, violence against women advocates are increasingly hearing about the sole charging of women, particularly in instances involving immigrant or refugee women with language barriers.

There are other unintended consequences of this policy, many of which interact with policies from other ministries and levels of government:

- The risk of retaliation against a victim of domestic violence increases if charges are laid. "A no contact order is a piece of paper. It offers scant protection against a clenched fist, a knife blade or a bullet" (Cross, 2004).

- If, as a result of calling the police, a spouse/partner is incarcerated/convicted then a victim may lose her only access to income.

- Immigrant families who are non-status may face deportation when criminal charges are laid.

- Child Protective Services must be called if there is a charge of domestic violence laid in a home with children, resulting in the possibility that a mother may lose her children to temporary care. "Changes to child protection legislation mean that the police now report all domestic violence calls where there are children in the family to the Children's Aid Society. Women seeking help with an abusive spouse/partner can suddenly find themselves involved in an investigation into whether or not they are appropriate parents to their children" (Cross, 2004).

- Women escaping violence are increasingly involved in criminal court cases, either as witnesses or as defendants (e.g., in those situations when they have also been charged).

Bail Safety Pilot Program

This program brings the victim, Victim/Witness Assistance Program (V/WAP), the police and the Crown together to work collaboratively at the bail stage of a criminal case where there has been partner abuse. Currently running as a pilot in ten Ontario communities, the program recognizes that the way in which bail has been handled in partner abuse cases in the past has often left the victim exposed to an ongoing and higher risk of more serious harm or even death. The Program is committed to allowing victim input at the bail hearing as well as to offering victims access to support immediately upon charges being laid. VWAP's role in the program is to have immediate contact with the victim and to conduct an in-depth interview to gather her input with respect to appropriate bail arrangements. The VWAP worker also discusses safety planning with the victim, introduces her to the court process and provides referrals to community agencies for counselling and support.

The role of the police is to participate in the in-depth interview with the victim and to complete a "risk factor checklist" which will support making appropriate bail recommendations. The police will obtain past occurrence reports, prior charges, prepare a complete Crown package and lay additional charges when required, as well as liaise with relevant community partners.

The Crown's role is to review and screen the Crown package and, if available, conduct the bail hearing using information gathered during the in-depth interview conducted with the victim by V/WAP and the police. Evaluation of the first three pilot projects is positive and a report is expected in the near future.

Legal Aid Ontario

Legal Aid Ontario has a provision for special services to help people experiencing domestic violence. However, services are not as widely available, clearly communicated, or accessible as they need to be, and many women find themselves without access to legal representation. Legal aid certificates are only available to women if there is a significant possibility that she will go to jail if convicted. This restricts access to legal aid for most women charged under the Mandatory Charging policy at a critical time in their lives. In addition, the financial eligibility criteria for a legal aid certificate are too low. For example, a woman with no children must have a gross family income of less than $10,800; even families under the Low Income Cut-Off may be considered to have too much money to qualify for assistance. Given the lack of policy coordination and the complexity of the policy environment, a woman experiencing violence may be dealing with up to four legal battles at the same time (e.g., family court, criminal court, child protective services and immigration) without adequate representation.

Educational:

Safe Schools Act

Under the Safe Schools Act, teachers are required to be trained to support children who are experiencing violence at home or who may be in the care of Child and Family Services. This policy mainly relates to the child's experience, but it may be important for women who are leaving situations of violence to be aware of the type of support that children have access to at school.

Gender-Based Violence Policy

In 2010, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) was the first board in Canada to pass a policy on gender-based violence. All types of gender-based violence are unacceptable and taken very seriously in the TDSB. The focus for combating gender-based violence in schools has been through prevention programming primarily provided by the Gender-based Violence Prevention team. Since 2009, this team has worked in hundreds of schools, developing local, tailor-made prevention programming as well as organizing and delivering the Positive Spaces campaign and training to develop greater awareness among students, greater capacity among staff, and easily identifiable spaces and faces in each school where students can seek support on any aspect of gender-based violence.

Equity:

Accessibility for Ontarians' with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The goal of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible by 2025, through the development and implementation of accessibility standards. Private sector and not-for-profit organizations, including violence against women services, must meet the Customer Service Standard by January 2012. The violence against women sector viewed the legislation as a critical step in making all services and supports accessible to abused women with disabilities and their children. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Homes, in its letter to the Standing Committee on Social Policy (2004), states that women with disabilities and deaf women who experience violence face discrimination based not only on disability, but on gender as well.

French Languages Services Act

Since 1986, the French Language Services Act guarantees each individual the right to receive provincial government services in French in 25 designated areas of the province. In its 2004 report, "Doing so Much with So Little: Overview and Profile of French Language Violence Against Women Services (1994 – 2004)", *the Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes* (AOcVF) reported that government investment in French-language anti-violence services does not compare with that offered to English-language services and that the provisions of the French Language Services Act have been applied sporadically and inadequately.

2. POLICY ANALYSIS – AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This section presents an account of the research that references the unintended consequences of the legislation, regulations, policy and practices described above on women who experience violence.

Through The Looking Glass: The Experiences of Unrepresented Abused Women in Family Court, Luke's Place (2008)

This report reflects the findings of a project that was undertaken to learn more about the needs of abused women in Durham Region who are unrepresented through their family court experiences in order to be able to better develop and support appropriate services for them. The project sought to gather information about the frequency, causes, difficulties and needs of unrepresented women with specific attention to marginalized women, women in ethno-racial communities, rural women and Deaf and disabled women. Despite the diverse perspectives of the stakeholder groups that participated in the project, many concerns and issues were common, including:

- The lack of legal representation as a critical issue
- Legal Aid Ontario requirements are not well understood by women and eligibility criteria are too restrictive
- Although women reported a low level of satisfaction with family court services, advocates and others continue to refer women there for legal assistance
- Post court experiences of women often have a long-term impact on them and their children. In particular, the issue of access remains problematic for women, often for many years after their case has made its way through the family court
- Many women who leave an abusive partner continue to experience that abuse post-separation; while the form of that violence might change, its presence does not

Perhaps the most staggering finding is that 63% of women fear for their lives during court proceedings. The report concludes with twenty-nine recommendations focused on the following areas:

- Access to legal representation
- Law reform
- Policy reform
- Access and improvement to service delivery
- Training for judges, service providers and women

A Coordinated Response between the VAW Sector and the Family Law System: Pre-Think Tank Report, Luke's Place (2011)

Luke's Place brought together a dedicated group of representatives from the VAW sector on November 8th and 9th, 2011 to discuss how to improve navigation of the different components of the family law system and to discuss the need for and feasibility of the creation of a Provincial Centre of Excellence for Woman Abuse and Family Law. Several themes emerged during the discussions, including:

- The interface between the legal system and the VAW sector is in continuous change;
- Access continues to be a significant challenge in the legal system;
- The experience of women in the legal system does not facilitate them dealing with the interconnection between the many issues that they are facing simultaneously;
- The VAW sector responds to the unintended consequences of the legal system by providing services and advocacy;
- Women rely on the VAW sector to navigate the legal system, particularly those with complex needs;
- There are different approaches used by the legal system and the VAW sector to support women;
- There is little coordination to support the VAW sector as it supports women to navigate the legal system;
- There is no formal system to monitor and address unintended consequences of the legal system.

The report concludes with a call to decision makers to support the VAW sector so that it can continue to support women who experience violence.

The Impacts of Recent Law Reform on Abused Women Involved in the Family Court Process in Ontario, Luke's Place (2011)

This report recognizes that over the past eight years there have been significant legislative, policy and process changes in family law and in criminal and immigration law that directly impact women who have experienced violence. While the reforms may have been intended to improve the situation for women, they have unintended consequences. The report explores the intersection of the legal issues women face and the family court experience of women who experience violence, with a focus on:

- Mandatory charging
- Dual charging
- Changes to the immigration and refugee processes (Bill C-11)
- Restraining orders
- Custody and access and the best interests of the child
- Intersections between Child Welfare, Family Court and VAW
- Changes to Legal Aid Ontario
- Changes to the Family Court process
- Intersection of Family Court and Criminal Court

The report draws its findings and recommendations from a survey carried out with 101 service providers and previous reports documenting the current state of issues. The themes identified by the report include:

- The VAW sector is often the first to identify the unintended consequences of changes to legislation, policy or process;
- The VAW sector responds to impacts through service delivery;
- The response by the VAW sector is a short term 'solution';
- Social and economic determinants and race and poverty influence how a woman experiences the justice system;
- Immigration law and its impacts are the least understood; and
- The issue of access continues to be a concern.

The report concludes with a set of promising practices and models of service delivery including:

- Establishment of working relationships between the VAW sector and other parts of the justice system
- Staff training
- Increasing information provided to women
- Coordinated service delivery models
- Service delivery hubs (one location for VAW and legal services)
- Monitoring and research on the unintended impact of changes to legislation, policy and process on women.

With the Disruptive Force of a Hand Grenade: Women's Post Violence Experiences of Recent Legal and Process Reforms in Ontario, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic (2011)

This paper was prepared as a background document for the Justice Done: Crafting Opportunity from Adversity project. It formed the basis for the discussions that took place at a provincial forum in 2011 and provided the content for the final project report. The paper examined and analyzed the following issues as experienced by women in Toronto:

- Access to legal representation
- Family court process reforms
- Mandatory charging policies and the implications for women
- Reforms to immigration law
- Custody and access
- Reforms to restraining order legislation
- Child protection
- Legal system intersections

The paper highlights the steady flow of legislative and process changes in family, criminal and immigration law. While the changes were made with the intention of improving the systemic response to violence and women's access to services, the implementation of these changes has had unintended negative consequences. As a result, the outcomes for women have not always been positive and service needs have both increased and changed. At the same time, women are increasingly having to navigate multiple legal systems at the same time. Although it does not propose recommendations, the background paper does suggest that women's service providers and government both need to consider new ways of delivering services in order to address the intersections of women's legal issues and service needs.

Justice Done: Crafting Opportunity from Adversity, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic (2011)

This reports documents the experience of the Schlifer Clinic in bringing together representatives from across the violence against women sector to explore key emerging justice sector issues for women who experience violence. Three main activities were undertaken: a service provider forum was attended by 31 organizations, a pre-forum survey was administered and a pre-forum discussion paper was disseminated.

The report presents eight themes developed through a synthesis of the discussion paper, survey and forum findings. These are:

- Lack of access to legal representation is one of the most significant pressures impacting the services delivered to a woman who experiences violence.
- Family Court process reforms, particularly the focus on alternative dispute resolution, leave women feeling pressured or mandated to use dispute resolution officers.
- Mandatory charging policies are a challenge to the VAW sector. On the one hand, the mandatory charging of an abuser is welcome for many women. On the other hand, there are negative impacts to mandatory charging resulting in problems with other areas including immigration, child protection and family law. The negative impacts are felt most strongly by racialized women.
- Recent reforms to immigration policy and legislation have serious implications for women experiencing violence, particularly foreign workers and sponsored women.
- Custody and access continues to be the single most important issue for women who leave abusive relationships. Courts continue to order joint custody inappropriately in cases involving woman abuse, with the result the woman and children are exposed to ongoing abuse.
- While the changes to Ontario's Family Law regarding restraining orders is positive in that it is now a criminal offence to breach an order, resulting in a criminal charge and up to two years in prison, some women are not comfortable seeking a restraining order against a partner because they do not want him to be exposed to criminal court.

- Difficulties between child protection and VAW services remain, despite many years of collaborative protocols, training and education. Immigrant women in particular are more likely to come to the attention of child protection and experience more aggressive interventions.

- There are increasing challenges for women who have experienced violence that arise as a consequence of the interconnections between family and immigration law and family and criminal courts.

The report calls for increased collaboration within and beyond the VAW sectors in order to deliver innovative services and to impact system-wide change.

Beyond Shelter Walls Phase III Policy Paper, YWCA (2009)

This report presents the results of regional consultations during which dialogue took place between key stakeholders at the national, provincial/territorial and community levels, to identify effective and lasting change regarding violence against women. The consultation revealed that the factors informing and affecting violence against women in Canada are intersectional.

The report identifies five areas that impact women. They are:

- Poverty
- Housing and homelessness
- The legal environment
- Life in the north
- Lack of inclusion for marginalized women

The report concludes that coordinated public policy development that has women at the centre is required to address these. It also identifies several promising practices and recommends the use of women's advocates, prevention and awareness programs, and education and training for staff as measures to address these themes. The report provides a series of recommendations, many of which target the federal, provincial/territorial or local level of government, recognizing the systemic nature of the issues identified.

Beyond Shelter Walls Discussion Paper: No More Running in Circles, YWCA (2009)

This discussion paper is part of the Beyond Shelter Walls Initiative, which seeks to present the policy solutions beyond shelters that are required to provide solutions to intimate violence. The discussion paper followed a literature review and reflects the results of a series of focus groups held with service providers, advocates and women who have experienced violence in four regions of Canada in order to gather recommendations, best practices, policy changes or innovative service ideas. The paper presents the state of the literature as well as focus group feedback to propose solutions that address a broad range of violence against women themes, including:

- The cyclical nature of abuse and homelessness
- Linkages between mental health issues/addictions and childhood sexual abuse, rape in adulthood and other forms of violence
- Child protection services, custody and access, and childcare
- Employment and income support programs
- Housing, shelter stays and cuts to services
- Perspectives regarding men and boys
- Policing and the criminal system
- Perspectives regarding the experience of women in the north, First Nations, Metis and Inuit women
- Perspectives regarding women of colour, immigrant and refugee women

The paper concludes that for women in Canada, leaving a violent male partner will adversely affect their social and economic prospects, perhaps in ways that are more difficult to live with than the abuse itself. This contradiction in the public policy response creates a situation in which many women return to their abusive partners.

"I Have to Pick My Battles": Navigating Immigration Policy when Advocating for Migrant Women in Violence against Women Shelters, Rupaleem Bhuyan (2012)

This study was conducted to explore: a) how immigration status and citizenship influence the way people interact with service providers in the social service sector; b) how service providers manage the sensitive identity information of people using their services, and; c) how the documentation requirements from funders impact the ability of organizations to provide comprehensive services to those in need. The research participants identified common barriers to service delivery, including:

- The lack of organizational resources available to support women with precarious status

- The difficulty of referring women to other services due to eligibility restrictions or lack of identification documents to verify eligibility

- The lack of organizational support or response for addressing immigration-related barriers in VAW programs

- The lack of information or misinformation about immigration policy

- The need to comply with funding requirements to maximize output of service delivery

- The concern about doing something that is 'illegal' when supporting women with precarious immigration status

- The fear of immigration law enforcement

- The fear of public perception that negatively views the provision of public services for 'illegal' immigrants

The report identifies a series of advocacy strategies that are used by service providers to challenge or evade immigration policies that impede women's ability to seek safety and support for themselves and their children, including:

- Providing women and their children with emergency shelter, no matter what their immigration status Developing clear 'access without fear' organizational practice guidelines

- Assessing and referring clients to immigration attorneys to apply for refugee or humanitarian claims

- Assisting women to relocate if they fear detection by immigration authorities

- Advocating to change organizational policies or funders' guidelines to be more responsive to the needs of women with precarious status

- Joining and supporting grassroots campaigns to address systemic issues of immigration, towards greater protection for migrant women and regularization for women with precarious status

Further, the report identifies additional advocacy strategies to minimize the negative effects of immigration enforcement activities on both migrant women and service providers, including:

- Brokering with immigration officials to delay deportation so a woman residing in a VAW shelter can get her documents and life in order before her deportation date

- Not collecting information regarding a client's plans following her departure from the shelter to go live 'underground'

- Not limiting the length of shelter stay for women who are non-status, or who are not eligible for social housing or housing subsidies

- Not withdrawing or withholding public support for political or grassroots campaigns that criticize the Canadian government

Doing the Right Thing, Angelique Caroline Jenney (2011)

The purpose of this study was to explore how women's narratives of domestic violence (DV) expressed within the context of child protection services (CPS) become translated into CPS workers' assessments of risk and need for safety planning. The study used focus group and interview data to explore how both the workers and clients' experiences of the process of risk assessment and safety planning influenced the course of the intervention. The study found that workers and clients held similar understandings about woman abuse and the role of CPS. For both, the concept of "doing the right thing" presented itself as an overarching theme implying that there is a "right way" to address DV cases within CPS work. The study

also found that negative interactions lead to misunderstandings that impact children, to the further subjugation of women victims, and the absence of any discussion regarding the role of men in addressing DV at the system level.

The study suggests that CPS is in a good position to support women because its focus on children allows women to receive services that their abusive partner may not otherwise typically allow. To be as helpful as possible it is recommended that:

- CPS workers recognize the complexity of risk assessment and safety planning and use these as a means of working more collaboratively with women

- The CPS system should recognize and find ways to support a therapeutic alliance relationship with clients as a key component of effective practice with DV clients

- CPS workers develop skills in assessment and intervention with children exposed to domestic violence and the skills to engage with perpetrators

The study cautions that understanding social problems does not always result in solutions to the problem. In the case of DV, despite a decade-long trend of decreasing spousal violence and domestic violence homicide rates, the number of families accessing services to address this issue continues to increase.

Report of the Legal Aid Review, Michael Trebilcock (2008)

In 2007, Professor Michael Trebilcock was asked to conduct a review of legal aid in Ontario since 1999, including a consideration of the *Legal Aid Services Act,* 1998 and regulations. The focus of the review was on tools and capacities to maximize effective administration and good governance of the legal aid system, and examining alternatives to the current tariff process, including methods of ensuring regular reviews to set and adjust the hourly rate paid to lawyers doing legal aid work.

Several VAW advocates, including The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) and the Barbra Schlifer Clinic, participated in the review to stress that the legal aid system fails to adequately address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

The review references international literature which finds that certain clients experience a greater number of problems both because their problems are interconnected, and because the clients are particularly vulnerable individuals (i.e. rented housing/benefits/debt, relationship breakdown/children/homeownership/domestic violence, and discrimination/employment). The review suggests that there needs to be a movement towards an integrated response to Ontarians' legal and social problems, and more experimentation and collaboration in the provision of legal information and advice services by Legal Aid Ontario, as well as a greater focus on providing legal, and potentially also social, services in a more holistic manner.

Access to Justice for Rural and Linguistic Communities. Karen Cohl and George Thomson (2009)

This report presents findings and recommendations for ways in which the Law Foundation of Ontario can make a strategic investment to improve linguistic and rural access to justice in Ontario. Through an extensive literature review and informal interviews with persons with related experience and expertise, the study examined the challenges of linguistic and rural access in the Ontario context and ideas for dealing with those challenges. The report offers recommendations for the Law Foundation to make a strategic investment in the following six areas to improve linguistic and rural access to justice:

1. Strategies to improve the capacity of non-legal community organizations to provide basic legal information and referral to their clients

2. A coordinated approach for enhancing linguistic and rural access to legal information and services in a designated geographic area

3. Creation of a legal interpretation network to improve access to interpreters, enhance quality assurance, and build a community of practice for interpretation in legal and community settings

4. Pilot projects to test strategies for using videoconferencing to increase linguistic and rural access to legal information and services

5. New articling fellowships to enhance the capacity of organizations providing legal services to persons isolated by language or distance

6. Ways to ensure that knowledge generated from this project and related initiatives is broadly accessible and contributes to our collective understanding of how best to remove barriers to linguistic and rural access to justice.

The report makes specific mention of domestic violence as it relates to barriers to legal information for women who are marginalized by language or geography. For example, access to essential information in the area of family law and special outreach to people who are isolated and to victims of domestic violence are two urgent needs highlighted in the report. The report also describes the Ontario government as a leader in funding language interpretation services in domestic violence cases and strongly encourages the provincial government to continue with these tangible efforts to improve access to justice for persons who do not speak English or French.

Moving Forward on Legal Aid, Melina Buckley (2010)

The Moving Forward on Legal Aid: Research on Needs and Innovative Approaches Report presents new research findings, profiles innovations in legal aid service delivery in Canada and elsewhere and suggests future directions to improve legal aid and access to justice generally. It suggests that the most innovative and important developments with respect to service delivery have been in the use of more comprehensive and integrated service delivery models, through which interdisciplinary teams assist a client to resolve the often-interconnected legal and non-legal problems she or he faces. This development flows from the insights gained from multi-year research into legal needs: that poor and vulnerable individuals tend to experience multiple legal problems that aggregate into cluster types which co-occur with other economic, social and health problems. Other important developments have been in the establishment of effective outreach programs as well as some court-based programs such as expanded duty counsel.

Police Policy and Practice on Sexual Assault against Young Women, Youth Alliance Report, ME-TRAC (2011)

This report presents the work of the Youth Alliance, which was convened to advocate for improved municipal violence prevention strategies to support young women, in its research regarding policing, sexual assault and gender-based violence against youth, and more specifically its review of police policies and procedures from a youth perspective.

The report reminds us that although youth under 18 represented 22% of the Canadian population in 2004, they made up 58% of victims of sexual offences. In order to improve police policy and practice in Toronto, a series of recommendations in the areas of policy and procedures, youth leadership, training, communications and accountability are made. Throughout the recommendations, the Youth Alliance emphasizes the need for police collaboration with young women and all youth in Toronto in order to improve the safety and quality of life of residents of the city.

Transforming Communities, Report from the Domestic Violence Advisory Council for the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues (2009)

The Minister Responsible for Women's Issues created the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC, or the Council) in the Fall of 2007 to provide recommendations to improve the existing system of services to better meet the diverse needs of abused women and their children; and to focus on components and/or issues within the broader system of services supporting abused women and their children. The Council was to focus its work on recommendations that required no additional funds, could be achieved by making better use of existing resources and that built on promising practices. The Council organized its recommendations under the five Transformational Directions of Ontario's Domestic Violence Action Plan, which are:

- Government leadership;
- A focus on preventing the violence;
- Broad-based interventions through a wide range of sectors;
- A balanced approach with investments in the community and the justice sector; and
- Targeted approaches to meet diverse needs.

The Council calls for a paradigm shift to achieve the vision and direction of the Domestic Violence Action Plan, in which the violence against women sector will need to work in an interconnected and collaborative way within the existing system to address the immediate violence that women are facing, and lay the foundation for healthy relationships and communities through changes to that same system.

This paradigm shift relies on the application of an intersectional approach, so that the violence against women system can address violence in such a way that it can respond to the specificity of the social location and the unique situation of women and their families.

Pushed Back into the Closet: Research Findings on the Safety Needs of LGBTTIQQ2S Women and Trans Communities of Toronto, METRAC (2011)

This research report summarizes findings of an on-line survey conducted to assess the safety needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, and two-spirited (LGBTTIQQ2S) women and trans individuals in the City of Toronto. The survey focused on the experience and impact of public safety, discrimination, harassment and hate crimes on LGBTTIQQ2S women and trans individuals. The recommendations call for increased advocacy, funding educational campaigns as well as both quantitative and qualitative research, to better understand the prevalence and impact of hate crimes on these communities. Although it does not focus on domestic violence, the literature cited in the report speaks to the intersection of oppressions expressed through violence and experienced by individuals who hold a more marginal status within oppressed LGBTTIQQ2S communities or racialized groups.

Who do you want to sue you? Confidentiality and Community Risk Management, Centre For Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children (2011)

This research paper examines the issue of confidentiality as it relates to the membership of community high-risk committees, with the goal of providing recommendations that will lead to the full inclusion of community members on these teams.

At the present time, high-risk committee membership generally fits into one of three models:

i. Only criminal justice partners are involved

ii. Criminal justice partners are committee members, and community partners (shelters, CAS, health sector, etc.) are invited to participate in specific instances where the criminal justice partners have determined it is necessary

iii. Both criminal justice and community partners are members of the committee

Those committees that consist of only criminal justice partners take the position that legislation *(Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Police Services Act)* prohibits any other partners from joining because of confidentiality concerns. The report finds that legislation, professional codes of conduct and case law all allow for exceptions to the general rule that personal information must be held in confidence. There is no absolute ban on breaching confidentiality. It concludes that in cases of violence against women where there is risk of ongoing and future harm, including but not limited to lethal harm, the safety of women and their children will be significantly enhanced by a collaborative approach to risk management at the community level that includes the violence against women sector as equal partners with the justice sector, and that this does not violate any legislation, professional obligations or legal precedents that address privacy or confidentiality.

Report on Violence against Women, Mental Health and Substance Use, Canadian Women's Foundation, 2011

This report is the summary of a review conducted for the Canadian Women's Foundation to understand the environment of services for women who have experienced violence and who have mental health and substance use concerns. The review involved consultations with women with lived experience, service providers and representatives from various ministries across Canada, and a review of the literature for current knowledge around and promising practices for supporting women impacted by these intersecting issues. Key findings include:

• Although many studies across anti-violence, mental health and substance use services have shown that women entering these settings have overlapping experiences of violence, mental health and substance use concerns, there is a lack of recognition of the connections between violence and mental health among funders, policy makers and service providers;

• Women impacted by violence, mental health concerns and/or substance use often face high levels of discrimination and judgment in society and in the services they attempt to access;

• Government bodies fail to act in cooperation, further compounding harms to women;

- The lack of integrated services has meant that women who have experiences of violence, substance use and mental health issues have worse treatment outcomes than women with just one of these concerns; and

- Women who are the most marginalized – women in poverty, sex workers, homeless or at-risk of homelessness and experiencing other forms of oppression are least likely to gain access to services.

3. 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 Policies Matter Project activities and for the project evaluation.

The Context that Creates Policy Intersections that Negatively Affect Women

In Year 1 of the Policies Matter 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.

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 Policies Matter 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 these 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 behaviour among women, including:

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

Rationale

Year 1 of the Policies Matter 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

Pilot Projects

In Year 2 of the Policies Matter 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 Policies Matter Project.

Name: Coordinated Access for Women
Objective: • To provide crisis/emergency counselling, support, information and referral services to women when they are required   • To improve service pathways for women who need crisis/emergency counselling, support, information and referral services
Phase 1 Priorities Addressed: • Service access and pathways   • Women with mental health and addictions issues   • Service provider training/skill development
Description/Rationale: AWHL provides free 24/7 counselling services in 154 languages and has the capacity to take additional calls. The Schlifer Clinic provides legal and counselling 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.

Next Steps:

1. Follow up with AWHL

2. Sonja to attend the next Working Group meeting

3. Develop a project plan, determine available resources, etc.

Name:

Supporting Refugee Women in Detention

Objective:

- To provide legal information and counselling support to women who are in detention

Phase 1 Priorities Addressed:

- Service access and pathways

- Immigrant and refugee women

Description/Rationale:

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, Bill C-31, which introduced significant changes to IRPA, means 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 C-31 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.

Next Steps:

- 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

Defining Success

See Blueprint Program Logic Model

4. 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				

• 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:
 	
  ◦ involving the women most at risk in the process
 	
  ◦ addressing the different types of violence they face
	• 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
		• 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
			• Policy barriers identified 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				
• 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	• 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	• Effective co-ordination efforts • Project allies engaged • Recommendations developed • Council more engaged in this project than others	• 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	• Each woman who accesses services gets her service needs met

LOGIC MODEL CONTINUED

STRATEGIES/ APPROACHES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS (2012-13)	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (2013-14)	IMPACTS (2015 AND BEYOND)
• From the recommendations, identify one collaborative project to pilot with organizations who work with women who experience violence (service providers)	• 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	• Service providers undertake a collaborative initiative • Partnership agreement • Implementation plan • Pilot related tools/ resources • Product verified • Product refined • Evaluation report on piloting	• 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	
• Engage the broader community of organizations working with women who experience violence in the learning process	• 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	• Dissemination Plan • Best Practices Guide • Training sessions	• Council identified as a convener among 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	• Enhanced use of gender informed tools/ resources among organizations that work with women who experience violence

LOGIC MODEL CONTINUED

STRATEGIES/ APPROACHES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS (2012-13)	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (2013-14)	IMPACTS (2015 AND BEYOND)
Objective 3: To enhance communication and collaboration with diverse service provider sectors to address diverse issues impacting women who experience violence				
• 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	• 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	• Workshop proceedings • Multi-sectoral action plan/Blueprint for addressing policy priorities • New funding source to move this work forward	• 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	• 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

5. INDICATORS FOR EVALUATION PLANNING

OUTPUT / DELIVERABLES	MONITORING EVALUATION PRIORITIES

• Organizing people and building support – internal to organization, alliances/partnerships, connections to policy influencers
• Information – accessing and interpreting data, contextual information, opinion, etc.
• Communications/marketing
• Identifying funding
	Outputs from Logic Model:
	
	• 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
	• Recommendations developed
	• Service providers undertake a collaborative initiative
	• Product verified
	• Product refined
	• Dissemination plan
	• Organizational resources to engage in public policy
	    ▫ Best Practices Guide
	    ▫ Technical expertise related to public policy
	• New funding source to move this work forward
	• Evaluation report on piloting
	• Pilot related tools/resources
	• Organizational commitment to public policy
	• Relationships with non-profits, government agencies, and policymakers
	• Communication skills and infrastructure
	• Decision-making structures

Accountability	• Effective co-ordination efforts • Project allies engaged • Council more engaged in this project than others • Partnership agreement • Implementation plan • Training sessions • Workshop proceedings • Multi-sectoral action plan/"Blueprint" for addressing policy priorities

6. OUTCOME EVALUATION PRIORITES

FORMULATING SOLUTIONS	
• Agenda Setting • Policy design and development	• Policy agenda established • Policy barriers identified and articulated so that they are understood by organizations serving women who experience violence • Clearly defined policy context • Organizations serving women who experience violence have a clear understanding of the policy related barriers faced by women • Policy barriers contextualized so that the organizations serving women who experience violence can more effectively use the tools developed • Increased understanding of the issues • Stakeholders conversant with key arguments and issues

ADVOCACY − INFLUENCING POLITICAL CHOICES	
• Convening	• Agreement among service providers regarding actions/ recommendations related to the project • 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
• Mobilization of support for change	• Changes in awareness • Changes in knowledge • Changes in skills
• Lobbying decision influencers	• Changes in partnerships • Some stakeholders move ahead with some of the recommendations • Ad hoc committee of strategic policy thinkers among service providers • Council identified as a convener among the organizations serving women who experience violence • Service providers have a collaborative table to identify on-going solutions to problems as they arise • 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

POLICY CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION	
• Indicators	• Successful pilot programs have begun to identify solutions to service and policy issues • Service providers and policy makers have a Blueprint for action • Changes in service practice(s)

7. 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
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	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	

8. EXAMPLES OF POLICY INTERSECTIONS

	INCOME SECURITY	HOUSING SECURITY	CUSTODY AND ACCESS	ACCESS TO SUPPORTS	FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION/ CRIMINALIZATION
Income Security	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. The Family Responsibility Office only enforces child support by order. Without 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.		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.		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. 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.

	INCOME SECURITY	HOUSING SECURITY	CUSTODY AND ACCESS	ACCESS TO SUPPORTS	FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION/ CRIMINALIZATION
Housing Security	To qualify for affordable housing a woman needs to give up equity/savings.	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). 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.	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. 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. If a woman leaves a DV situation and leaves her kids behind with her partner as the sole caregiver for a long period of time while she is in the shelter, it may affect her custody outcomes.		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
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 undermine child custody determination and sole custody results.	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 physically safe).	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. 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. 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 this is 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.

EXAMPLES OF POLICY INTERSECTIONS CONTINUED

	INCOME SECURITY	HOUSING SECURITY	CUSTODY AND ACCESS	ACCESS TO SUPPORTS	FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION/ CRIMINALIZATION
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. 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.	Going to a shelter or affordable housing requires a woman to leave the support of community and to give up her matrimonial home. Without access to a lawyer a woman who is married to her partner may not be able to fight for her right to exclusive possession of the matrimonial home.	A woman who has been dependent on her spouse may not be able to afford a lawyer to represent her custody case. If there is joint custody and the woman is trying to access supports for her child (e.g., child counselling) 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.	Drastic cuts in legal aid funding mean 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. 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.	

	INCOME SECURITY	HOUSING SECURITY	CUSTODY AND ACCESS	ACCESS TO SUPPORTS	FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION/ CRIMINALIZATION
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 impact the outcomes of her case. Gender analysis suggests the program has not been set up to address women's participation needs. 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.		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. 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. A woman whose H&C claim is not approved and who is being deported may lose her children to her partner.	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 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. 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. 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.	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 permanent resident status who are charged risk deportation. 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. 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 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.

9. COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Methodology

Service providers and advocates working on violence against women issues are increasingly discussing and documenting the impact of policies upon women. The literature review shared some of the work that has been generated and describes how policy and systemic issues intersect and conflict to impact women who experience violence. The themes highlighted in the literature review were brought forward for discussion with diverse stakeholders including women with personal experiences of violence, service providers (e.g., shelters, health service organizations, counselling services), policy makers and advocates. In total five semi-structured focus groups and 8 interviews were undertaken. Please refer to Appendix A for the list of organizations that participated in the consultations. Please refer to Appendix B for the focus group/interview guide. The consultation findings are presented by stakeholder group and describe a) the barriers that impact women's ability to create safety, and b) emerging directions/ideas for addressing these barriers.

Women with Lived Experience

The following themes emerged through discussions with women with lived experience who were asked to discuss the barriers that impact their ability to create safety in their lives.

- Legal issues
    - Lack of affordability of good quality legal services
    - Women cannot afford lawyers to appeal decisions (e.g., by ODSP)
    - Health is impacted negatively as legal cases drag on
    - Children are negatively impacted as legal cases drag on
    - Partners have money to get good legal support and manipulate the system
    - There is re -victimization of women by judges who don't believe they come across as 'victims' in their statements; penalized for being strong
    - Judges should be providing the box of safety, but create unsafe situations
- Discrimination
    - By police, social services
- Inconsistent practices by providers
    - Service providers can be useful (e.g., referrals) or can be judgmental
    - Police may or may not take on a case personally
    - Relationship with crown attorneys – lots of communication issues
    - Victim protection program may re-victimize women or can be very supportive
    - No training for police officers or lawyers or judges about the intersections of issues that women are facing (mental health, addiction, violence)
    - Inequitable service delivery; it is all about luck of the draw; if you are in the know you will get what you need; if you have a "big mouth" you will be heard; women who have been abused have often lost their 'voice' and are not heard
    - Information is not available to all women; especially marginalized groups, newcomer groups (e.g., in ESL classes)
    - Sometimes a woman is in a better position representing herself in the court system
- Lack of collaboration among the courts and among service providers
    - No link between the family courts and the criminal courts; can end of up being in 4 courts which are not connected (e.g., also immigration and labour)
- Support of family
    - In some communities if a woman admits she is abused she is punished by the family who will support the husband and potentially his claim to children

- Access to information
    - Women are dependent on police or lawyers or service providers and end up not getting the information they need or getting it too late
- Access to mental health services and supports
    - Supports for women with mental health and addiction issues is not available
    - There is a lack of access to counselling services that don't 'end when the therapy ends' but also think about next steps for women (e.g., employment training or linkages to volunteer opportunities)
    - Takes years to resolve custody and legal issues and it wears women down; its endless and non-stop
    - There is a lack of access to the right service provider in the right place at the right time (e.g., counsellors in hospitals, therapists in shelters)
    -
- Access to income and employment
    - Stress from poverty and abuse leads to depression and it is hard to get out of that
    - Employment is a key indicator of safety
    - Loss of income earnings is a significant issue; victimization of women
    - Bill 168 is a good piece of policy but employers do not know how to use it and it is putting more women at risk of losing employment/income
- Intersections and re-victimization
    - Family services/housing and women's access to income
        - CAS requires 2 bedrooms for two children, which is not affordable for women; women in shelters are on the priority list, but those who are not will not be able to access the housing the need to get their children back

Emerging Directions/Ideas:

The following are the solutions that women with lived experience identified as interventions that could address some of the barriers that prevent or impact their ability to create safety in their lives.

- Groups for women (peers) to work through the issues before they become explosive; before relationships are abusive; women's lived experience is important
- Awareness raising programs and empowerment programs for women
- Access to bursaries and education to support women with on-going training
- Advocate-based programs: those programs that support women to navigate systems where there is a significant power imbalance (e.g., courts, housing)
- Counselling/mental health programs for women (e.g., in shelters)
- Transitional support program for women who have left the shelter
- Families (not the woman) need to be at the centre of the intervention, especially for immigrant communities
- Engagement with the community (e.g., mosques, churches)
- Legal information that is written in clear language
- Police need to enforce restraining orders and stop dual charging women
- Training for employers so that a woman can talk about needing go to court without risk of losing her employment
- More consistent and coordinated approach to service delivery (e.g., with health care providers) in order to address the continuum of violence from prevention to treatment and safety

Consultations with Service Providers (Health)

The following themes emerged through discussions with service providers who were asked to discuss the policies and policy intersections that impact women who have experienced violence as they aim to create safety in their lives:

- Special populations are particularly impacted by policy and policy intersections:
  - Mental health/addictions/trauma
  - Aboriginal women
  - LGBTQ – no resources for this population
  - Sex trade workers – are considered outside of the law and to not have rights
  - Immigrant women – lack of awareness and understanding about rights and resources
  - Non-status women
- Violence against women is a cross-sectoral issue that touches:
  - Health (all health sectors including public health, hospitals, primary care)
  - Men and boys
  - Children (involvement of Children's Services and Family Courts)
  - Housing
  - Police and legal services (lawyers, judges, police)
  - Employment
- There is a lack of a consistent approach to working with women in the health sector
  - Training - lack of training for providers and inconsistent training when it does happen
  - Guidelines for screening are not consistently used or applied
  - Providers are not comfortable dealing with culture, language, religion
  - Inconsistent approach to involving police and children's services - some hospitals call police if woman is abused and some call only if a child is involved
  - Lack of consistency leads to lack of confidence in service delivery and the competence of service providers
  - Not all women who go to hospitals get flagged to social work – within a single hospital or across hospitals
- Hospital policies and priorities are a barrier to serving women
  - Hospitals want to move people through ERs quickly; hospitals get funded based on achieving targets in this area
  - Specific guidelines regarding who gets a hospital stay which exclude women who experience violence
  - Policies become an excuse for not dealing with the issue
- Bill 168, PHIPA and documentation lead hospitals to become focused on risk management at the expense of service delivery sometimes

Emerging Directions/Ideas:

The following are the solutions that service providers identified as interventions that could address some of the barriers that impact women who experience violence to create safety in their lives:

- Development of Guidelines for Health Service Providers
  - Development of public health guidelines
  - Best practice guidelines – the RNAO is working on this

- Safety planning guidelines for health practitioners (separate from screening guidelines)
    - Safety planning needs to be informed by consultation with women and service providers
- Discharge guidelines (including safety planning, information resources and referrals to shelters)
- Documentation/charting guidelines for health practitioners that will protect women
- Training for service providers
- Hospital Response
    - Beds dedicated to safety planning in hospital
    - Public education in hospitals/health facilities: by doing this you can educate the whole community or focus on specific groups such as newcomers, youth, etc.
    - Wrap-around services: as soon as woman presents in emergency she can access a case management worker to support her through the system (e.g., referenced TCAT); focus on case management
        - Increase women's access to information inside of hospitals (prevention, safety planning, referral resources and community supports)
    - Connection and collaboration between hospitals/health care/public health and social workers, shelters (24/7) (e.g., Toronto emergency has access to social workers)
        - This is needed so that health care providers do not feel like they need to resolve this issue for women
- More centralized approach to link women to the system (i.e. one intake into the shelter system)
- Non-court ordered programs for men
- Community meetings to raise awareness
- Programs for boys; programs for girls (self-esteem)

Consultation with Service Providers (Shelter and Support Services)

The following themes emerged through discussions with service providers who were asked to discuss the policies and policy intersections that impact women who have experienced violence as they aim to create safety in their lives:

- Special populations are particularly impacted by policy and policy intersections:
    - Non-status women end up being stuck longer in shelters; not allowed to be on welfare or social housing because it will impact their claim
- Shelters are not consistent in their practices:
    - Not all shelters automatically involve the police
    - Women do not always know that police have been called by shelters
- There is not consistent application of mandatory charging policy:
    - Police are not sure who to charge especially if the woman has a prior charge or does not speak English
    - Police are not always using translators
- Mandatory charging touches many parts of a woman's life:
    - Can lead to dual charging and the criminalization of women
    - Impacts refugee claims for women and families
    - Impacts women's access to income and employment
    - Results in involvement of children's services

- Access to legal services is one of the biggest barriers to women being able to address violence in her life:
  - Legal Aid is impossible to access because of the restrictive criteria:
    - Cannot be accessed if a woman owns a home
    - Harder to access if woman already has charges
  - Legal Aid is harder to access for immigrant women who do not speak English
- There is not a consistent approach to case management within or across organizations:
  - Not all shelters have a good relationship with central intake at children's' services
  - All organizations are doing case management but not linking with each other in terms of this work
  - Not all are doing case management the same way because this falls upon counsellors who have time constraints
  - Three different people can work with a woman and all hand in reports
  - Little communication between counsellor, housing workers and policy makers
- The Housing Service Act is a barrier to women who are trying to create safety:
  - Women need to demonstrate proof of co-habitation to access housing
  - Women need to sign a declaration that they will permanently leave the abuser
  - Restrictive criteria: women who are stalked or harassed do not have access
  - Women often do not apply for housing within the time period (3 months in Toronto) because they are dealing with other issues (i.e., children's services, family court)
  - Women without status cannot get housing and end up with long shelter stays
  - Women who are not in a shelter are not prioritized for housing; de-facto women need to give up their homes to get housing

Emerging Directions/Ideas:

The following are the solutions that service providers identified as interventions that could address some of the barriers that impact women who experience violence to create safety in their lives:

- Replicate programs such as the Transitional Housing Support Program and the Family Court Support Worker Program
  - Workers in place to help women navigate the system
- Increase the collaboration between VAW providers and other sectors
- Collaborative agreements between family services (CAS) and VAW (shelters)
- Create a centralized domestic violence team to respond to women who need help 24/7
  - Team can be called upon by hospitals, police, etc.
  - Would ensure a consistent response
- Create initiatives that draw upon peer support models
- Enhance women's access to women's groups
- Enhance training for VAW workers
  - Case management for shelter workers and counsellors
  - Documentation
- Focus on increasing access to daycare for women, particularly those who are not in shelters as they are not prioritized
- Focus on reducing jurisdictional inconsistencies (e.g., access to welfare and housing)

Consultation with Policy Makers and other Key Informants

The following themes emerged through discussions with key informants who were asked to discuss the policies and policy intersections that impact women who have experienced violence as they aim to create safety in their lives:

Special populations are particularly impacted by policy and policy intersections:

- Young women
- South Asian, East African, Caribbean
- Addictions and mental health
- Aboriginal community – very distinct issues
- Racialized communities – impacted by discriminatory practices/implementation of policies such as mandatory charging
- Sex trade workers – at high risk of experiencing violence as they are seen as outside the system (i.e., no rights, protections)

- While some policies are positive and should not be eliminated, their implementation is problematic
  - Bill 168
    - Everyone is asking for a criminal reference check
      ◊ Because of Mandatory/Dual charging women's access to employment is threatened
  - Privacy legislation
    - It is not clear whether it trumps Bill 168?
    - Privacy has long been held as a barrier to collaboration among service providers/ sectors
  - Mandatory Charging often results in dual charging
    - Discourages women from calling the police
    - Discourages advocates from involving the police
    - Impacts are broad:
      ◊ CAS involvement and long-term custody issues
      ◊ Employment threatened
      ◊ Family reunification – immigration claims
    - Police are not trained to use discretion properly

- Screening women in health care settings is not a consistent practice
  - Studies have shown the benefits as neutral
  - Practitioners are discouraged from screening as they do not have the training or resources to support women if they do ask

- Housing is a key issue for women
  - There is a need for second stage housing for women leaving the shelter system
  - Legislation that requires women to give up their homes in order to get subsidized housing is a problem

- Women cannot afford legal services
  - Women cannot navigate multiple courts that are not connected

- Income security is a key issue for women
  - Social assistance rates are too low
  - Social assistance regulations are problematic, require women to give up their assets to get help (even if only temporary help)

- Both the policy and service delivery levels operate in silos without coordination or collaboration
  - Collaboration is limited by differing organizational mandates
  - Women cannot navigate the system or get what they need

Emerging Directions/Ideas:

The following are the solutions that key informants identified as interventions that could address some of the barriers that impact women who experience violence to create safety in their lives:

- Create a HUB for women who are engaged in violence/justice system
  - Toronto needs a HUB for women's services
  - Virtual HUB – not common roof model (e.g., re-arrange where workers are situated; women should not need to get to the right service; workers should be where women are)
  - Engage healthcare
- Pilot a housing project
  - 2nd stage or transitional housing, post-shelter, with on-site counselling
- Create alternatives to prison/charging
  - Restorative Justice Program as an alternative to prison and to address the court backlog
  - Prevent women from having their children removed
- Develop a collaborative case management project to review all mandatory charges/dual charges
  - Court diversion program
  - Reduce prosecutions
  - Case management/collaborative approach
- Undertake a legal education initiative
- Carry out training of employers regarding Bill 168
- Increased collaboration, coordination and communication within the sector
  - Work more SMARTLY
  - Encourage professional development across all sectors
  - Engage healthcare
  - Through the Violence Against Women Network (VAWN), the shelter system has identified and is moving forward on three strategic priorities (mental health and addictions, child welfare and immigration) and is communicating its activities to other networks to ensure that efforts are not duplicated
- Focus on special populations
  - Immigrant and refugee women
  - Women with disabilities
  - Women with mental health or addictions or concurrent issues
  - Young women
    - Pilot an initiative with schools regarding healthy relationships
- Continue with legal reform/policy and legislative initiatives
  - Advocate for Violence Against Women legislation
  - Focus on witness protection program

Summary of Consultation Findings

Overall, the consultation phase validated the literature review themes related to the 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 prevents 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; and
  - Women with mental health and addictions issues.

The consultations also identified the following as 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:

A. Improve access to services and improve 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

B. 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)

C. 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

10. 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 for 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 Against Women Network (VAWN) to provide training on violence, mental health and substance use for shelter workers				X	
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	

EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES ADDRESSING POLICY ISSUES CONTINUED

INITIATIVES	INCOME SECURITY	HOUSING SECURITY	CUSTODY AND ACCESS	ACCESS TO SUPPORTS	FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION / CRIMINALIZATION
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 a 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
Making Connections: When Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Substance Use Problems Co-occur is an initiative that 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 resident status and ultimately be deported. Exemptions exist only for women who can "prove" violence					X
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

11. BLUEPRINT EVALUATION REPORT

Executive Summary

To date, the Policies Matter Project has produced valuable insights into policy intersections affecting women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence. The policy action plan, in addition to a web-based tool, provides a significant knowledge base from which to design interventions for the women's service sector and for government policy.

The Blueprint report, web-based tool and action plan were produced primarily through the extraordinary effort of the Management Team, a small group of committed sector leaders. In addition, key stakeholders from nine other organizations had opportunities at every juncture to contribute as part of the Advisory Committee. Finally, in May 2013, 60 representatives from the Violence Against Women sector joined in the Blueprint Launch Forum to finalize the action plan and point toward the next phase of the project.

So far, stakeholders engaged in the process report that the results of this project are a remarkable achievement. Moving forward, the most important issues that remain are how the web-based tool will be finalized and maintained in an ever-changing environment, and how the learning produced can move the resulting action plan forward in improving collaboration and coordination in the sector, as well as the operations of individual organizations.

While the web-based tool as it has emerged is helpful in illustrating the current policy context, it will require additional resources to promote, update and utilize it for change. The key organizations that have been involved to this point will be vital to the effectiveness of this work.

The learning produced through this Project represents a remarkable opportunity to move the Violence Against Women sector forward in collaboration with other sectors, and with new vision and understanding. The members of the Management Team, and especially the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (Woman-ACT), are now positioned to seize this opportunity and begin bringing service providers and policy makers together to communicate about how systemic policy issues negatively affect women's lived experience. With continued work, the Blueprint will improve the lives of women by highlighting leverage points for effective policy intervention.

A. Introduction

Eko Nomos was contracted as the evaluation consultant at the beginning of the Policies Matter Project in September 2011. This report provides a summary of key activities and findings based on the involvement of Mary Ferguson, the principal of the company. Throughout this project, gender-based analysis was used as a framework for all planning, implementation and evaluation activities.

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 producing/impacting these differences. Gender-based analysis also examines the intersection of gender with other factors such as income, race, age and religion.

The project team included representatives from three partnering organizations (Elizabeth Fry Toronto, Barbra Schlifer Legal Clinic and the Woman Abuse Council Toronto), and the two consultants working on this project. The Policies Matter Project's aim was to produce gender-based information about the impact of policies and programs on women who experience violence. The long term goal is that this information will support more informed decision-making by both policy makers and service providers. This will result in efficient and effective programs and services that are responsive to the realities of women's lives.

B. Role of the Evaluation Consultant:

This Policies Matter Project was a developmental project and, as such, required an evaluation approach that would help to shape the project over the two years.

"Developmental evaluation refers to long-term, partnering relationships between evaluators and those engaged in innovative initiatives and development. The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change."[9]

This developmental approach allowed the evaluation consultant to become part of the Blueprint team as it moved through the various phases of the project from conceptualization to implementation and closure.

The evaluation process was founded on an understanding of the need to develop a long-term relationship with the members of the project team, enabling feedback at all critical points in the project's development. Thus, the role of the evaluation consultant was to:

- Ensure that gender-based analysis was used throughout
- Facilitate the development of a theory of change, logic model and evaluation plan
- Monitor project progress and process evaluation activities at various points in the project
- Oversee the implementation of the evaluation plan
- Provide input into a literature review
- Identify data collection methods
- Oversee the definition of policy implications
- Oversee the definition of priorities
- Provide reports
- Liaise with the project coordinator consultant
- Attend all meetings as required

C. Phases of the Evaluation Process

Phase 1: Evaluation Planning

The Policies Matter Project proposal to Status of Women laid out the broad strokes of the project, but there were many unanswered questions about the scope of the project, and the population of women on which the project would focus.

In any project, it is important to develop a clear theory of change, logic model, outcomes and indicators for evaluation planning and evaluation outcome priorities (see Appendices 3 – 6). These together provide a clear picture of what the project is aiming to achieve so that the evaluation work remains focused and relevant. Eko Nomos facilitated a series of meetings with the project team to develop these documents. Sonja Nerad from SN Management provided coordination and research services throughout the project.

The literature review and consultative research conducted by Ms. Nerad provided valuable information that was used by the team. The team engaged in ongoing collaborative analysis of research data and other learning. This allowed the project to evolve and decisions to be made along the way to strengthen the outcomes. For example, the Theory of Change that was developed in the fall of 2011 was reviewed and revised in the summer of 2012 to better reflect and guide the project toward its successful conclusion.

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9 Learning and Evaluation for Trail Builder Initiatives in Vibrant Communities, Caledon Institute, Spring 2005.

Phase 2: Evaluation Methodology and Activities Throughout

The following chart provides a summary of the evaluation activities, timeline, approach and summary notes on when the activities were completed.

ACTIVITY AND DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE	APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES	NOTES
Briefing and Detailed Work Planning	July/August 2011		Completed by August 2011
Liaison and Meetings	Throughout	• During Phase 1 • During Phase 2	Consultant attended all but 2 meetings of the Management Committee and 1 meeting of the Advisory Committee
Develop Project Theory of Change and Logic Model	October 2011	• Meetings with Management Team and SN Management • Preparation of Theory of Change, Logic Model and Evaluation Plans • Finalize Documents	Completed by December 2011
Evaluation framework and work plan finalized	December 2011	• Developed using base documents produced by the team	Completed by December 2011
Focus group evaluation design and analysis	February 2012	• Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis	Completed as events were held
Priority Setting Workshops evaluation design	May 2012	• Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis	Completed as events were held
Output Monitoring Completed	April 2012	• Quarterly Review at Management Meetings	Done throughout
Year 1 Evaluation Report	May 2012	• Evaluation documents included in report	Completed May 2012
Forum Evaluation	April 2013	• Design • Data Collection by coordinator • Analysis	Completed May 2013
Interviews with Management Team and	June 2013	• Interviews with the management Team	Completed June 2013
Final Meeting with the Advisory Committee	June 2013	• Final Meeting with Advisory Committee Members and Management Meeting	Completed June 2013

Phase 3: Closure of the Evaluation Process

Towards the end of the Policies Matter Project, the evaluation consultant collected information about the Launch Forum, documented the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Group, and conducted third-party interviews with members of the Management Committee and the consultants. The following provides a summary of the results from these three final activities.

D. Stakeholder Forum Evaluation

Forum attendees were invited to fill out an on-line survey in order to gauge the Forum's effectiveness and value. In total, 14 attendees completed the survey. When asked whether the Forum met their expectations, the majority of respondents (83%) indicated that the Forum met or exceeded their expectations. None reported that it was disappointing. This indicates that, overall, the Forum was a positive experience for attendees.

When asked to comment on the "best thing" about the Forum, six of the respondents indicated that 'networking', or otherwise being able to meet and connect with other people in the sector, was the most positive outcome of the day. In addition, seven respondents made reference to the panel discussion as being helpful in providing access to "leadership" or "experts" in the field. Finally, a few respondents reported that working in small groups was "enlivening", and "provided an opportunity to work together".

When it came to "key take-aways", respondent answers were somewhat more diverse. While three respondents made reference to the potential for web-based development, most other responses were less concrete. Nevertheless, four respondents made comments related to the "diversity" of the Forum as being especially important; it is clear that simply providing a space for individuals to learn and begin "collaborating" was "heartening". Finally, four respondents made reference to some policy issue as being one of their key take-aways. One respondent related that they had learned that, "women's issues are mainly due to low income". Another made reference to the "keen political insights" provided by all participants. One respondent made direct reference to the "Charter cases that are in progress", and expressed a desire to receive ongoing updates about them.

When asked what questions they had remaining, respondents primarily made reference to either "next steps" or "collaboration". Six respondents expressed concern with what would happen following the project, in terms of "implementation", "next steps", or "continuing the work". Three respondents made reference to "linking with others", or the practicalities of "collaboration" as a remaining question. One respondent thought that the framework could have been explained better. Another asked, "How are clients engaged in VAW (violence against women) advocacy? What community development approaches are being utilized to have women engaged, and in time, leading several initiatives?"

When asked about current policy interventions not captured by the Forum, most respondents (79%) chose not to respond, or responded that there were none. The one response that did make reference to a policy intervention was in the area of "financial capability and inclusion". This respondent commented that there are "huge gender connections and a need for further research" in this area. One respondent found the question unclear.

In the final question, respondents were asked to identify individuals or institutions that "might want to hear about the Policies Matter Project". Again, most (64%) respondents replied in the negative, or not at all. "Younger populations" and "volunteers in the sector" were identified generally. One respondent commented that it "would have been good to have CWF there", when in fact, a representative of CWF was there. Other groups or institutions that attendees identified as potentially having an interest in this project included:

- Springtide Resources
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
- Multicultural Women Against Rape
- Native Women's Resource Centre
- Newcomer Women's Services

E. Management Team and Advisory Committee Final Meeting

On June 10, 2013 there was a final meeting of the Advisory Committee, the Management Team and consultants. The meeting was digitally audio-recorded. The following section provides a summary of evaluative comments and next step suggestions arising from that meeting.

Evaluative Comments:

About the project

This project was, "*an experiment in new ways of convening.*" Moving forward, the transparency of this project ensures that we will see all the small victories that stem from it; "*It's accountable, it's ethical. I love it.*"

About the Blueprint Forum

The Forum was perceived as a first step toward continuing effective collaborative work.

"Certainly the issue of poverty reduction came up… if we could simply get the next phase of the poverty reduction targets to focus on women, we would have achieved a very, very big victory, because at the moment they are not putting a gender lens on it… [That talk] was very stimulating to the group, and that's one of the reasons you see that specific phrase around poverty reduction coming up in those results."

About the web-based Tool

All the feedback on the web tool was positive, in particular with respect to the design and the designer. Expectations were exceeded in this regard.

- *"It's impressive for me, it's like 'wow.' It's so accessible. You make it so accessible and right there."*
- *"It gives me goose bumps."*
- *"Look what you've done with this. This is amazing,"*
- *"It's an excellent way to show people how complex are the issues."*
- *"What a treasure."*
- *"...This can and will support organizations to independently identify their strategic primary instructions."*
- *"We can use this to avoid repeating work already completed and instead put resources where they can be most effective."*
- *"...The Blueprint tool comes in really handy in terms of making people aware."*
- *"This will help us to work with our own agencies to join in the work of the coalition."*
- *"This is going to change the landscape of policy."*
- *"This tool will empower people to contact government offices and ensure that they speak to and follow their policies."*
- *"This is amazing. I never imagined that this was going to be that good."*
- *"I think that it is an excellent piece of work that has to be promoted."*

Suggested Next Steps

"There are three things to do immediately: Governance plan, dissemination plan, and prep for a November forum."

Governance

"Something that could be easily accessible or updated in house... at least until we get some additional support for it to continue in a bigger, broader way."

The questions of governance that need to be answered include:

- Who takes control?
- Under what terms?
- Who is authorized to post material?
- Who is authorized to access material?
- Are there crowd-sourcing options, and what are they?
- Who will perform the administration tasks?
- Where will the funding come from?

Dissemination

"So what's the dissemination plan? [It needs to be] reasonable and feasible, given the resources that are available to us, and where we can leverage existing networks."

"...Part of the beauty of this kind of tool is that we don't have to be the sole promoter of it, that the whole idea is that it takes on a life of its own and becomes communal property."

The following organizations and networks were identified for potential dissemination and continued engagement:

- OCASI
- CLEO
- CAS VAW
- VAWN
- WomanACT
- Provincial Associations
- Elizabeth Fry Chapters
- Canadian Association of Women's Shelters
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Women's World Congress

Plan for a Violence Prevention Month November 2013 Forum

"The whole purpose of this [project] was to give us some kind of collective presence, because we're all disparately doing things, and if we have a forum and then followed it up with a lobby at Queens Park, and we handpicked a couple of things and we could brief a couple of receptive ministers or even the Premier herself on these areas of impact… I think the visual is really impactful - and maybe we will have made it."

Forum activities may include:

- Prepare a presentation of new developments
- Discussion and analysis as to what needs changing
- A place to review and update policies
- Opportunity to visually engage provincial funders
- Time to decide on collective advocacy issues: where efforts are, where they should be, where they can best be focused, where to align with others
- A sector meeting, revisiting current priorities before moving forward
- Reactivate the VAW group "*working in the intersection of justice*" to participate in WomanACT-hosted forums
- Put a gendered lens on lobbies that need them, finding allies in other sectors
- Developing a pre-election strategy
- Preparation to bring issues forward to the inter-ministerial committee

F. Project Team Interviews

The Policies Matter Project provided an opportunity for the 5 members of the project team to engage in a developmental process. All members agreed that the way the team worked together was unique, and warranted evaluation. The evaluation consultant thus engaged a third party to conduct interviews with each of the team members as a way of closing the process and gathering perspectives. The following provides a summary of the collective assessment learning resulting from these interviews.

Evaluative Comments

Design:

Overall, interviewees liked the model of working together as a team with the combination of the Management Committee, evaluator, and coordinator. Comments included, *"the committee works well together and the consultants are professional"* and *"the design works well"*.

One of the first meetings was about commitment, realities of hours etc.: "*We developed Terms of Reference to better understand the commitment of each organization – we all knew our roles and tasks from the very beginning.*" The Policies Matter Project design was an "*iterative process… the proposal was vague, which made it challenging. There was enough there to get going, and we knew what the first component would be. As it was undertaken, we were able to figure out what the other components would look like and put in place the systems and processes needed. [The] design came out of the Management team and consultants... 5 of us did the detailed design… once the design was done, it was quite effective.*"

In summary, the Management team expressed satisfaction that, while there was initial flexibility in the scope and responsibilities of the project, the iterative process allowed the individual team-members to work closely together and develop the process organically.

Engagement of the Team:

The level of engagement was seen as one of the strengths of this project:

"The Management team was incredibly engaged."

"They also know the context well, have strong relationships within the sector and made key activities of the project happen through their networks."

"[The] analysis and dynamics of that group was extraordinary… [This] led to the success of the project."

"Everybody made [engagement] a priority… there was work and analysis going on that you find very rarely."

The Advisory Committee and other key stakeholders, however, were seen to be less engaged; many stakeholders in this process were "*very busy… [sometimes] women over-commit*". Advisory Committee members may not have been equally committed because, "*[their work is] higher level, [and] less involved in the day to day*". In addition, "*though less engaged, many Advisory Committee members were responsive and would follow up outside of meetings, providing input.*"

The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto was at the centre of the team: "*the ED and 2 Board members who formed the Management Committee were very engaged. The rest of the board was very interested… [and while there] wasn't the best turn out with the one meeting, [this was] not indicative of the project necessarily… they are revitalizing.*"

"More peripherally, people participated, [but were] not necessarily engaged… [Yet,] the consultations had good participation – during those events, people were very focused and interested." The project engaged with a diverse cross-section of people; *"[those with] lived experience, different kinds of women, service providers, policy-makers, experts. [The project] definitely focused on immigrants and newcomers."*

It is clear that stakeholders and participants in this project had differing levels of engagement. While the Management Team was deeply engaged, and worked very closely together, the Advisory Committee appears to have taken a less active role in conducting the project. That is, the Advisory Committee members appear to have acted more individually in providing additional knowledge, experience and input on the ideas, findings and collaborative work that the Management Committee produced.

Objectives

When asked about the objectives of the project, all but one of the objectives were perceived as having been exceeded, achieved or mostly achieved

1. Conduct a gender-based analysis and needs assessment to identify institutional and other barriers to women's safety, particularly newcomer/immigrant women, with an emphasis on involving the women:

- Achieved (2)   - Mostly achieved (2

Robust policy analysis produced a living document that is in the process of being updated for a third time; policies and legislation are constantly changing.

2. Organize and co-ordinate a focused discussion within 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:

- Achieved (1)   - Mostly Achieved (3)

This occurred in a variety of settings through an extensive consultation process with women with lived experience, service providers, Advisory Committee meetings, at the Management Team level, at the May 16 Forum, and with the Project team. The team took "*a whole bunch of steps to get there… [It] had to happen iteratively… with different groups, as it's a complex issue.*"

3. Develop a Blueprint for Action that provides VAW stakeholders, including service providers and policy makers with a roadmap of initiatives addressing policy issues:

- Exceeded (2)   - Mostly achieved (2)

The Blueprint "*illustrated the collective impact of different policies and legislation on women. The tool presents this dramatically.*" The result was, "*way beyond what we imagined… [It] ended up with a document and the on-line tool.*"

The term "*roadmap*" is debatable because there is no one clear path; "*at the beginning [we] didn't know what it would look like, [but] developing a tool that could be useful… [We were] very, very happy to see that [and] received only very good feedback. The group's opinions are hopeful in terms of how they can use it – you can see all the intersections – it gives you goose bumps. The fact that they can click and see quick and easy how this is impacting their clients – makes it easier to be understood by funders and policy-makers.*"

4. Identify one collaborative project to pilot with organizations that work with women who experience violence:

- Exceeded (3)   - Mostly Achieved (1)

There are already two new projects, and there are likely more that will come out of the May 16 Forum. The two current collaborative projects have secured funding to support implementation. These aren't Policies Matter Projects specifically, but are illustrative of how the project incubated ideas, and avenues for the pursuit of change: "*There will be more as the website goes live and people take ownership of it.*"

5. Engage the service provider community in the learning process:

-               Achieved (2)   - Mostly achieved (2)

The process of gathering information during this project resulted in engagement on the part of those providing information – "*they provided input, learned something and contributed.*" This was also a main outcome of the May 16 Forum. The information and tool coming out of the project was completed only as a result of the feedback and discussion that took place at the Forum. It is expected that service providers will be engaged "*more in the next phase.*" There is also the ongoing challenge of finding resources to support this ongoing learning.

6. 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:

   - Mostly Achieved (1)[10]   - Mostly not achieved (2)

The tool and information gathered has created the platform for this to happen in the next phase of the project: "*Now that we have the information and tool we can move to including them, [and] set goals for addressing those policies that are putting women at risk.*"

Gender Approach

A gender-based approach was the "*perspective through which we looked at all of the activities of the project.*" The Management Team *"looked at policy and how it impacted women, how the gender of someone makes the impact different [in terms of] policy, systems, lives. The matrix document lays that out really clearly… contextualized why this report, why gender gets forgotten, why to do this kind of analysis… [I am] pleased with that outcome.*"

The analysis was clearly undertaken with a dedicated gender-based perspective and the tool and report are presented as such.

Policy Agenda and Blueprint for Action

There was general agreement that a policy agenda was brought forward at the May 16 Forum, during which the participants identified three priorities. High-level actions were identified, "*[but] we need to figure out how to move forward with them.*"

Gaps identified were:

- Organizations serving aboriginal women
- Policy-makers
- "*Robustness*" of the action plan
- Strategic analysis
- No ownership of the agenda and action plan; "*who will keep it going? How [can we] create collective ownership?*"

"The Action Plan identifies a number of possibilities, particularly around bringing VAW and poverty reduction sectors together using gender-based analysis. [There is] similar energy around housing. The work to date creates a good foundation upon which to build outcomes."

Partnerships and Collaborations

The team identified a number of partnerships and collaborations including:

- With the broader human services systems:
  - The project brought people together who don't work together often, or at least regularly: "*Communication has started.*"
  - A platform now exists to enhance communications. "*The project and product legitimizes the reality of these issues and the capacity of the sector.*"
- Other partnerships strengthened:
  - Between members of Management Team, BSCC and Elizabeth Fry.
  - VAW and refugee sector (OCASI)
  - WomanACT is in conversation about potential partnerships
- Engaged stakeholders: "*Can all see themselves and their role in the sector; came together at the Forum, and now in the priorities there is a clear priority for coordination within the sector.*"

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10 One of the interviewees was not at May 16 Forum and so couldn't respond.

Building Knowledge

Knowledge about women's safety and policy increased for all those involved in the project. We now have "*greater understanding of the complexity of policies and legislation impacting women. The tool provides a visual of how their work [in the] sector relates to the bigger picture of how women are impacted… [This] provides a path towards solutions.*" This knowledge production is seen as "*one of the biggest accomplishments of the project.*"

"Service providers have understood intuitively that women are facing multiple policy and legislation barriers, but the project took all the policy issues, collected them in one place, and dramatically presents the fact that policies are designed in isolation of each other and have a collective negative impact on women."

The results of this project allow "*individual women to see how the system affects their ability to get ahead… [They] may feel less personally to blame [as a result].*"

This project shows the "*usefulness of providing information as a means to create change*."

The service provider community talked of many "*ah-hah moments… [and] validation. The tool helped them to see why they work so hard and don't get very far; [to] see how systemic it is.*"

From interview responses, it is clear that the Policies Matter Project has enhanced the knowledge of both individual participants, and the sector at large. The Blueprint tool is perceived as a helpful intervention, allowing individuals a deeper understanding of complex, high-level policy interactions.

Next Steps/Recommendations

The team members had consistent agreement about key themes:

- Policies in and of themselves may or may not hurt women, but their collective impact is increasingly problematic

- The VAW sector will be effective only by engaging with people from other sectors; "*otherwise they just duplicate the work.*" Capacity for engagement and collaboration "*always boils down to relationships and a few key leaders who are committed at the strategic level and not getting stuck in the day-to-day.*" Sector leaders "*need to remind stakeholders of what we've committed to, and support that ongoing attention.*"

- Coordination, collaboration and integration are priorities.

- Management Committee: "*their priority needs to be putting some systems or structures in place to [prevent] the project [from] becoming static, [or] sitting on a shelf or website somewhere.*"

- "*Need to be intentional about using gender-based analysis in all activities and projects that develop out of this project.*"

- "*Need to realize that we are at the tip of the iceberg in understanding the policy context. The policy context is very complicated and is changing constantly.*"

The Web-Based Tool

- A need to finalize it and make sure that the tool is accessible; make it "*easy to use so that it can assist in continuing the discussion beyond, and equipping service providers*"

- Need to develop protocols around who can change it

- "*This site needs to be curated by a senior level person who understands the importance of this and can use it to galvanize the sector*"

- "*Who will take this work forward?*" Both leadership and accountability are needed

- The tool "*has the ability to become a provincial and federal site capable of influencing things in a very interesting way*"

- Key people must be engaged to move the Policy Agenda and Blueprint for Action forward

Role of WomanACT (Woman Abuse Council of Toronto) in the Next Phases of the Policies Matter Project

- Demonstrated leadership in this project; WomanACT, "*Has always been cross-sectoral [and] positioned itself as a bit of a hub around policy issues*"

- "*The community wants us to take leadership and be part of the bigger picture even more.*"

- Need to make sure that the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is adequately resourced for its role in the next phase of this work

- "*The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is in a position now that it can take the agenda forward*"

- "*Positioned itself to be the driver for this work; needs to assume that role and keep working effectively with stakeholders… that can be easier said than done; policy work is hard, long-term and labour-intensive*"

- "*So important for Woman Abuse Council of Toronto to position itself as a convener and facilitator of action, to support that cross-sectoral action*"

- "*Structure [of the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto] might look different than what it looked like before; we're going to develop task work groups [with] specific people working on specific issues*"

- Ought to be "*strategic about what we do and how we do it… our way of working is going to change… I believe we are ready to move into policy windows… we have a lot of supporters who want to work with us*"

- "*There are strong people on the Board, but is the structure conducive to it playing a key role? Are there enough active people on the council? Are they the right people to move it forward? Is there an opportunity to look at a redesign around these priorities as a sector with limited resources?*"

- "*Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is the only organization with a dedicated policy mandate. [One] would assume for that reason [that] stakeholders expect them to take a key role. This is the opportunity for the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto to figure out how to organize itself around these and take advantage of this huge opportunity*"

- "*Woman Abuse Council of Toronto needs to step up, go back to the funder to get more resources, seek support of specific decision-makers and other funders*"

Dissemination for Broader Engagement:

- "*Develop a communication strategy to engage the broader human services system and policy-makers*"

- Need a plan for strategic dissemination of the results of this project, *e.g., send to key ministers, stakeholders, bring results of this project to upcoming conferences*

- Priority setting that happened at Forum needs to be vetted through different groups of stakeholders; need to get more concrete and streamlined around moving those areas forward; there is no actual action plan

- Are there strategic policy thinkers among service providers?

- "*Project resulted in identification of clusters of people to work on areas of interest; hopefully connected by a common vision set out in the Blueprint*"

- "*Different stakeholders will take the lead on different parts… finish one and move on. [This] will result in people having a better capacity to think through policy*"

- "*[We] need an engagement plan... that is strategic*"

Concluding Comments

- There was consensus that the project moved the sector forward.

- The vision is refreshed, and people are focused; "*an opportunity to engage in critical issues.*"

- Primary strengths of the project include: Management Committee continuing to work on the project; members of the Management Committee having complementary skills, experience, background, and a shared commitment to ensuring it moves forward

- Weakness: the proposal wasn't well defined at the beginning, *"but allowed us to be creative which is necessary when working with such complex issues."*

- "*Primary strength is to recognize that we need to be part of the solution in addressing systemic issues, and that we have to be committed.*"

- "*It was awesome to be part of this conversation, to see people committed and willing to be part of the solution… refreshing to see that again. [I'm] very excited and happy.*"

- The project produced information that wasn't available before.

- "*Management Committee was made up of different kinds of people, which was helpful for a non-linear process. [The] people at the table were critical for success.*"

- "*The primary strength of the project was the articulation of the complexity of policies impacting women and identifying the five determinants of safety. These will resonate with lots of people… they'll be using those into the future.*"

G. Summary of Findings

Analysis of the Blueprint Forum Survey, the interviews and the discussion at the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Committee demonstrates that the Policies Matter Project has made a remarkable contribution to the VAW sector. A strong commitment from a core group of leaders has produced a new and innovative tool, the Blueprint Tool, for visualizing the diversity of conflicting policy and legislation that impacts the lived experience of women, and the work of those who serve them. This centralized knowledge bank is key to creating new opportunities for communication of and collaborative advocacy about policy issues that negatively impact women who experience or are at risk of experiencing violence.

While the initial guidelines for this work may have lacked clear focus, the iterative nature of the Management Committee's work resulted in a process that achieved, among other things, significant consultation across the sector, consensus-building and learning interactions across the human services system, and a very effective tool. These are all strong outcomes for the project.

It is clear, however, that the work begun by this project is not finished, and indeed requires ongoing management, facilitation and sector-wide consultation. Most importantly, the methods by which the Blueprint Tool will be managed in the future, and who shall be responsible for ensuring its continued accuracy and efficacy, remain to be determined. Further, there is a clear need to ensure, as work continues, that more stakeholders are engaged. While the core leadership of this project to date has resulted in a clear and effective illustration of priorities for the sector, these priorities must now be developed into a strategic action plan and communicated to key decision-makers in government, and throughout the VAW sector and the human services system.

H. Next Steps

1. In concert with the Advisory Committee and the Management Team, develop an accountability and management structure for the Blueprint Tool.

2. Engage a larger group of stakeholders in reviewing and refining the Blueprint Tool.

3. Approach identified stakeholder groups with opportunities for collaboration on focused projects in each priority area.

4. Develop a strategic action plan to address the priority areas identified and agreed upon at the Forum. This involves discussing ways in which identified priority areas may be incorporated into organizational mandates and program directions.

5. Identify key partners to assist in leading strategic policy initiatives.

6. Apply for funding to develop the Blueprint Tool as an interactive, on-line tool enabling continuous updating, broad communication, and collaboration on policy development.

7. Refine the priority policy areas, develop a strategic action plan for addressing these priority areas, and restructure operations within organizations to effectively take action.

8. Conduct a forum in November 2013 to unveil the next phase of development, focusing on the work already done, the new opportunities for collaboration it produces, and an action plan for achieving priority results identified during this forum.

9. Disseminate the Blueprint Tool widely: to policy makers, government agents and agencies, leaders and workers in the VAW sector and the human services system serving women at risk of or who have experienced violence, the media, and the public at large.

12. POLICIES MATTER PROJECT TEAM

- Harmy Mendoza, WomanACT – Management Team Member
- Amanda Dale, The Schlifer Clinic – Management Team Member
- Michelle Coombs, Elizabeth Fry Toronto – Management Team Member
- Sonja Nerad, SN Management – Project Coordinator and Researcher
- Mary Ferguson – Eko Nomos – Project Evaluator

13. 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 Tygesen, Ernestine's Women's Shelter
- Deborah Sinclair, Consultant

14. 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

- OISE

- 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 of Toronto

- 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 , Ernestine's Women's Shelter

15. 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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