



SELECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN VANCOUVER

**Alejandra Lopez
January 2007**



GOOD PRACTICE 02 – “Multicultural Family Support Services Society”

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a prevalent and well-documented social problem in Canada. A 2005 Statistics Canada profile on family violence prepared by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics and the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization are the most recent reports available that track family violence, including the incidence, prevalence and severity of woman abuse in Canada. These resources are the source for most of the statistics given below. The statistics are also categorized according to the pervasiveness of woman abuse in Canadian society by: age (younger women 18-24) or women over 65, aboriginal women, immigrant or refugee women, women who are living with disabilities, abuse during pregnancy, abuse faced by homosexuals, and the effects on children who witness abuse in the home.

Abuse Faced by Immigrant and Refugee Women

Woman abuse occurs in all societies and cultures. Refugee and non-status women in Canada are at high risk of experiencing violence because of the vulnerable position they live in:

- They have very limited access to information, counseling and other social services;
- They are reluctant to call the police in an emergency because they may fear being deported, as the police have authority to arrest or detain someone on behalf of Immigration Canada;
- If her partner is charged with assault, this could lead to devastating consequences for her; and
- They cannot easily access medical services.

Actual reported victimization rates among immigrant and visible minority women in a 1999 Statistics Canada survey were somewhat lower than other women (10.5% of immigrant and visible minority women experienced emotional or financial abuse compared to 14% of other women; 4.2% cited physical or sexual abuse compared to 6.2% of other women). However, the survey was done in English and French and not representative of immigrant women who were not proficient in either language. (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004)

1. PROJECT PROFILE

1.1 Project Promoter(s)

The Multicultural Family Support Services Society is a non-profit organization that offers culturally sensitive services in twenty languages to immigrant and visible minority women and their families who are experiencing family violence.

1.2 Project Name

Vancouver and Lower Mainland “Multicultural Family Support Services Society”

1.3 City(ies) where it has been implemented

Vancouver and Lower Mainland

1.4 Level

Municipal

Period of implementation

The Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society was formed in September 1991. The Ministry of Social Services (now known as the Ministry for Children and Families Development) accepted a proposal submitted by Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of BC to set up a new organization to serve immigrant and visible minority women and their families experiencing family violence.

1.5 Budget

Initial and permanent founding source

- Province of British Columbia - Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- Ministry of Children and Families Development

Other founding sources achieved

- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- Public Health Agency of Canada-CAPC (Community Action Program for Children)
- Canadian Heritage
- Vancouver Foundation

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

2.1 Field(s) of intervention

Through this program, immigrant and visible minority women help other visible immigrant minority women by providing:

- Free and confidential services.
- Advocacy, counseling and support through the continuity of support by bi-lingual, bi-cultural social workers.

2.2 Main objectives of the project

The organization provides safe and non-judgmental environment for women and their children in their own language and culture. Individual counseling is provided at the office, out of the office and over the phone. Other aspects of their work include:

- Group counseling and support and counseling to women victims of sexual assault and to adult survivors of sexual abuse, with emergency interventions and referrals to appropriate resources.
- The approach is to empower women in dealing with their issues, help them to develop coping skills, assist them in self-exploration, and to support them while they go through the different stages of rebuilding their lives at their own pace, in a culturally sensitive environment.
- They promote awareness and understanding of the dynamics of family violence within the multicultural perspectives to professionals working with immigrant families.
- They offer educational programs within ethnic communities about the dynamics of family violence and alternative models of treatment.

2.3 Target group(s)

The target of this organization is women and children from immigrant visible minorities backgrounds who experience family violence and volunteers interested in multiculturalism, migrants and women violence issues. The organization offers their services in: Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, Visayan, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Russian, Czech, Farsi (Persian), Amharic, Tigrania, Arabic.

2.4 Number of beneficiaries

Unlimited. Women and children in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

2.5 Summary of the Practice

Strategy

Individual Counseling:

The Vancouver and Lower Mainland Family Support Services (VLMFSS) provides individual counseling in a safe and non-judgmental environment for immigrant and visible minority women, in their own language and culture. Counseling sessions take place at the office; however, workers can reach out to women who cannot come to the agency for reasons connected to the abuse and counsel them at a place that is convenient for the women, or over the phone.

Group Counseling:

The VLMFSS provides on-going support for groups to women of all ages in their languages. Groups are focused on providing emotional support, practical assistance and education with the objective of:

- Providing a space to come together.
- Sharing common experiences.
- Enhancing self-esteem and assertiveness.
- Enhancing problem-solving skills.
- Getting information about resources and alternatives available in the community.

Advocacy/Support

The VLMFSS also assists women to find a place in transition houses when it is required. During their stay at transition houses, they have very close relationships with the staff to provide on-going support, language interpretation and cultural sensitization. They advocate and assist women in their interactions with the social and justice systems. They provide court advocacy and assistance for immigrant and visible minority women who are attempting to access the justice system. This service includes court preparation assistance, liaison with lawyers and Crown Counsel, and on-going supportive counseling throughout the court process.

Supportive counseling and referral is available to immigrant and visible minority women who have been victimized by sexual assault or who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This service includes:

- The provision of support groups.
- Supportive counseling.

The identification and referral to treatment agencies and therapists in the community.

Activities

Children Who Witness Abuse

The Children Who Witness Abuse Program provides one-on-one counseling and group counseling to children of different ethnic backgrounds. It supports the children and provides them a safe environment to express their feelings and to develop social, problem-solving and coping skills.

Children and youth, up to age 19, need to be in a stable environment prior to receiving counseling. Counseling for expecting mothers and parenting groups are also provided. Upon request, group counseling can be held at schools. Confidentiality is strictly maintained and services are free. Funding for this program is provided by: Ministry of Community, Aboriginals, and Women's Services CAPC-Health Canada.

Community Based Victims Assistance Program

This program offers Court Advocacy and assistance for immigrant and visible minority women and children who are in need of accessing the justice system. Women who are victims of sexual or physical abuse/assault, spousal assault, childhood abuse, stalking, hate crime or any other crimes, and children and youth who are victims of sexual or physical abuse, date rape, bullying, childhood abuse, stalking, hate crime and other violence can receive:

1. Assistance and orientation to the justice system.
2. Emotional Support.
3. Liaison with other services.
4. Referral to multicultural workers.

Volunteers Program

The program is open to the beneficiaries and to everyone interested in working with immigrant women and families. Volunteers support the staff by performing general office duties, getting involved in challenging projects such as organizing small discussion groups for immigrant women, or teaching survival English classes, offering Income Tax Clinics and other initiatives useful to the beneficiaries.

Volunteers enjoy great flexibility in their working hours, are encouraged to participate in free workshops on women's issues and in a Leadership Training Program. They can receive Certificates of Appreciation and Recognition. A letter of reference is provided to those who donated 60 volunteer hours in three months.

The Leadership Training Program (L.T.P.) is an interactive program focused on self-development, communication and leadership skills. It also provides education about the Canadian justice system, health system and other issues that are relevant to immigrant women.

The Program is offered once a year, and aims at immigrant and visible minority women who have experienced abuse in the home or who are motivated to help other women in their communities.

Results

The Vancouver and Lower Mainland Family Support Services gives services to women and children in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Today it has different workshops, training and support group with no charge:

- Mother and Children: Emotional Power
- South Asian Mother Support Group. Languages: Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi
- Chinese Single Mother Support Group. Languages: Mandarin, Cantonese.
- Parenting Workshop
- The Leadership Training Program

The organization has several publications including:

- Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introductory Manual on the Impact of Family Violence for Multicultural Home/School Workers. V.L.M. Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Burnaby, BC, 1993. Funding provided by the Ministry of Education, Gender Equity Program.

- Translations from the "West Coast Reader" on Wife Abuse. Published by the West Coast Reader (Capilano College). Languages: Punjabi, Spanish, Cantonese, Persian (Farsi), Filipino (Tagalog), Vietnamese, Arabic, Korean, Polish. V.L.M. Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Burnaby, BC, 1993 and 2000. Funding provided by Legal Services Society.
- What Is Abuse? An Exploration of the Aspects of Family Violence for Elementary Teachers (Primary/Intermediate). V.L.M. Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Burnaby, BC, 1995 and 1997. Funding provided by Ministry of Education, Gender Equity Program.
- Discipline Vs. Abuse: A Multicultural Perspective. A Report on meetings with six ethno-cultural communities in the Lower Mainland on the theme of child abuse and apprehension. V.L.M. Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Burnaby, BC, 1997. Funding provided by Ministry for Children and Families.

In addition, they offer 20 brochures with information, programs and services of the VLMFSS in 20 different languages.

Women and children who receive services from VLMFSS or that are involved in any of their programs are expected to understand domestic violence, develop a Safety Plan and be empowered to exercise their legal rights.

3. STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES

3.1 Sustainability

The Vancouver and Lower Mainland Family Support Services is funded by different and important sectors of Canadian Society. The Provincial Government and other stakeholders interested in migrant groups, women and family issues from the government as well as from non-profit organizations help creating wide networks with minority women groups to have a better impact in solving discrimination and violence against women. It is important to identify and recognize that the VLMFSS is not only self-sustainable; VLMFSS is also successful in widening its services and programs because of the strong and ongoing support of minority women groups in BC.

3.2 Actual and potential advantages of the practice

In Canada as well as in other places, governments are giving greater funding to specific projects of different non-profit organizations working to solve social problems. This is a good opportunity for the non-profit sector to take advantage of community knowledge, human resources, experience and wide networks to use funding from the government to implement their projects.

Many countries have signed the Millennium Development Goals, which emphasize the urgent need for governmental and non-governmental agencies efforts to focus on strategies to reduce poverty around the globe. There is a special focus in the MDGs for agencies using different strategies to include a gender focus in their work. A focus on reducing gender inequalities in any poverty reduction strategy is important and a program like VLMFSS can help reach these goals.

4. POTENTIAL REPLICABILITY IN CITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

4.1 Conditions and prerequisites

A few decades ago in most of the countries of the developing world, projects and policies that addressed women's issues had low priority. Today things have been changing and gender issues are now on the agendas of many politicians and governmental agencies as well as many non-profit organizations. It is not easy to give priority to women projects particularly in very traditional and religious countries; another important factor to acknowledge is that gender inequalities happen in wealthier societies too. Gender inequalities are a problem of power and patriarchal structures all around the world. Nevertheless, poor women and girls as well as migrants suffer the most pervasive inequalities.

One of the most important conditions for replicating this program is to have strong and organized minority women groups. Most of the women's programs have started with local and grassroots community-based projects with the support of feminist activists, international agencies, or through the mobilization of intellectuals and participatory research projects.

Another important condition for the success of this program is to find leadership among women to promote the projects and to develop on-going support of different sectors of any society. One of the reasons international agencies and governments have acknowledged the importance of reducing gender inequalities is because of the ability of women to organize themselves and build community, empower other women and work together in showing how without women's participation in public life, without women's voice, and without respecting and giving women the opportunities to attain all their economic, social, cultural and political rights, poverty reduction strategies are never going to be successful.

5. LINKS

Vancouver and Lower Mainland Family Support Services www.vlmfss.ca

BC Institute on Family Violence (604)669-7055 www.bcifv.org

BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses www.bcysth.ca

Vancouver Multicultural Society (604)731-4648

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services www.gov.bc.ca/weq

GOOD PRACTICE 03 – “Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver”

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned, Vancouver is one of the most diverse cities in Canada in terms of cultures and migration. Vancouver is also a major city in which Canada faces the challenges of immigration, poverty and social exclusion.

Many immigrants in Vancouver face the challenges of finding work in a new land, living on a low income, raising children in communities identified as high risk for children and growing old with dignity in their own home.

Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver are activity centres for multicultural and diverse communities. The houses bring together families, community members, businesses, health and social service agencies and community resources to offer a wide range of support and opportunities to children, youth, adults, seniors and families across Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

These houses were founded with different specific reasons as they derived from initiatives of different groups, but they all have a common purpose: to build safe and healthy communities, to build social capital, and to build social networks. The Neighbourhood Houses offer a variety of services and have a wide range of programs directed to cover the needs identified in each community.

Implementing Neighbourhood Houses in cities of developing countries could be challenging work but also be a contribution to the needs of building stronger and empowered communities.

1. PROJECT PROFILE

1.1 Project Promoter(s)

A volunteer-driven, community service agency, the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver (ANH) has a diverse and rich history of working with neighbours in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

1.2 Project Name

Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver

1.3 City(ies) where it has been implemented

There are thousands of neighbourhood houses in more than thirty countries around the world. Today, there are 7 Neighbourhood Houses and one related outdoor centre in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in Canada.

1.4 Level

They are implemented locally as initiatives of the neighbours in each community to respond to specific neighbourhood needs.

1.5 Period of implementation

ANH is part of the neighbourhood and settlement house movement that began in the 1880's in England to address the needs of people who had moved into the cities to find work, often leaving behind their families and everything that was familiar to them. The Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver (ANH) has a diverse and rich history of working with neighbours in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Originally

founded in 1894, the Association has operated a hospital, an orphanage, a “fresh-air camp”, a neighbourhood house and more recently an association of seven neighbourhood houses and an outdoor centre.

Camp Alexandra was founded in 1916 as a summer camp for children from the Alexandra Orphanage, one of the first buildings constructed on the west side of Vancouver. By 1930, the Orphanage had joined the Vancouver Welfare Federation, (now the United Way), and the Crescent Beach camp had become an important service for the needy who required much more than fresh air and sunshine. The camp continued to operate in the summer for the next 30 years until the residents of Crescent Beach demonstrated a strong desire to have a neighbourhood centre in their community. In December of 1972, Crescent Beach Community Services was established and a Board of Management began to plan for the provision of community services. Ongoing year round funding was secured when, in January 1974, CBCS was granted the status of Neighbourhood house in the Neighbourhood Services Association, the evolution of the original Alexandra Orphanage. NSA has now become the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver an association that includes a number of other neighbourhood houses in other areas of the city. As population growth in recent years has resulted in increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in Vancouver, the member organizations of ANH have taken on a range of new services oriented toward facilitating the integration of new residents and new social groups into the communities of the city.

1.6 Budget

Initial and permanent founding source

The Association is a member agency of the United Way of the Lower Mainland and receives an annual allocation that comes from community donations during the United Way's annual campaign. The Association also receives funding from the City of Vancouver, the Provincial and Federal Governments, and various charitable foundations including the Vancouver Foundation and the Alexandra Foundation for Neighbourhood Houses. Specific programs, services or special projects may be funded through one or more levels of government, corporations and/or donations from individuals.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

2.1 Field(s) of intervention

The neighbourhood/settlement house movement is credited with establishing public recreation programs, the first day nurseries for working parents, English as a second language and adult literacy classes, as well as the profession of social work. Today, neighbourhood houses are hubs for local community development activities and for programs and services that address local needs

2.2 Main objectives of the project

- To work with communities to develop innovative programs and services that meet the changing needs of a diverse population at neighbourhood levels.
- As neighbourhood houses they are concerned for neighbourhood life as a whole in their communities.
- To address specific barriers to participation with the provision of low-cost, culturally sensitive, participant-driven and locally based programs.
- To promote a sense of belonging and sharing.
- To bring people together in a safe, inviting and stimulating environment where everyone is included and each can contribute.

2.3 Target group(s)

The activities of the neighbourhood houses are directed to everyone in the neighbourhood where they exist. They are targeted to the needs of the changing dynamics in communities, especially where there are growing rates of newcomers and migrants to the city.

2.4 Number of beneficiaries

This depends on the number of people in the neighbourhood; through the establishment of new neighbourhood houses, the number could be unlimited.

2.5 Summary of the Practice

Strategy

- Identify and work with residents of the community on issues of common concern.
- Offer programs and services that address the specific needs of children and their parents, youth, adults and seniors, immigrants and refugees and people with disabilities.
- Provide volunteers with new skills and a place to share their abilities and talents.
- Offer places where the local community can come together to celebrate ethnic and cultural events throughout the year.

Activities

The activities vary depending on the Neighbourhood House because they respond to the specific needs of a community. Among the services that the seven Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland offer there are:

- After school clubs and family support.
- Networks for preventative, community based social service programs.
- Supportive opportunities for volunteers' leadership in local and city-wide partnerships and support for community development initiatives, which work towards the betterment of community life.
- Kinder care, after-school care and daycare programs.
- Places for preteen kids to go after school, for high school kids new to Canada to buddy-up with more seasoned peers, and for youth to learn leadership skills by working with younger children.
- A program to provide skills for high school youth to deal with racism, bullying and intergenerational conflict while volunteering at Frog Hollow.
- English language classes for new Canadian adults.
- Young adults out of work, or living on the street, can find hope through advice and a chance to earn an honest buck at our Youth Spot Employment Centre.
- Activities for seniors, such as Tai Chi classes; long-time self-run seniors groups meet every week to socialize and support one another.
- A program called "online community building" that utilizes new technology to facilitate the development of communities over the Internet.
- Opportunities for local youth to learn to use a variety of new media, including the Internet and video production, to help them express their perspective on the world.
- Creative Playtime is a drop-in time for children to play in fun and creative environment.
- A Mobile Lending Library, operated by the West Coast Childcare Resource Centre, that visits Creative Playtime twice a month.
- The Homework Club, offering support to school-age children.
- Employment services, including the Adult Employment Program, that provide career planning assistance, job search techniques and interview skills. This program also

provides access to computers and the Internet and offers assistance in the preparation of resumes and covering letters.

- Youth Search, the youth employment program, aids youth ages 15 to 24 to gain the necessary skills to enter and maintain employment.
- Neighbour-to-neighbour helpers who donate their time for such programs and organize the Hot Lunch program, enabling over 25 trips and picnics over the course of the year, as well as staffing the Attic Thrift Store as a means of subsidizing many programs and services.
- ANH volunteers also provide help as receptionists, ESL instructors, assist seniors with their income tax, lead classes, assist with special events, as well as a multiplicity of other programs and services.
- Transportation to seniors who love exploring; there are also a number of special events each year that keep local seniors involved and active during the year, including regular weekly lunches.
- A partnership with MOSAIC (another community-based multicultural support organization) to provide an outreach program for isolated, new moms, a domestic violence outreach worker and a comprehensive multicultural family support program.
- The member houses of the ANH continue to provide the services which they have always provided for children, youth, families, seniors, as well as various settlement and language services for newcomers to their community.

Results

The Neighbourhood Houses are one of the most comprehensive approaches to respond to the changing dynamics of the neighbourhoods in Vancouver as a result of the growing immigration. One of the most important results is that after the first neighbourhood house in Vancouver was founded, the following houses have been developed as initiatives of the members of the communities. The demand for social services has continued to increase proportionally with residential immigration leading to an ongoing need for and upgrading of the facilities and the expansion of programs and services.

3 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES

3.1 Sustainability

The Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver are growing both in number of beneficiaries and in the number of volunteers, with a parallel growth in support for activities. They are also increasing community development activities and building strong community partnerships. The financial support tends to be ongoing as well, because the neighbourhood houses are seen to cover in an effective way a variety of needs in each community. They are building and maintaining high levels of community services as well as widening their social networks.

3.2 Actual and potential advantages of the practice

In addition to developing a comprehensive collection of community services, neighbourhood houses have developed an important role as centres for volunteerism. Neighbourhood houses have the strong support of the government and the private sector due to the range of services and beneficiaries that they cover. They are spaces of building social capital and civic education as a consequence of how they organize and promote the participation of the entire community. Because they are locally founded, they give the people a sense of belonging, thus enhancing local commitment to each project they take on. Through their work, everybody improves their lives, having healthy, strong and livable communities.

4 POTENTIAL REPLICABILITY IN CITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

4.1 Conditions and prerequisites

Studying the history of how each of the neighbourhood houses was founded as an initiative of members of the community, I feel confident in promoting this practice in cities of developing countries. It is the case of the poorest places in developing countries that people organize and build social networks in order to survive. Members of the families and communities create activities that will promote their own well-being and development. Each of the Neighbourhood Houses offers their specific services and has their specific programs depend on the needs of community residents. I would venture to say that this is the case of many cities in Latin America; they all have urgent and changing social and economic needs that could be addressed through neighbourhood houses.

Neighbourhood houses need to be supported by grassroots projects, thus building a wide spectrum of social networks for and through the neighbourhood house organizations. To implement such a program it is important to find key leadership and volunteers in each community. It is essential to create linkages with public and private institutions, develop resident initiatives, and build strong organizations through support by the local people in order to create a sense of belonging and sharing.

5. LINKS

Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver - <http://www.anhgv.org/>