



**Canadian Council for Refugees Spring 2008 Consultation
“Our Past, Our Future: Our Children”
22-24 May 2008, Winnipeg
Conference Report**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees held a successful 2008 Spring Consultation in Winnipeg, attended by over 260 participants from all over Canada and beyond. The Consultation took place 22-24 May at the Radisson Winnipeg Downtown. The theme was “Our Past, Our Future: Our Children”.

Participants at the Winnipeg Consultation came from diverse backgrounds and regions and included refugees, immigrants, youth, staff and volunteers at organizations serving newcomers and ethnocultural organizations, private sponsors of refugees, representatives of various levels of government and of UNHCR, lawyers, academics and others involved in refugee and immigrant issues. Refugee participation and youth participation were both excellent at this consultation and youth participation was mentioned as one of the most appreciated elements by conference participants.

The objectives of the 2008 Spring Consultation was to provide an opportunity for training, networking, information-exchange, policy discussions and prioritizing of issues among government and non-governmental representatives involved in promoting the integration of refugees and immigrants.

30 sessions were offered during the three days of the consultation, including the opening plenary session, three Working Group meetings, 22 workshops and informal caucus sessions. The program structure offered 3 or 4 workshops simultaneously on different issues related to settlement and protection. Workshops offered a participatory format: moderators encouraged participation, especially from those who are new to Canada and new to the CCR. At the beginning of every workshop, moderators mentioned that the CCR is committed to providing an environment which is free of racism, sexism, discrimination and bias, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity.

The topics of workshops were selected during the Working Group meetings in February, in which participants brainstormed on relevant issues and volunteers were selected to plan the workshops. Resource persons speaking at Consultation sessions represented different perspectives: service providers, refugee advocates, UNHCR, government, lawyers, youth, etc. They were chosen by taking into consideration different factors: participation of refugees; gender balance; regional diversity; representation of local resource people; a youth perspective, and experience and knowledge of the issues.

The Working Group meetings held during the Consultation gave participants the opportunity to discuss emerging issues and share information, best practices and initiatives with others from across Canada. They also offered an opportunity to prepare resolutions to be presented at the General Meeting, and to follow up on action items. Gender-based and anti-racist perspectives were included in discussions about the direction of future work.

Participants' oral and written evaluations were overall extremely positive, as much in terms of the smooth running and organizing of the Consultation, as in terms of the content of the workshops and the quality and diversity of presentations. According to the evaluations, the Consultation achieved its goals of information-exchange, networking, training and strategizing to enhance protection of refugees and settlement of refugees and immigrants into Canadian society.

The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the very efficient work of the local organizing committee, made up of staff and volunteers from organizations in Winnipeg. Participants were also very fortunate to be welcomed by a wonderful team of more than 40 volunteers, who contributed to the friendly atmosphere of the event.

II. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

Opening plenary

This session served as an introduction to the consultation and provided an opportunity to hear from a range of speakers on recent developments. Participants were first welcomed by Marty Dolin and Janine LeGal of Winnipeg. Abraham Abraham, the recently arrived UNHCR Representative in Canada, was welcomed and made brief comments. Participants also heard about various new and ongoing aspects of the work of the CCR, through a report from CCR President Liz McWeeny; an update on plans and activities to celebrate the CCR's 30th anniversary and information on efforts to develop a CCR Anti-oppression Policy. Participants also had the opportunity to see a video prepared by Winnipeg youth on the experiences of newcomers, and to hear from three newcomer youth from various regions in Canada who were participating in the consultation.

Resource persons:

Abraham Abraham, UNHCR Representative in Canada
Jehad Aliweiwi, Co-Chair of CCR's 30th Anniversary Committee
Roberto Jovel, CCR Vice-President
Liz McWeeny, CCR President

Moderators: Marty Dolin and Janine LeGal

General Meeting

The Consultation concluded with the CCR's Spring General Meeting. A total of 7 resolutions were adopted. The resolutions can be found at <http://www.ccrweb.ca/documents/resmay08.htm>

III. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Refugees and Immigrants Caught in Precarious Employment

This workshop looked at the impacts on refugees and immigrants of the structural shifts experienced by the Canadian economy as a result of employers' quest for "flexible" labour force arrangements. Speakers offered an analysis of the barriers faced by immigrants and refugees caught in contingent and unstable forms of employment.

Speakers described their work with and on behalf of immigrants and refugees in situations of precarious employment. Major issues facing immigrants and refugees in this segment of the labour market include: downloading of government and employers' labour-related responsibilities and costs on the workers, particular vulnerabilities associated with abuses in the early settlement experience, difficulty in overcoming the precarious employment and income situation, which can become chronic.

Discussions led to the identification of a need to holistically strengthen the following areas: direct services for and advocacy on behalf of workers, networking between immigrant and refugee serving organizations and labour organizations, public education and other efforts towards policy improvement. Policy improvement must include: labour standards legislation and mechanisms for monitoring compliance; employment insurance that is accessible to immigrants and refugees.

Resource persons:

Sarab Atiyat, Labour Market Specialist, Success Skills Centre, Winnipeg
Tess Tesalona, Immigrant Workers Centre, Montreal
Amy Casipullai, OCASI, Toronto

Moderator: Debbie Douglas, OCASI, Toronto

Resettlement Experiences of Privately Sponsored Refugees

The workshop presented the results of a detailed study of privately sponsored refugees' resettlement in Winnipeg conducted by the University of Winnipeg. The study was based upon in-depth interviews of 50 families, representative of PSR arrivals in Winnipeg that have been here from one to five years.

Resource persons:

Dr. Tom Carter and Anita Friesen, Co-researchers, University of Winnipeg
Tom Denton, Co-Chair of the Manitoba Refugee Sponsors

Moderators: Karin Gordon and Julien Fradette, Manitoba Refugee Sponsors

Dialogue with government

This workshop provided participants with an opportunity to hear from, and exchange with a senior CIC official on a range of issues of concern to the CCR. Claudette Deschênes, Assistant Deputy Minister, opened with a briefing on Bill C-50 and the consultative/briefing process held by the Department in recent weeks. She also commented on some of the work being done

collaboratively between CIC and CCR such as the ATC Chair/Focal Point process and recent initiatives regarding the issue of separated children in the context of Regulation 117(9)(d) and overall regarding family reunification.

Questions from the floor covered a range of topics including:

- 117(9)(d) issues
 - the need for BID training for personnel making 117(9)(d) decisions
- Family reunification
 - Ministerial Instructions for grandparent/ parents where they need exit visas
 - Overuse of DNA testing to prove relationship
 - Separated minors – refusal of older children
 - Mission priorities for family reunification, especially of separated children
- Questions around the recent promotion of Family Class for resettlement of Iraqi refugees
- Canadian Experience Class
 - Specifically around the large number of Temporary Work permits about to expire in Alberta and its impact on the labour force
 - Accreditation problems with provincial boards, etc.
- Case specific issues/ Case Management Issues
 - Poor decision making on sponsorships
 - Inconsistency and delays in decision making re security/admissibility
- Bill C-50
 - Skilled workers leaving Canada due to accreditation issues
 - Lack of consultation with NGOs in Bill C-50 process
 - Concern over people without status in Canada
 - Concern that Bill C-50 process is undemocratic
- Asylum seekers in Canada fleeing domestic violence whose children need spousal consent in order to be reunited with their mother in Canada
- RFP process for CIC funding
- RAP
 - No increase in budget for a long time: budget has not kept up with increased need for supports for new populations being resettled e.g. youth and children, more health/medical needs, refugees from protracted situations

- Blue Ribbon Report from the Treasury Board: CIC 5 priorities

Outcomes of workshop:

The Immigration and Settlement Working Group proposed that the CCR write to CIC regarding their 5 priorities for the Blue Ribbon Report from the Treasury Board.

Ms. Deschênes agreed to follow-up with the CCR on a number of questions.

Resource person:

Claudette Deschênes, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Moderators: Sherman Chan and Liz McWeeny

Refugee and Immigrant Women as Leaders

This informal session brought together refugee and immigrant women, and allowed them to get to know each other and strategize about their involvement in the consultation, in the CCR and in their local communities. Participants discussed issues relating to leadership, such as the importance of taking voice, connecting with each other, getting involved and how leading is empowering. Participants also talked about the importance of getting involved within CCR and in their local community, being more proactive and getting connected to different opportunities. The CCR's Amina Malko Fund was also presented: this fund helps refugees to attend CCR Consultations and to get more involved in the CCR.

Outcomes and suggestions from the workshop include:

- Plan the workshop during lunch so that everyone is able to be part of it.
- Plan it as a learning experience
- Share personal experiences and empower others
- Give more introduction on leadership at the CCR level
- Include training on leadership and mentorship
- Get a panel of more than 2 facilitators
- Include a positive leadership story at the opening Plenary at every consultation
- Less formal, more participatory
- Have different seating arrangement more involved in a circle than facing the panel
- Use audio, visual and other tools
- Request the women to bring something that reminds them of who they are

Moderators: Jamila Aman, Northwood Neighbourhood Services and Wanda Yamamoto, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council

Fan of the Canadian Council for Refugees? Become a CCR Regional promoter!

This workshop brought together participants interested in the CCR Regional Promoters Program and in building a network of resources and contacts to reach out to others on refugee and immigrant rights. A brief overview of the Canadian Council for Refugees was first presented, including past and present public outreach efforts. Participants shared their past successes in promoting refugee and immigrant rights locally, asked questions and made suggestions for future resources. These included:

- Materials for professional development (on how to reach out to the public with CCR resources) for use within CCR member organizations
- Developing lists for CCR resource people
- Ideas of where to promote the CCR
- How to promote the CCR 'brand' locally – visibility of the CCR locally is an issue
- How to take CCR media releases on campaigns to local media, especially if there is a compelling local angle
- Ideas of how to promote CCR materials into local events

The key outcomes were:

- The need for regular contact among regional promoters to exchange information and share ideas
- To have a centralized information-sharing space to share materials, access resource lists and to ask questions.
- Participants were invited to:
 - o Take home resources (like an electronic copy of the CCR display board) that can be used to promote the CCR locally
 - o Sign up and participate in the online discussion and information-exchange forum for CCR Regional Promoters (<http://ccrweb.ca/user> - menu: Forums)
 - o Participate in monthly 'training and information-sharing' conference calls for Regional Promoters. The first call will take place on Friday, June 6th with a focus on promoting refugee and immigrant rights in Canada on World Refugee Day, June 20th.

Resource persons:

Victor Porter, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Colleen French, CCR Communication and Networking Coordinator

Preparing for the settlement of Bhutanese Refugees from camps in Nepal

This workshop offered participants an opportunity to learn about the Bhutanese refugee population scheduled to be resettled in Canada from camps in Nepal, and to make suggestions and discuss strategies among service provider organizations, Sponsorship Agreement Holders and CIC to prepare for their effective settlement. The workshop started with the presentation of a short film "Bhutanese refugees in Nepal" prepared by the UNHCR Regional Office in Washington for the Bhutanese resettlement movement to the US. According to the video, over 100,000 mostly Hindu Bhutanese refugees have been living in 7 refugee camps in Nepal for 18 years.

Abraham Abraham indicated that there are medical issues including malnutrition and respiratory conditions. There are no repatriation or local integration alternatives and 20,000 people have been targeted for resettlement but the situation is politically charged as there are groups among the refugees who are opposed to resettlement who are using misinformation to discourage others. UNHCR has an information campaign to counteract the misinformation.

Chitra Pradhan spoke about additional Bhutanese who are outside refugee camps among the general population in Nepal and unable to access the refugee camps. Some Bhutanese in Manitoba have family members among this group.

He provided several suggestions for overseas strategies. He noted that although there already is an effort to provide accurate information on life in Canada, the message is not getting through. He suggests forming a Canadian delegation that is deemed credible by the refugees. The information needs to deal with misinformation such as the belief that refugees are being moved to another refugee camp in Canada. They need accurate and practical information about Canadian policy, freedom to practice religion, job prospects, free education, landed immigrant status and future citizenship, and the concept of equality. A video of a family that has preceded them would be helpful.

Chitra Pradhan proposed in-Canada strategies including the orientation of settlement serving agencies, recruitment and training of Bhutanese and Nepali community members as interpreters, settlement workers and life skills trainers, as well as volunteering individually or with family members. He also feels housing will be particularly difficult and that an orderly flow is essential.

Participants highlighted the need to prepare for trauma issues, updated pre-departure information, comprehensive health assessments upon arrival, extension of life skills supports, local Bhutanese/Nepali/Indian community involvement, creating Nepali language versions of existing video resources, provision of EAL in camps for those selected to resettle, settlement in clusters sufficiently large to have a critical mass, overseas immunization, overseas youth orientation, connecting youth in camps with youth in Canada by mail or Internet, overseas interpreter training for English speakers, and early employment training and employment related interventions using community development principles.

Resource persons:

Abraham Abraham, UNHCR Representative in Canada

Chitra Pradhan, Bhutanese representative

Jeff Daly, Refugees Branch, CIC

Moderator: Barbara Treviranus

Children: The Invisible Asylum Seekers?

A growing number of children accompany their parents seeking asylum in Canada. Too often, they are not seen as persons with their own stories, needs and rights. This workshop examined the situation of children at different points along the asylum process, and identified their needs and how the system deals with them or ignores them. As Canada will be examined next year on its compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this workshop offered critical information for any submission the CCR may wish to make.

The context of the Convention Right of Child was first presented. Then, issues concerning children as they enter the asylum process were discussed, such as lack of services; discrepancy of availability of services across Canada; delays which result in late registration for school; lack of access to daycare (Alberta is an exception); housing; poverty; stress for parents with respect to the process; impacts of delays on children; non recognition of children as victims who should be heard in the process. Presenters also talked about the fact that the special needs of separated children are not met, except in Quebec which has a unique model regarding designated representative. There are also youth protection gaps: youth over 16 are not taken care of in some provinces.

An action recommendation was submitted to the Inland Protection Working Group: Conduct a survey in the context of the Convention on Right of Child (province by province) e.g. services, medical, daycare, welfare, legal, education, designated representatives, detention, CAS/ Youth protection

Post survey:

- a) Identify federal, provincial and other institutions to be addressed
- b) Identify recommendations for action for member organizations
- c) Prepare a submission to the committee examining Canada on compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child

A need for specialized training of professionals across the system was identified.

Useful document: Legal Aid Ontario: Representing Minors and Persons with Mental Health Disorders or Disability before the IRB.

Resource persons:

Gerri Sadoway, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Toronto
Anne-Marie Kabongo, Refuge Juan Moreno, Montréal

Moderator: Rivka Auginfeld

Training: Best Interests of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) require that immigration officers take into account the "best interests of the child". This workshop provided an opportunity to learn about how this applies to children affected by immigration decisions and offered participants some tools to ensure that relevant information about children's best interests are included in immigration applications, especially for humanitarian and compassionate consideration.

One of the issues discussed was the draft CCR practical guide to H&C applications involving Best interests of the Child determination. Examples were given of cases where BIOC is important: R117(9)(d), deportation, deportation of parent, family reunification, moratoria cases. Other issues discussed include international human rights law and Canadian jurisprudence – especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, IRPA and guidelines in immigration manuals IP5 and OP4, and a checklist for preparing submissions. There were also discussions in groups of particular decisions on H&C.

Action item: need to work with CIC for training of visa officers on H&C – BIOC.
Need to work for resolution of special cases involving custody etc.

CCR will finish and proof read the "Practical Guide" and put it on CCR website with sample precedent from Gerri Sadoway (Excluded family member case)

Resource persons:

Gerri Sadoway, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Toronto
Rick Goldman, Committee to Aid Refugees, Montreal

Survivors of Torture and the Challenges of Settlement

This workshop dealt with challenges related to the meaningful settlement of survivors of torture and war who come to Canada at different times and in different ways. Participants learned about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that comes as a result of the experience of torture or war atrocities. On the basis of the presenter's experience serving survivors, almost 30% of refugees coming to Canada are survivors of torture. They carry their past trauma with them. Most of them suffer from lack of concentration, forgetfulness, flashback, nightmares, withdrawal, avoiding people and places, depression, hyper-sensitivity, insomnia, etc. When they arrive, they have to deal with their cultural shock, immigration bureaucracy, financial problems, homelessness, health problems, job, language barriers, loneliness of exile and many other retraumatizing issues.

It is not enough to provide them with clinical services as everything reminds them of their torture experiences. Care-givers and service providers need to provide them with holistic services and help them to promote their self-esteem, rely on their own and become agents of their own rehabilitation. The CCVT has an all-embracing program to help survivors of torture and war to promote their coping capacity: face to face counselling, befriending, ESL, psychological and physical treatment, computer classes, etc. The main factor for rehabilitation is helping them to participate in social life meaningfully and make Canada their new home. It is highly detrimental if they remain in a condition of uncertainty and limbo. We must try our best to provide them with maximum level of stability.

Outcomes of workshop include an action item requesting that CCR organizes a workshop on non-citizens in limbo at the next conference. There will also be a request to CCR Executive to work towards effectiveness of such remedies as Ministerial Relief. Networking, arrangements for information sharing and future collaboration among sister organizations were also outcomes of the workshop.

Resource person:

Ezat Mossallanejad, CCVT, Toronto

Moderator: Chizuru Nobe, CCVT, Toronto

(Re)Settlement and Integration begins in the field

The workshop looked at the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme as a means to begin settlement and integration while refugees are still abroad as well as looking at the benefits for organizations, individuals and their professional development. The session aimed at encouraging settlement sector staff to consider temporary placements in a UNHCR field office especially to work with refugees who eventually may be resettled to Canada. Participants heard from returning deployees, a new deployee candidate, a sending employer and the UNHCR-ICMC deployment liaison.

The session brought information regarding different aspects of the deployment scheme, including some of the challenges as well as positive aspects of the scheme. Particular concerns were raised by several participants and some panel members regarding delays in actually deploying trained and ready personnel. Concerns were also raised about the difficulties for sending organizations due to staffing issues.

Resource persons:

Jane Bloom, ICMC, Washington, DC

Marty Dolin, International Centre, Winnipeg

Yosief Araya, Catholic Cross-cultural Services, Toronto

Glynis Williams, Action Réfugiés Montréal

Moderator: Liz McWeeny

Education Issues for African Newcomers

This workshop focused on the educational needs barriers and challenges of African newcomers in the Canadian education system. Participants heard of a refugee's experience and story. A specialist made a presentation on issues relating to education and talked about the different barriers faced by African students in the education system in Manitoba. Speakers underlined the need for funding for refugees and for well-trained school settlement workers.

Resource persons:

Diana Turner, Consultant, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

Murenzi Evasion, Liaison Agent, French School Division, Manitoba

Moderator: Anne-Marie Kabongo, CCR Executive and African Caucus

Promoting Pathways to Gender Justice

This workshop offered an opportunity to learn about the second phase of the Pathways to Gender Justice Project which aims at helping organizations engage in gender justice internally, with staff and service users. The workshop aimed at raising participants' familiarity with the CCR's Toolkit on gender, developed during the first phase, generating feedback for the second phase, and promoting organizations' participation in the pilot project.

Participants were provided with the Toolkit to review. The moderator guided participants through the Toolkit and explained the context of gender in this work:

- sex and gender
- diversity of gender
- different areas of the settlement sector identified to work on: board, management, policy, implementation of services

The moderator shared her organization's experience in integrating gender justice.

In an open format, participants were invited to share their experiences related to gender-based analysis and gender justice, and give feedback on the project. Some of the comments focused on the critical issues of sexual orientation and torture. Many refugees are bound by their religious communities and they need to be very careful to do something with religious communities. Homosexuality is illegal in 80 countries, punishable with death in 9 countries. The CCR was congratulated for its work on this very important project. Everyone should help out to finalize it and make it visible on their web site.

Some participants from CIC shared they recently formed a group in their branch and are working hard to incorporate gender competency with a protocol.

It was noted that when a couple makes a claim, the wife's voice is often not heard, unless someone with gender sensitivity asks the wife directly. Women are often told to change their last name to their husband's name and are encouraged to think that it is the way it is done in Canada.

It was recommended that changes be sought at policy level: it will take some time for them to trickle down to the services.

Moderator: Ljiljana Kalaba, Multicultural Association of Fredericton

Policy Shifts: Temporary Work Permits, Canadian Experience Class

Economic convenience and employers' expectations are increasingly shaping immigration policy in Canada. Government positions reveal an emphasis on Canada's competitiveness in the globalized era. The growing use of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is presented as the way of the future. While some measures for access to permanent residence are being explored, such as the Canadian Experience Class, they remain narrow and exclusionary. Many temporary workers, as well as people without status continue to be used as the cheap solutions for a "competitive economy". This workshop explored the challenges of these policy shifts for temporary workers and other newcomers to Canada.

The first presentation focussed on temporary workers in Manitoba and the many problems they face, including being charged very high fees by agencies to come to Canada; not being eligible to settlement services; language barriers; not knowing what their rights are and the many cases of exploitation these workers face. The presenter talked about the work done at the local level to help workers and inform them about their rights.

Participants then heard about CCR's position on CIC's new proposed Canadian Experience Class (CEC), which will give some workers on temporary permits access to permanent residence, based on "skilled" work experience (<http://www.ccrweb.ca/documents/CECcomments.pdf>). The CCR is concerned about Canada's increasing emphasis on temporary rather than permanent migration and about the fact that the new CEC excludes many people with valuable contributions to Canadian society, such as workers on temporary permits in the "lower skilled" categories, refugee claimants and people from moratorium countries.

The final presentation focussed on the Temporary Workers Program within the context of the goals and values of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The current shift towards temporary migration is clear when we consider statistics but also in the government's messaging for public opinion purposes. The emphasis on labour shortages and immigration as an economic strategy contradicts the goals of the IRPA, which includes a commitment to the settlement and integration of permanent residents. The recent Bill C-50 is presented as a way for the government to align the immigration system with labour market needs.

Outcomes of the workshop:

A resolution was proposed asking that Temporary Foreign Workers not be restricted to a specific named employer, giving them the same rights to labour mobility as other Canadian workers;

Resource persons:

Jorge Fernandez, Settlement Services, International Centre, Winnipeg

Roberto Jovel, OCASI, Toronto

Meissoon Azzaria, CCR

Moderator: Debbie Douglas, OCASI, Toronto

Resettlement of Refugees with Medical Needs

The workshop presented an analysis of the current Canadian and other countries' policy and practices related to resettlement of refugees for medical reasons and settlement. The workshop also looked into the experiences of settlement workers in dealing with refugees with medical needs and identified improvements needed. The workshop covered a number of issues related to the resettlement of refugees for medical needs.

Issues presented by the CCR:

- Selection and processing of refugees for medical needs
- Post-arrival services
- Special needs of children with medical needs
- Mental health issues
- Normalize resettlement options for people with HIV/AIDS

Challenges identified by CCR:

- Information transfer and privacy issue
- Fraud related to medical documents
- Delay in processing of an application
- Cherry picking of cases by receiving countries
- Capacity of the receiving community

Priorities of CCR

- Increase number of resettled refugees with medical needs
- Improve UNHCR referral and state selection practice
- Building a selection process

Notes from presentation by CIC:

- Lack of a commonly understood UNHCR definition of medical needs
- Different health system in provinces
- Gaps in the pre-departure health info
- Info-sharing limitation within Privacy Act

Priorities for CIC:

- Work together with NGOs

- Develop a policy framework with UNHCR – what constitutes medical needs, identification and referrals
- Identify best practice

Settlement organization point of view:

- Health issues take up large proportion of counseling time
- Insufficient advance information for preparation of settlement
- Lack of pre-departure counseling regarding expectation of refugees
- Capacity of settlement communities
- Provision of health insurance and IFH often insufficient
- Point to ponder - safety of frontline workers versus privacy act

Comments from participants:

- A suggestion to expand services covered by IFH – in particular dental issues are not sufficiently covered by IFH
- There is a need to improve the advance information sharing practice so that settlement counselors and sponsor will feel safe to deal with refugee with medical issues
- The public needs to be sensitized about the needs of refugees with medical needs before damaging information hits news headlines

Outcomes of workshop:

There was a proposal to adopt a resolution that call for a formation of a working group that includes different government department, NGO's, and other interest groups. The proposal was not accepted because participants stated that it is better to work with the existing forums. At the end of the meeting, those who were interested to work on this matter met and discussed how to coordinate the different groups working on same or similar issues

Other outcomes

- a. The three panelists agreed on the need to improve the information sharing related to medical conditions of refugee
- b. There was agreement on part of government and CCR to have a clear understanding or definition of what constitutes refugees with medical needs
- c. There is a need for an improved referral and selection process by states
- d. IFH needs to reflect the needs of refugee resettled for medical needs
- e. Coverage for dental treatment was identified as one that need serious consideration. Most refugees resettled did not have ample access to dental care and there is a high need for dental treatment
- f. There is a need to find out which groups or people are working on medical issues of refugees and work together on the same issue

Resource persons:

Elizabeth McWeeny, CCR President

Kareem D. Sadiq, Refugees Branch, CIC

Aurelio Madut Danto, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc.

Moderators: Mary Fiakpui and Yosief Araya

Monitoring Detention in Canada

This workshop presented a review of international detention standards for asylum seekers and refugees and the role of UNHCR as monitors. The workshop also presented a review of immigration detention practices in Canada. Special attention was given to the implementation of the National standards for Immigration Holding Centres. The main issues discussed included UNHCR detention standards; CBSA's facilities, operations and policy and practice; Action Réfugiés Montréal's practice in Montreal detention centre; Refugee Law Office's overview provincial penal institutions.

Outcomes of the workshop:

- Importance of having a social worker (especially to address mental health needs)
- Ombudsperson – complaint process
- NGO partnerships – shelters – alternatives POE – prevention and access
- Training for jail guards – sensitivity to refugee population
- Encourage CCR – CBSA working group on detention regionally and nationally to meet biannually.

Resource persons:

Hy Shelow, UNHCR Sr. Protection Officer Canada
Glynis Williams, Action Réfugiés Montréal
Jennifer Egsgard, Refugee Law Office, Toronto
Chris Raymond, Canada Border Services Agency

Moderator: Gloria Nafziger

CCR's 30th anniversary

The workshop was about planning CCR 30th anniversary events. Participants were asked to participate in a brainstorming session about how we can meet the goals of the 30th anniversary. Issues discussed included ideas to get organizations to sponsor a year for CCR, communities that should be approached to participate in 30th anniversary activities, and ideas for the Toronto gala.

Participants were also invited to share information surrounding their own 30th anniversary celebration.

- A planning committee for the Toronto gala event was struck.
- Two new members for the 30th anniversary national committee were recruited
- UNHCR offered its expertise in branding.
- Two major event ideas discussed: hosting a cross Canada film screening, as well as having an author event at Chapters-Indigo in Toronto.

Resource persons:

Jehad Aliweiwi, Co-Chair of CCR's 30th Anniversary Committee
Faith Shamonda, CCR's 30th Anniversary Coordinator

Professionalization in the Settlement Sector: Challenges and Promises

This two-part workshop discussed existing work and further planning for professionalization in the settlement sector. In the first part, the panel presented current provincial and national initiatives concerning professionalization of settlement workers and organizations. The first presentation focussed on the work done in British Columbia and the development of a competency framework and training for settlement workers in settlement agencies and in other institutions. The second presentation was about Alberta and gave details about the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies' training and accreditation program. Participants then heard about OCASI's new initiative on organizational standards aiming at building the capacity of organizations. The presentation on Quebec gave an overview of the existing provincial policy on community action that recognizes the autonomy of organizations and includes immigrant and refugee serving organizations.

The final presentation was about the National Task Force on Professionalization which was formed in 2005 by provincial and regional umbrella organizations with the coordination of the CCR. Participants heard about the different conferences, resolutions and resources developed over the years that led to the creation of the Task Force, as well as the current funding challenges. The workshop concluded with an open discussion on developing strategies to move forward with the national professionalization initiative using a collaborative approach.

Resource persons:

Diane Fisher, AAISA

Sherman Chan, Task Force on Professionalization in the Settlement sector

Debbie Douglas, OCASI

Stephan Reichhold, TCRI, Québec

Moderator: Carlos Vialard, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council

Benefit and Burden – the unseen costs of transportation loans

Canada is one of few resettlement countries requiring refugees to repay their travel and medical costs as well as interest on the loan. Through a role play and with a DVD prepared for this workshop, participants explored the impacts and hidden costs to newcomers and to society because of the transportation loans program, including barriers to education, family conflict and separation, impoverishment and barriers to family reunification.

An overview of the current Immigration Loans Program was presented. Transportation and Admissibility loans have existed since 1951. Interest was added in 1995. There is a set time to pay: flexibility is granted in payment amounts and schedule, but loans are considered in default if they are not paid according to set schedule. Contributions are granted for special needs refugees – the budget for this is over half a million. There are loans cap of \$10,000 per loan- but this sometimes leads to 18-22 year olds getting their own loan.

Participants viewed the debut screening of a DVD made by an Edmonton coalition showing young people affected by transportation loans, and powerful messages from their teachers saying that the loans have a terrible impact on the students' education prospects and mental health.

Somali youth presented a humorous play with a powerful message about the impact of the travel loan on a Somali family (grandmother anxious about not dying in debt, mother insisting that her son quit school in order to pay family's loan as husband is "useless", complaints about paying costs for son who became gang member and doesn't contribute to the family).

There was also an overview of the impact on sponsors (if they pay loans they likely sponsor fewer refugees).

A public discussion followed about the negative impact of loans, including some personal testimonials from newcomers affected right now. There was a general strong sentiment that it is time to stop charging refugees for these costs.

Outcomes of workshop:

A resolution was proposed to call on the government to absorb the costs of travel and medical expenses for Convention Refugees, members of Humanitarian classes, and dependents of Protected Persons. There was agreement to have a strong policy statement, leaving strategy to implementation.

CCR should secure a copy of the DVD and it should be circulated and shown widely. It would also be great if the play could be filmed as well.

Resource persons:

Mary Fiakpui, Catholic Social Services, Edmonton

Paulette Johnson, Catholic Social Services (SAH), Edmonton

Muuxi Adam, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council

Moderator: Barbara Treviranus

'Struggle to Survive': Struggle to be heard

The workshop consisted of the viewing and discussion about the video 'Struggle to Survive', a semi-fictional account of refugee and immigrant youth in Edmonton and the challenges and experiences they face.

After the video was shown, nine youth that participated in the project came to the front, along with with the director, Taro Hashimoto. They responded to questions and comments from the audience. Overall the feedback provided by the audience was positive. People commented on the relevance of the stories portrayed in the video, the high quality of the production, its value as an educational resource, and the desire to get a copy and use it to promote understanding on the issues faced by refugee and immigrant youth. Taro distributed all copies he brought and explained to the audience how to order further copies.

There was some discussion about the need to seek consent from the intellectual owners of the video before moving to wide distribution, viewing, and posting possibly on the CCR website as a downloadable resource.

The experience was a positive one for the youth participants. From the stage they were able to experience the privilege of having an authoritative voice in front of an audience of over 70 people. Youth were acknowledged for their contribution to the promotion and understanding of refugee youth issues, their ability to articulate key issues, and their courage.

Resource persons:

Taro Hashimoto, Catholic Social Services

Nine youth who participated in the film project

Moderator: Victor Porter, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Youth and Education: Identifying Barriers, Exploring Solutions

This workshop aimed at identifying and examining the multifaceted barriers faced by refugee youth in the Canadian education system. Participants heard about the experiences of newcomer youth from across Canada and attempted to identify commonalities, while simultaneously learning from the challenges and successes they have experienced.

The first part of the workshop looked at the experiences of newcomer youth, as told by three youth from across the country (Hamilton, Edmonton and Winnipeg) with different perspectives. One participant had no previous schooling before arriving in Canada as a teenager, another had already finished the first year of university in her country of origin but was placed in Grade 10 and another had been taught in an informal setting in a refugee camp. They discussed regulatory barriers (age), expectations (academic and social), issues with their peers, teachers not understanding and difficulties/lack of support from the schools.

The second part was from the perspective of a child therapist and school administrator (Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg) that have been working together to develop a different approach to working with newcomer youth and children, one aimed at overcoming some of the challenges associated with trauma and the issues brought up by the youth. They discussed trauma and its effect on brain development while also looking at how teaching methods generally used in Canada fail to take into account the experiences of the newcomer youth. They also provided the workshop participants with successful approaches used in both research and on a more practical level within the Louis Riel School Division.

The third part consisted of a break-out session to identify additional challenges and barriers to success in school, focusing on youth. They then prioritized them, suggesting that issues with the police, teachers/curriculum not accommodating and financial burdens are important factors in achieving success in schools

It was suggested that the model used in the Louis Riel School Division should be spread to different parts of Canada. Also, in the third section, the connectedness of issues with police (profiling etc.) and financial burdens for youth were deemed important and it was suggested that these areas should be explored further. Also there needs to be more emphasis on what we can do. Suggestions include more sharing of resources, newcomer youth training for police, ambassador programs in schools and looking at policy level barriers (social assistance & age restrictions).

Resource persons:

Ruwa Banaga, Hamilton

John Mayom, Winnipeg

Reiman Abakar, Edmonton

Maribela Arruda, Child Psychologist

Tim MacKay, Newcomer Family Reception Centre

Moderators: Noelle DePape, Immigrant and Refugee Community of Manitoba and Jodi Alderson, Needs Centre for War Affected Families, Winnipeg

Family separation: impacts on children

This workshop examined the impact on children of family separation resulting from delays in the family reunification process or exclusion therefrom. Participants heard the perspectives of persons with frontline experience working with children and their families in Canada and overseas.

Case examples of problems arising out of separation were provided. There was also discussion about the absence of institutional protocols to respond to children in Canada who have been affected by separation, specifically in relation to public education and children's aid societies. There was also a presentation of a University of Winnipeg research on psychosocial impact.

Outcomes:

- Concern that concurrent processing is not concurrent
- Concern that extraordinary intervention in particular cases is not a sufficient remedy to systemic problems
- Concern that Temporary Residence Permits are not being used to the extent they ought
- Optimism that recently struck working group may be useful (separated children's issues especially).

Resource persons:

Janis Nickel, MIIC, Winnipeg

Leo Johnson, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO), Hamilton

Tom Denton, Hospitality House Refugee Ministry, Winnipeg

Jan Stewart, University of Winnipeg, Institute of War Affected Children

Moderator: Lisa Wyndels

CCR: Integrating Anti-Oppression to our work

Different forms of oppression affect the lives of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The CCR has begun a process to develop and implement an anti-oppression policy. This workshop offered an opportunity to take part in a learning session about the various forms of oppression and to be actively engaged in the early stage of development of the CCR's Anti-Oppression Policy.

The workshop had two parts. The first one was a facilitated, interactive training on issues of diversity and oppression. It highlighted the intersectionality of forms of oppression and promoted

a change in values and organizational culture in view of integrating anti-oppression to all areas of work. It also reviewed the history of crucial forms of oppression (colonialism, racism) in Canada.

The second part was a facilitated discussion among CCR consultation participants on the basic elements of an anti-oppression policy (the issue of unequal power, the need for an integrated approach that comprehensively addresses the interlocking forms of oppression, the challenges posed by systemic and interpersonal level oppression).

Participants discussed the current policy development process and expressed their expectations as regards the outcomes of the eventual implementation of the policy

Outcomes:

CCR needs to make sure that there is ongoing education for all members and consultation among participants, addressing the differences in terms of learning curves. There is a need to ensure further clarity among members on the reasons why anti-oppression is needed. It was recommended that the emphasis be put on the process (of organizational transformation, of individuals' learning) and to make an explicit commitment in the policy to recognizing the importance of process. Applications of the policy should cover all of CCR's areas of work. Anti-oppression should inform the organization's mission, vision and values, so it is rooted in its foundational statements.

Learning session facilitator:

Anthony Mohamed, Diversity Coordinator, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto

Moderators: Wanda Yamamoto, Welcome Place, Winnipeg and Roberto Jovel, OCASI, Toronto (CCR Executive Committee members)