



Canadian Council for Refugees Spring 2014 Consultation
Gateways to Hope, Pathways to Belonging
29 – 31 May 2014, Halifax
Conference Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees' Spring 2014 Consultation was held the 29 - 31 May at Saint Mary's University in Halifax. Over 200 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with a strong attendance from the Maritimes.

The Spring 2014 Consultation provided a space for learning, experience-sharing and networking among people involved in refugee protection, the immigrant and refugee serving sector, and refugee resettlement across Canada. The Consultation focused largely on issues concerning the recent shifts in citizenship and immigration laws in Canada, the changing landscape for settlement work and refugee sponsorship and protection, as well as on the importance of strengthening and carrying on efforts to share the stories and contributions of refugees in Canada in order to direct the conversation about refugees in a positive direction.

Different approaches and a new program format were tried out at this Consultation, including a new caucus session format held on Friday morning consisting of five parallel sessions for more informal discussions. A new Closing Plenary format was also attempted, which started and ended earlier than usual. Participants found that these changes increased their level of engagement and encouraged their participation in discussions.

Thirty-three sessions were offered during the three days of the Consultation, consisting of two plenary sessions, three orientations, one training session, three working group meetings, nineteen workshops, and five caucus sessions. The program included three or four concurrent workshops in any given time period, apart from the times when participants met in plenary. Workshop streams focused on (a) immigrant and refugee settlement and integration, (b) refugee resettlement and overseas protection and (c) inland refugee protection.

The Working Group meetings held during the Consultation were once again divided in two parts, on Thursday and Friday, which 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 held as part of the Closing Plenary, and to develop strategies for action to address issues emerging from the discussion.

Several CCR member organizations and volunteers from Halifax formed a local organizing committee (LOC) to host the event and successfully ensured that logistics were looked after and that a welcoming team of volunteers was ready to respond to the needs of participants. The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the time, dedication, and hard work of the staff and a team of dynamic and helpful volunteers from the Halifax Refugee Clinic, Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS), YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. The social event organized by the LOC at the Maritimes Museum of the Atlantic offered delicious food, live music, and dancing, which was enjoyed by all who attended.

At this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind contributions of the Halifax Refugee Clinic, ISIS, YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, Halifax Regional Municipality, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, and Destination Halifax.

The CCR gratefully acknowledges financial support for the Consultation from the Nova Scotia Government, Office of Immigration, Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Dalhousie School of Social Work, Maritime Conference United Church of Canada, Greater Halifax Partnership, McInnis Cooper Law Firm, Killam Properties Inc., Global Health Office – Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia Department of Community Services – Child Welfare and Family and Youth Services Branches, and Merrick, Jamieson, Sterns, Washington & Mahody – Barristers.

II. EMERGING NEEDS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Through workshops, caucus sessions, plenaries and the written feedback we received on the Consultation, a number of emerging needs and priorities in the refugee protection and newcomer settlement sector have been identified.

Family Reunification

The discussion on the persisting delays and barriers to family reunification was continued within a caucus format in this Consultation. CCR participants explored ways to effectively push for a speedier process to reunite children with their parents, including calling for an “express entry” process for family reunification to be established, as is currently planned for some economic immigrants.

Concerns with the recent changes to the regulations on sponsoring parents and grandparents were discussed as well. Participants also reported concerns with misinformation about refugee status determination forms, in which applicants are uneasy about writing all of their family member’s names. It was suggested that future applicants be informed about the need to communicate with family members overseas to make sure that all family members are included.

Housing

Settlement workers report the continuing barriers to housing faced by their clients across regions. The workshop allowed for participants to share perspectives on the different barriers faced and to exchange possible strategies to mitigate these barriers. Acknowledging the important links existing between settlement and housing, participants called for the CCR to create a space to continue the discussion on issues concerning housing support and where support workers can examine best practices.

Access to Education

A successful caucus session was organized by the Youth Network to discuss issues, barriers and experiences faced by newcomer youth and by people without status in accessing education. Participants considered the possibility of creating spaces to continue discussing gaps and exchanging experiences across regions, and possible methods to address the barriers faced.

Citizenship Exclusion

Recent changes and proposed legislation are making Canadian citizenship harder to acquire, harder to pass on to one’s children, harder to retain, and easier to lose. Service providers report that their clients are being affected by the complicated residence questionnaires being assigned to some citizenship applicants, as well as difficulties in fulfilling language requirements and in assuming the financial costs required to take the language test.

The discussions raised concerns about the considerable impacts the changes to legislation proposed by Bill C-24 will have on refugees and lower income populations, and on settlement and integration. A [resolution](#) was adopted putting forward principles on citizenship.

Changes in resettlement

The Consultation provided a forum in which to continue discussion and sharing of perspectives on the changes in Canada's resettlement programs and refugee selection structures. Participants discussed concerns and the implications of the direction in which the programs are turning.

First Nations Treaties

The discussion on Treaties and what it means to honour our obligations as Treaty peoples inspired the proposal of a resolution that builds from the [We are Treaty Peoples resolution](#) adopted in November 2013. The [resolution](#) adopted calls for the government of Canada to adopt measures to ensure that newcomers are made aware of their role and responsibilities as Treaty peoples.

Serving refugees with special needs

A discussion was carried out in caucus format to exchange resources and consider best practices, challenges and opportunities related to supporting refugees with special needs. It was suggested that a workshop be organized in the next Consultation on vulnerable populations and case management exploring the experiences of British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario, and that a resource guide of communities of best practices be developed.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Note: a number of the presentations are available online for CCR members at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/spring2014-presentations>

Opening plenary

The Consultation opened with a welcome from Loly Rico, President of the CCR. Her welcoming speech was followed by Rup Narayan Dhungana, CCR Youth Network Ambassador who spoke about his own experience and involvement with the Youth Network, and the importance of including youth in discussions about issues affecting refugees and newcomers. Participants were given an opportunity to learn about the history and realities of the Mi'kmaq First Nation, on whose territory we were meeting.

Professor James Morrison, from St Mary's University gave the keynote speech, exploring the role of Pier 21 in Canada's immigration history through some of the stories collected in the museum's Oral History Collection. He also highlighted some of the experiences of political, economic and cultural refugees who arrived to Canada through the years, while acknowledging some of the historical and current barriers imposed on refugees and newcomers.

Moderators: Claudette Legault and Angélique Cishahayo

Closing plenary and General Meeting

Highlights of the Consultation were presented and the next conference in Gatineau, 27-29 November 2014 was announced. Guest speaker Ilamaran Nagarasa spoke on the topic of "Witness to Genocide, Witness to Resilience," sharing the story of his journey from Sri Lanka to Canada, and his difficult, yet resilient experience upon arrival.

In the General Meeting, members reviewed the resolutions process, adopted two resolutions, on [Citizenship](#) and on [Treaties](#), and elected a nominating committee.

Co-chairs: Loly Rico and Gilbert Iyamuremye

IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Note: a number of presentations from the workshops are available to CCR members online at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/spring2014-presentations>.

Principles of Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program Challenged by Ongoing Changes

This workshop explored the ways in which the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program is changing towards one that is more government-led and where private sponsors, as representatives of civil society, have less opportunity to respond to refugees that they believe deserve attention. It also explored possible ways of using the limited allocations of sponsorship spaces as best as possible.

Tom Denton compared the current context to the early years of the PSR Program, when greater cooperation existed with the government of Canada and less paperwork was required. Brian Dyck identified some of the current challenges faced, particularly relating to allocations of sponsorship spaces and case backlogs. Elizabeth Walton offered an explanation for the existing backlog, the allocations and caps, in particular pointing out the issue faced with allocation spaces that remain unused at the end of the year. As a response, she suggested that the Settlement Agreement Holders (SAH) Secretariat track all unused spaces and that these be assigned fairly to SAHs who are ready as required.

The discussion following the presentations focused on the importance of raising public awareness through education on refugee sponsorship, and to engage a younger demographic in these efforts. The following suggestions came out of the discussion:

- To affirm the Proud to Protect Campaign, 16-22 June 2014
- To develop education pieces for MPs about refugee sponsorship, and eventually for faith groups.

Resource persons:

Tom Denton, Hospitality House Refugee Ministry, Winnipeg

Elizabeth Walton, SAH Secretariat

Brian Dyck, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba Refugee Assistance Program & SAH Council Chair

Moderators: Rose Dekker and Gilbert Iyamuremye

CBSA Accountability

This workshop underlined the different efforts that the CCR has carried out in order to call for a complaints and oversight mechanism for the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

Participants explored why this is necessary and what a mechanism could and should look like.

Rick Goldman specifically presented an overview of the CCR's efforts to advocate for CBSA accountability for the past 20 years. These efforts have included resolutions on detention, removals, Port of Entry interviews and a call for the Commissioner on Children's Rights, as well as a letter regarding arming of CBSA officers. This presentation pointed out that the CCR has on

many occasions called for an independent complaints procedure, an oversight mechanism, and an ombudsperson, among other requests. Reference was made to a number of reports that have recommended greater accountability from CBSA and that have called attention to the lack of response and movement from the government with respect to this file over the years.

Howard Epstein gave a more general presentation concerning the different aspects to take into consideration when calling for a specific oversight mechanism. These included: grounds for complaints, agents (i.e. whether a third party can make a complaint on behalf of others), remedies called for, time limits, standard of proof, and reasons, among other things to consider. He emphasized the effectiveness of drafting legislation to decision-makers that reflects what advocates are seeking.

During the discussion, there was a repeated emphasis on the need to record CBSA interviews as a first step. It was also suggested that member organizations collect examples of priority areas for CBSA accountability. The Refugee Law Office offered to gather cases and priority concerns and to move forward on this topic in collaboration with the CCR. The importance of looking at provincial bodies, such as Human Rights Commissions, was also pointed out in order to determine if they have any jurisdiction.

Resource persons:

Rick Goldman, Committee to Aid Refugees and CCR Secretary

Howard Epstein, Lawyer, former Member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, Halifax

Moderators: Jenny Jeanes and Claire Roque

Mitigating Barriers to Housing, Setting the Foundation for Settlement

This workshop focused on the barriers to housing that refugees face regionally and discussed the important connection between housing and settlement. It explored ways of mitigating barriers to housing stability, as well as strategies to find long-term solutions for refugee housing.

Claudia Jahn, who has worked in the housing and homelessness sector for several years, pointed out how changes in legislation have affected the ways in which marginalized people access housing. As an example, she highlighted Halifax's Homelessness Partnership Strategy's shift from a focus on funding organizations and projects using housing support, to one that concentrates on organizations implementing a housing-first lens. She noted that while this approach will benefit chronically homeless people, it may not be appropriate for diverse populations with unique needs who require strong housing support. Finally, she suggested that alternative streams of funding be sought and that strong connections be made with the private sector to secure housing for newcomer populations in Halifax.

Janet Fairfield shared the experience of COSTI's "A Path to Home" program in Toronto, illustrating how essential housing support is to settlement. COSTI is one of three hosts of the program (presently in Edmonton, Fredericton and Toronto) and supports the housing needs of newcomers in the greater Toronto area, reducing barriers to housing stability by re-engineering

settlement through a housing lens. “A Path to Home” uses a Housing Continuum Model that focuses on: 1) Housing Access; 2) Stabilization; and 3) Eviction Prevention.

Hani Al-Ubeady shared some of the short-term and long-term strategies used by Welcome Place in Winnipeg to address newcomers’ housing and settlement needs:

Short term strategies: Welcome Place brought the private sector together with government officials to discuss approaches to affordable housing. As a result of these meetings, the provincial government agreed to give subsidies to the private sector to offer rental units at a rate geared to individuals’ income.

Long term strategies: Ongoing research by the University of Winnipeg is looking to find tangible solutions to the gap between government-provided shelter allowances (for Government Assisted Refugees – GARs) or housing budgets (for other refugees), and the cost of available housing in Winnipeg. Preliminary research findings have indicated that this gap contributes to refugees moving into inadequate housing, to families sharing housing with other individuals or families, and to families drawing resources from other areas (food and transportation budget) to pay for housing.

In the future, Welcome Place hopes research will include a comparative pan-national study leading to recommendations for communities involved in the study. Recommendations to address the barriers to refugee housing include:

- Increase the number of low income units available to refugees;
- Stabilize and support transitional housing options for refugees;
- Develop partnerships between government and agencies to support refugee-serving agencies in becoming housing providers/managers;
- Build a pan-Canadian network to advocate for refugee housing solutions.

Participants agreed that housing is inextricably linked to settlement and suggested that it remain on the table as a key issue for the CCR. Seeing that barriers to safe and affordable housing are a national concern, it was also suggested that the CCR create a space on the website for issues concerning housing support and where housing support workers working with immigrants and refugees can convene and discuss best practices.

Resource persons:

Claudia Jahn, Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, Halifax
Janet Fairfield, COSTI, Toronto
Hani Al-Ubeady, Welcome Place, Winnipeg

Moderators: Caroline Dailly and Florim Tafilaj

Dialogue on Resettlement policy

This workshop was divided into two parts. In the first part, participants heard from Jean-Marc Gionet, the new Director of Resettlement at CIC, and discussed with him questions related to the

current state of the Refugee Resettlement Program. His presentation shared anticipated resettlement targets for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), and Blended Visa Office Referrals (BVORs) for 2015. He also highlighted the refugee populations that CIC will be focusing on as part of their multi-year commitment approach, and looked at the status of CIC's "inventory management strategy". Finally, he stated that as part of CIC's broader response to the Syrian crisis, they are considering UNHCR's request to admit 100,000 Syrian refugees in Canada over 2 years starting in 2015.

In the second part of the workshop, participants heard from Naomi Alboim, who discussed "A Proposed Refugee Resettlement Policy for a New Age," a paper authored by her, Howard Adelman and Mike Molloy, which recommends new directions for Canada's refugee resettlement program. In particular, she highlighted the need to improve the effectiveness of the program in:

- Facilitating family reunification for refugees in Canada;
- Expanding Private Sponsorship;
- Improving quality of support for GARS;
- Enhancing labour market integration for refugees.

The discussion following the presentation suggested pursuing a public education campaign to counter-balance the prevailing negative discourse about refugees.

Resource persons:

Jean-Marc Gionet, Director, Resettlement, CIC

Naomi Alboim, Fellow at the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University

Moderators: Jim Mair and Rivka Augenfeld

Security inadmissibility: From Liberation to Limbo

This workshop focused on the impact of the security inadmissibility provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) on the lives of refugees in Canada. The panel included the legal context in which this takes place and stories from individuals who have been found to be inadmissible.

Angus Grant provided a legal overview of IRPA's section 34 provision, including how it operates. He explained how the Courts have interpreted the provision, and provided examples to demonstrate the breadth of activities and organizations to which the provision is applied.

Julie Chamagne discussed the severe consequences of unjust labelling as a security threat. She used the example of Habtom Kibreab, an Eritrean refugee in Halifax who was driven to take his own life after he was denied protection in Canada. Francisco Rico talked about the case of Oscar Vigil, a former journalist and FMLN press secretary from El Salvador now facing deportation because of his involvement with that organization.

Following the presentations the group entered into a strategy discussion, including potential legal, advocacy and public education initiatives to challenge these provisions. An action request was made for members to collect stories of people that have been affected by security inadmissibility provisions. A summary of the strategy options was presented at the Inland Protection Working Group meeting, and a committee was struck to start to develop a campaign that will be brought forward in the next meeting.

Resource persons:

Angus Grant, Legal Aid Ontario/Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto
Julie Chamagne, Halifax Refugee Clinic

Moderator: Andrew Brouwer and Francisco Rico-Martinez

Treaties between First Nations and the Crown: The Case of the Mi'kmaq

In November 2013 the CCR passed a resolution to honour all the Treaties upon which this country is founded and which bind all of us as Treaty peoples. This workshop was meant to provide a 101 training on treaties between the Crown and Indigenous peoples in Canada, and on what it means as individuals and organizations to honour our obligations as Treaty peoples.

Unfortunately the main panellist, Shelley Young, was unable to attend. However, Darryl Leroux was able to present on the importance of First Nations Treaties, with a special focus on the Treaty about the land in which the Consultation took place on: Mi'kma'ki, the land of the Mi'kmaq First Nation.

In the course of discussion, participants discovered similar strategies that the government utilizes to condemn and oppress First Nations people and refugees. The discussion resulted in the proposal of a resolution regarding the CCR's continuing dedication to learn more about the importance of Treaties, and how to honour these as Treaty people.

Resource persons:

Darryl Leroux, St Mary's University
Shelley Young, Eskasoni, Mi'kmaq First Nation (absent)

Moderator: Shauna Jimenez

Facilitating Safe Space for Non-Status Populations

This workshop advanced discussion around how to safely and appropriately encourage the participation of non-status individuals in different areas of our work, particularly in light of the growing Sanctuary City movement. The aim of the workshop was to inform promising practices in program development and implementation, and to consider ways of improving the shape of service delivery in responding to the specific needs of non-status populations.

Participants requested that the workshop discussion be continued in the way of a virtual meeting in order to allow for further discussion about creating safe spaces for people without status,

particularly across provinces and in rural and urban areas. It was also suggested that this space be used to discuss implications on migrant workers.

Resource persons:

Loly Rico, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto

Gillian Zubizarreta and Keith Macmillan, Halifax Refugee Clinic, Halifax

Valeri Garcia, CCR Youth Network, Edmonton

Moderators: Destin Bujang and Amy Casipullai

Global Migrant Justice Organizing

This workshop looked at international and transnational efforts to promote justice for migrant workers. Panellists highlighted the situation of migrant workers in different countries, the global socio-political context that makes people engage in temporary labour migration, the role of governments and international institutions in "managing" migration, and the resistance of migrant justice struggles at the global level.

Resource persons:

Gloria Nafziger, Amnesty International, Toronto

Stan Raper, Agricultural Workers Alliance (AWA), Rexdale

Connie Sorio, International Migrant Alliance, Toronto

Moderator: Amy Casipullai

Cessation

This workshop addressed the grounds for cessation of refugee status and emerging issues following recent changes in the law, involving a significant increase in CBSA applications to strip refugees of their status in Canada. Chantal Tie and Rick Goldman provided the legal context and presented case examples that highlighted the types of situations that are being considered for cessation applications and the severe consequences of cessation. Advice for community groups and their clients was provided and the panellists shared CCR resources available on the website (<https://ccrweb.ca/en/cessation-basic-information>).

Participants requested that the presentation be made available on the CCR website as an additional tool for members, and two action requests were made for:

- The CCR to request information from CBSA on their criteria for initiating cessation applications, as well as access to officers' training curriculum on cessation and to make the guidelines transparent and public;
- Members to collect information on cessation cases and report them to the CCR.

Resource persons:

Chantal Tie, South Ottawa Community Legal Services

Rick Goldman, Committee to Aid Refugees, Montreal

Moderator: Francisco Rico-Martinez

Violence against women and immigration policies

This workshop offered a context for violence against women experienced by immigrant, refugee and non-status women, looking at how particular Canadian immigration policies put women at increased risk of violence. Angie Arora provided a contextual framework for working with immigrant, refugee or non-status women who have experienced/are experiencing violence. She focused on the meaning and implications of working with a model that is culturally sensitive and emphasized the need to focus on the particular barriers faced by women with specific needs, which may be independent of culture.

Sayran Sulevani discussed the evolution of Canadian immigration policy and focused on the limitations and risks imposed by the Conditional Permanent Residence (CPR) policy for spousal sponsorship. She also emphasized the option of applying for Humanitarian and Compassionate (H&C) consideration for women who are facing difficulties as a result of CPR, and presented information on the H&C toolkit produced by the Barbara Schlifer Clinic. Julie Chamagne shared 3 case studies in order to demonstrate how the changes to the refugee determination system may have a particular impact on women who have experienced violence.

Following the presentations participants were able to exchange ideas on how best to operate within systems that are problematic when working with women who have experienced violence.

Resource persons:

Angie Arora, Seneca College, Toronto

Sayran Sulevani, Barbara Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Toronto

Julie Chamagne, Halifax Refugee Clinic

Moderators: Tanya Aberman and Katie Tinker

Urgent Protection and Refugee Resettlement

This workshop examined the main elements of Canada's Urgent Protection Program (UPP) and discussed its effectiveness in providing protection to refugees in need of immediate settlement. The panellists reviewed past CCR resolutions on Urgent Protection, as well as CIC resources and information on the UPP and process, and discussed the UNHCR's "Emergency Submissions to Canada 2010-2012: Observations and trends analysis". The panellists also examined pre-arrival urgent protection cases and concerns, with some case examples from Egypt, and post-arrival resettlement concerns, presenting case examples from Ontario.

Following the presentations, participants were divided into groups in order to discuss questions regarding participants' experience with the UPP and to consider strategies for responding to the immediate protection needs of refugees. The group discussion identified the following points:

- There is a need to have adequate information on UPP cases in order to be able to better serve and resource the person in need of protection. CIC needs to coordinate this information and the processes involved.

- There is a need to reconcile the various processes and programs that address the UPP category so that it is accessible to more organizations, including SAHs.
- The UPP is ineffective because of the long processing times and inadequate resources to support the program.
- There is a need to open up the referral process to other agencies beyond the UNHCR, including private sponsors and NGOs.
- The UPP would benefit if it were to: a) Provide greater access to SAHs in order to build the capacity to deal with these cases; and b) Expedite the nature of the process for the benefit of the person.

Resource persons:

Monica Abdelkader, COSTI Immigrant Services, Toronto

Rob Shropshire (summarizing UNHCR findings)

Moderators: Mustafa Delsoz and Jennifer Mpungu

Citizenship: Inclusion or exclusion?

This workshop explored current and emerging issues around citizenship in Canada, including the implications of Bill C-24. Daisy Au shared some of the difficulties her clients have faced in Vancouver and the barriers that more vulnerable newcomers are likely to face as a result of the changes proposed by Bill C-24, emphasizing that these will work against the timely integration and full participation of newcomers in Canada.

Marie Kettle gave an overview of the Salvation Army's Atlantic Refugee and Immigrant Services (ARIS) project and discussed the challenges that clients are facing with regards to fulfilling language requirements and meeting the financial cost of taking the language test in order to be able to apply for citizenship. She expressed concerns that the proposed changes will increase financial barriers, particularly for refugees and for lower income populations, and will have particularly negative effects on older applicants.

Constance MacIntosh explored the ways in which the changes implemented in 2012 have particularly affected refugees and explained how existing barriers may be compounded by the proposed changes to citizenship legislation. She also focused on cessation as a new vulnerability that only applies to refugees, and explained how citizenship has become harder to get and easier to lose.

Ala'a Jarban provided a youth perspective on how the proposed changes will specifically affect youth. Among other issues he spoke of the challenges youth already face in managing the paperwork and fees involved with various immigration processes prior to citizenship eligibility. These would only be increased by the new citizenship policies which implement higher fees and lengthier applications. He also discussed the additional barriers which will be created by extending the age bracket within which applicants need to show proof of language proficiency to 14-64, explaining that there are many factors which influence how quickly young immigrants are able to become fluent in English or French, including the quality of education they are receiving in our schools.

This workshop resulted in a resolution presented by Immigration and Settlement and Inland Protection, putting forward principles on citizenship. An action request was also made for members to continue collecting stories on citizenship exclusion.

Resource persons:

Daisy Au, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Marie Kettle, Salvation Army ARIS, Halifax

Constance MacIntosh, Dalhousie Law School, Halifax

Ala'a Jarban, CCR Youth Ambassador

Moderators: Katrina Heyde and Geri Sadoway

Trafficking of Non-Citizen Women and Gender-Based Trauma

This workshop explored the different forms of gender-based trauma faced by trafficked women, particularly non-citizen women. It also examined how specific immigration and refugee policies can make trafficked persons more vulnerable to trafficking and can impact the trauma that has been previously experienced.

Larissa Maxwell presented an overview of the specialized services that Debora's Gate, as part of the Salvation Army in British Columbia, provides to domestically and internationally trafficked women, girls and transgendered individuals. She then explained the different levels of trauma that trafficked persons may face, and looked at how different immigration laws, processes and the many barriers to access status can result in compounding the trauma of trafficked non-citizens. She highlighted that, in order to support people to begin to address their trauma and the personal impact on a deeper level, a minimum of 1 year is necessary; for some people, this process can take years or a lifetime.

Shelley Gilbert looked at the ways in which policy impacts trafficked persons' trauma symptoms, and how trauma presents itself while trafficked non-citizens attempt to access programs or services that are governed by policy. She did this by analyzing specific immigration policies and the factors that have an impact on trafficked non-citizens' potential to escape a trafficking situation, or to be able to provide their full story. The policies presented were:

- Conditional Permanent Residence policy (must live with spouse for 2 years before full permanent residence is given, and burden of proof of abuse is on the sponsored spouse);
- New bars to access Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) for unsuccessful refugee claimants (for 1 year, or 5 years for Designated Foreign Nationals);
- New bars to access a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (for 1 year, or 3 years for claimants from a designated country of origin);
- Short timeline (15 days) to provide a Basis of Claim to CIC.

The limitations caused by policies' inability to adjust to the flexibility and complexity of trafficking situations were underlined, as well as their failure to recognize the factors that affect individuals the most. The narrow interpretation of the element of coercion in practice was also

presented as an important barrier that greatly impacts trafficked persons' access to protection and their compounded trauma symptoms.

Natasha Jamieson presented on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) approach to trafficking in persons and on the trainings they provide in order to raise awareness about trafficking among frontline officers and community groups, and in order to build connections with groups across Nova Scotia. She emphasized the importance of working closely with other government agencies, namely CIC and CBSA, and the need for cross-training opportunities between CBSA and the RCMP regarding the detection of potential human trafficking and forced labour situations. She also highlighted the importance of learning to look at each other's mandates and of sharing information.

Following the presentations, a discussion was carried out. Immigration and Refugee Board representatives who were present identified the need to provide training to IRB members on trafficking-related issues. An action request was also made for the CCR to follow up with CIC regarding the bars to TRPs and about any plans to exempt trafficked persons.

Resource persons:

Larissa Maxwell, Deborah's Gate, The Salvation Army, British Columbia
Shelley Gilbert, Legal Assistance of Windsor and Windsor Essex Anti-Human Trafficking Action Group - WEFIGHT, Windsor
Natasha Jamieson, RCMP, Nova Scotia

Moderators: Marta Kalita and Amy Casipullai

When Is a Voluntary Return Truly Voluntary?

In this workshop, panellists examined programs of return or repatriation from Kenya, Israel and Canada, and examined whether they can be considered voluntary. Waikwa Wanyoike presented (via Skype) on the current status of the situation in Kenya and also provided a context on past agreements between the Kenyan and Somali governments and the UNHCR, aimed at facilitating repatriation of refugees. It was highlighted that authorities are rounding up Somali refugees and sending them back. The panelist argued that recent efforts by the Kenyan government to return Somali refugees are not legal and cannot be considered voluntary.

Melissa Scott examined the situation in Israel and the particular context in which the country's citizenship and immigration framework operates, which does not follow international standards. The panellist discussed ways in which this framework affects African refugees' and non-Jewish asylum seekers' rights and limits their access to protection, leaving most asylum seekers in Israel marginalized, in a state of 'permanent temporariness' and in limbo. The panellist therefore argued that, faced with the current policy context, with pressures on the community and discrimination, as well as with the possibility of being detained for an indefinite period of time, asylum seekers are being coerced into choosing "voluntary" return, which can be understood as a situation of necessitated departure.

Francisco Rico-Martinez examined the program of return from Canada and explained that the current context only provides rejected refugees with 2 options that are not fully voluntary:

- 1) If a refugee claimant is rejected by the IRB and an appeal fails, the person must leave the country. If the person does not want to leave voluntarily, he/she will be forcibly removed by CBSA.
- 2) The Assisted Voluntary Return Program is managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and is meant to provide support and anonymity to the person being removed.

It was therefore argued that, since voluntary departure implies consent from both parties and rejected refugee claimants often do not have a real choice, return cannot be considered voluntary.

The presentations were followed by a discussion, and an action request was made for the CCR to contact NGOs in Dadaab in order to receive a security assessment, as well as information on how the situation has changed over time.

Resource persons:

Waikwa Wanyoike, Katiba Institute, Nairobi (by Skype)
Melissa Scott, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University
Francisco Rico-Martinez, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto

Moderators: Sharmarke Mohamed and Marie-Claire Rufagari

Youth Workshop

The Youth workshop gave members of the Youth Network and other youth participants an opportunity to work with local poet extraordinaire El Jones. El presented a few of her own spoken word pieces to help participants feel comfortable and display how spoken word can be used as a tool to express oneself and talk about important social issues. All participants were moved by El's words and were motivated to create their own.

Participants then discussed issues facing newcomer youth that they would like to write and speak about. An interesting theme that came about was what it means to "become Canadian." With guidance from El, the group took some time to write their own pieces, some individually and some in groups. Those who were comfortable doing so shared their pieces with the rest of the group and the result was powerful. Some of the pieces that were created will be included in the Youth Network's Alternative Guide to Turtle Island (Canada) for Newcomer Youth.

Moderators: Ala'a Jarban and Valeri Garcia, CCR Youth Ambassadors

Changing Context for Settlement Work

This workshop first provided an overview of the development of the National Settlement Council (NSC) and then presented some of the emerging trends that have been discussed at the NSC. It also explored what these trends mean for settlement service providers in Canada.

The current topics of discussion at the NSC include potential changes to the Canadian immigration system, including:

- Program eligibility
- Next Call for Proposals (CFP)
- Pre-arrival services
- Vulnerable populations
- Labour market
- Express entry

The workshop discussion also focused on the NSC's existing working groups, which look at grants and contribution agreements, professional development, and performance measurement, on the National Language Advisory, and on the newer policy-focused groups that concentrate on vulnerable populations and pre-arrival services.

Participants were encouraged to participate in the process through constituent groups, including provincial regional umbrellas, the CCR, SAH Council, UNHCR, and Francophone umbrellas, and to participate in the provincial and regional jurisdictional summits that CIC will be hosting in the Fall/Winter 2014/2015, leading into the CFP process.

Resource persons:

Claudette Legault, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, Halifax
Chris Friesen, Immigrant Services Society, Vancouver
Sherman Chan, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Moderators: Jean McRae and Jehad Aliweiwi

Sharing Refugee Stories for a Stronger Canada

This workshop explored how to share refugee stories with new audiences through unique community partnerships, in order to better inform and change public perceptions about refugees in Canada.

Veronica Simmonds shared with participants some resources and possible approaches to sharing stories, including methods to promote offline and online story sharing, and ideas to help build an audience.

Catherine Baillie Abidi and Dr. Susan Brigham presented examples of ways to share stories and the lessons learnt from the Refugee Photography Project carried out in Halifax, with the support of Mount St. Vincent University. This project explored storytelling of migration experiences through participatory photography. It involved ten participants from different newcomer communities who used photography to document their lives in order to process their learning experiences on a personal level, and to communicate their migration experiences to a broader audience. All project participants shared their stories in different public community venues across Halifax.

Following these presentations, participants also heard examples and lessons on sharing refugee stories from Kimberly BC, Winnipeg MB, and Kitchener-Waterloo, ON. These examples are available online: ccrweb.ca/en/proud-to-protect-refugees-activities.

Participants were encouraged to think of ways in which they can share refugee stories in their own communities. Ideas shared included: working with teachers and students to bring refugee stories to classrooms, using and promoting stories of exile, making connections with literary groups, development of online base to share and promote stories and storytelling tools, using humour and satire to get messages across, and more.

The [Proud to Protect Refugees](#) campaign, launched in 2013, was also presented as a powerful way of sharing the contributions of refugees in Canada and of raising refugee voices and putting them at the centre of the conversation. As part of this campaign, participants were encouraged to organize a [Walk with refugees for a stronger Canada](#) to support efforts to change the conversation about refugees and others seeking protection in Canada.

Resource persons:

Veronica Simmonds, Communications and Marketing coordinator for Invisible Publishing, Halifax

Catherine Baillie Abidi and Dr. Susan Brigham, Refugee Photography Project, Halifax

Moderators: Eunice Valenzuela and Giovanni Rico

V. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Participants had the opportunity to connect and exchange valuable information with others involved in refugee protection, the immigrant and refugee serving sector, and refugee resettlement across Canada. Overall, participants reported that they valued the opportunity to network, learn best practices, exchange ideas and solutions to problems, as well as receive updates on issues affecting their daily work.

Among the qualities of the Consultation that were appreciated the most were the expertise of resource people, the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, and the overall organization and content of the Consultation. Several people valued having had the opportunity to hear different perspectives on various issues and having representation from government agencies with experience with refugee issues. Overall, participants reported having benefited from the knowledge acquired throughout the Consultation, seen as particularly relevant to their day-to-day work.

Respondents greatly appreciated the way in which participation and inclusion were fostered at the Consultation. Some of the factors identified as having contributed to an inclusive atmosphere were introductory statements reminding participants that we strive to make the Consultation a safe space, free of oppression, in which people can express themselves, as well as the time dedicated for introductions at the beginning of the working group meetings, efforts made by moderators and panellists to encourage participation and promote inclusive and open discussions, and the availability of translation in some sessions.

While comments on participation and inclusion were overwhelmingly positive, a few suggestions were made to enhance this in future Consultations. Most importantly, participants recommended including more refugee and First Nations participation in discussions, and improving the francophone element of the Consultation. A suggestion was also made to create some space for government participation in some of the Working Group sessions. Moreover, while there were many positive comments regarding moderators' contribution to making the sessions inclusive, a suggestion was made to explore ways of limiting the speaking time of participants who tend to dominate the discussion.

Overall, respondents felt that the conference was a success. Among the sources of motivation prompting participants to attend future Consultations were: the cause behind work to assist refugees, a focus on successful stories in addition to unsuccessful ones, reporting positive outcomes following the conference and greater participation from organizations in the Quebec region. Logistically, it was suggested that Consultations be organized in a more central location.