



**Canadian Council for Refugees Spring 2011 Consultation
“Honouring Refugee Rights: 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention”
26-28 May 2011, Hamilton
Conference Report**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees’ 2011 Spring Consultation was held May 26-28 at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Hamilton, Ontario. Over 350 participants from across Canada and beyond attended the Consultation. Several settlement organizations from across the Hamilton region pulled together to host the event, ensuring substantial participation by local front-line settlement workers.

The 2011 Spring Consultation provided an opportunity for training, learning and experience-sharing among people involved in the immigrant and refugee serving sector from across Canada, as well as creating space for policy discussions and prioritizing issues among government and non-governmental representatives.

Thirty sessions were offered during the three days of the consultation, consisting of one plenary session, two orientations, three working group meetings, twenty workshops and training sessions, three caucuses and a General Meeting. 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 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 develop strategies for action to address issues emerging from the discussion.

Participants’ oral and written evaluations were overall extremely positive. Participants appreciated the networking opportunities offered by the Consultation, the content of the workshops, the quality of presentations, the diversity of participants, the good organization and smooth running of the event, and the facilities.

The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the very efficient work of the local organizing committee (LOC), made up of staff from various organizations in Hamilton, as well as some interested individuals. The LOC coordinated a team of dynamic and helpful volunteers, who contributed to the friendly atmosphere, as well as the smooth running, of the event.

The portions of the consultation addressing settlement and integration were funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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 newcomer settlement sector have been identified.

Violence against Newcomer Women

The consultation highlighted the need to engage men in the struggle to end violence against women. A workshop and a smaller caucus session were held on this issue, the latter facilitated by New Jersey anti-violence and anti-sexism activist and film maker Byron Hurt. Participants were interested in continuing this discussion in order to raise awareness and mobilize both men and women to help end violence against women.

At the Spring Consultation the CCR launched its new web page and e-mail list on issues pertaining to newcomer women in situations of violence (see: ccrweb.ca/vaw), developed as follow up to needs identified in earlier consultations. The new resources are intended to support settlement workers serving newcomer women clients in situations of violence.

Participants at the Immigration and Settlement working group meeting discussed the federal government's recent proposal for a conditional permanent residence period for sponsored partners, which would create inequalities in all spousal sponsorship relationships, and put women who experience violence at increased risk. Participants heard testimony from a survivor of violence who had been trapped as the sponsored partner in an abusive relationship, and felt it was important for settlement agencies and NGOs to raise awareness on the issue.

Need to increase public awareness

Participants affirmed the importance of addressing public opinion and working to ensure that Canadians are aware of the positive contributions of newcomers. This need was highlighted in the context of a perception of an increase in negative discourse about refugees and immigrants, which has broad impacts on the successful integration of newcomers. Many agreed that an effective strategy for engaging the public is to put a human face on the realities of newcomers by supporting refugees and immigrants in telling their stories.

Responding to trafficked persons

The workshop on trafficked persons confirmed that a growing number of service providers are aware of trafficking issues, and developing their capacity to educate the public about trafficking and offer services to trafficked persons. Participants were able to work together to identify gaps and next steps in ensuring relevant resources to support them are developed and shared.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Issues of exploitation and abuse under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program continue to be identified as of great concern to many service providers. Discussion in Hamilton focused on questions of appropriate and affordable housing for migrant workers, and the different forms of economic exploitation under the TFWP, some of which fit the description of human trafficking.

A need was identified for public education and awareness-raising about the concerns with the situation of migrant workers in Canada.

Impact of Missing and Inaccurate Identity Documents

Participants examined the problems faced by newcomer youth who have lost their permanent resident card or have incorrect information (such as date of birth or name spelling) on their PR card. As a result, they may be denied access to important services and resources. This issue had been identified as a key concern by the CCR Youth Network.

Racism/Racial Profiling

Racism is of course a deep and well-known problem in relation to newcomer integration: the CCR Spring Consultation shone a light in particular on how it affects newcomer youth. At the root of many of the damaging “myths” about newcomer youth lie racist stereotypes. The CCR Youth Network organized a workshop on racial profiling that used group activities and discussion to strategize on solutions to this complex problem faced by many newcomers.

Participants were also concerned over government policies and practices that have adverse impacts particularly on applicants from Africa.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY DISCUSSION

Opening plenary

Participants were welcomed to the consultation and introduced to the theme of “Honouring Refugee Rights: 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention”, which was addressed by the three keynote speakers. Abraham Abraham spoke about the relevance and limits of the Convention, the initiatives of the UNHCR to mark its 60th anniversary and the strengths of Canadian refugee programs, as well as areas of concern for the UNHCR. Soheila Pashang focused on the experience of women, highlighting the gender-specific abuses experienced by women and the fact that existing categories such as “refugee” and “migrant worker” leave many migrants falling between the cracks, without status or protection. She also spoke about the institutional challenges facing those working in refugee and immigrant-serving organizations. Finally, Barbara Jackman gave a legal perspective, emphasizing the importance of entrenching rights in law. She reviewed the progress achieved in Canada since the 1960s, when the law did not even include a definition of refugee, and reviewed some continuing and re-emerging challenges, such as access to timely family reunification and excessively short timelines for the refugee claim process. She emphasized the fundamental importance of community work, arguing that court decisions that strengthen refugee rights come as a result not just of legal arguments, but as a consequence of successes by community activists in winning over public opinion.

Remarks:

Abraham Abraham, UNHCR representative in Canada

Soehila Pashang, Seneca College

Barbara Jackman, lawyer

Moderators: Scott Jones and Tanya Chute Molina

General Meeting

The Consultation concluded with the CCR General Meeting. Four resolutions were adopted. The resolutions can be found at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/resolutions-may-2011>. Action requests from Working Groups to members were also presented (<http://ccrweb.ca/en/action-spring-2011>).

IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Housing for Migrant Workers

This workshop looked at the housing issues faced by migrant workers in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program through a human rights lens and identified related gaps in access to appropriate and affordable housing. There was a discussion period at the end for strategizing on next steps to address migrant workers' housing issues.

The workshop began with the presenter from CERA introducing the human rights framework for housing. This framework relies on three points: tenants are seen as human individuals with dignity; there are standards in housing that must be met; when these standards aren't met, there must be a mechanism to complain about this. The 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights declares that all people have the right to adequate housing. Provincial legislations such as the Ontario Human Rights Code aim to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity. In its provisions concerning housing, the Code helps to ensure that all people in Ontario have equal opportunity to access accommodation. However, programs under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program are antithetical to these rights: the Live-in Caregiver Program forces caregivers to give up their human rights by requiring them to live with their employers. The lack of privacy and mobility that results from this set-up is a fundamental part of the human rights violation and is a way of maintaining control over workers. Workers participating in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program have been subject to notoriously deplorable housing conditions. Because there are housing construction limitations on some agricultural lands, housing that is put up must be temporary, so it is likely to be sub-standard.

The resource persons from Filipino migrant organizations Migrante and PINAY gave their first-hand experience of situations of inadequate and even exploitative housing situations faced by Temporary Foreign Workers. The floor was opened for discussion, and people felt that the CCR should advocate for migrant workers to be provided with tenants' rights information, and to continue working for the rights of migrant workers in Canada to be protected.

Resource Persons:

Leilani Farha, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, Ottawa

Christopher Sorio, Migrante, Toronto

Evelyn Calugay, PINAY, Montreal

Moderator: Jill Hanley, McGill School of Social Work and Immigrant Workers Centre

Focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo

This workshop addressed the displacement of Congolese, internally and as refugees, with a special focus on women. Canada's involvement, both in sustaining the conflict and in responding to refugees was examined.

Resource persons made the link between the war in DRC that has forcibly displaced people and the activities of Canadian mining companies. An example was given of a company alleged to have contributed by its actions to the displacement of thousands. The role that Canada could play in the protection of Congolese refugees and the situation of Congolese IDPs was also discussed.

Since Canadian mining companies contribute in a number of ways to the war in DRC, it was felt that Canada must intervene in the activities of Canadian mining companies there, work with international partners to end instabilities in DRC, increase the numbers of Congolese resettled in Canada, and expedite family reunification cases.

Resource persons:

Leilani Tshiamo Kalonji, lawyer and former program officer, UN Population Fund in Congo

Matt Eisenbrandt, legal coordinator, Canadian Centre for International Justice

Erick Makundi, doctoral candidate, University of Toronto

Moderator: Fredrick Wangabo MweneNgabo

Refugee Reform (Bill C-11)

This workshop addressed the upcoming changes to the refugee determination system, with a focus on the new interview for refugee claimants. Participants received up-to-date information on plans for the new process and learned about opportunities to provide support for claimants going through the process.

The workshop covered two aspects of the changes to the refugee determination system under Bill C-11. The first part covered what could be expected at the Immigration and Refugee Board, what they are planning for, what information will be gathered and how the interviews will be conducted; the second part addressed what is being done to help NGOs to prepare claimants for their interviews, in particular the Refugee Forum project to develop and train people on interview preparation. Settlement agencies were encouraged to be part of training and train the trainer to help prepare claimants for the interviews.

Resource persons:

Simon Coakeley, Executive Director, Immigration and Refugee Board

Peter Showler, Refugee Reform

Rick Goldman, CAR and CCR

Moderator: Chantal Tie

Training Session on the Statelessness Conventions

This workshop provided an accessible introduction to the two statelessness conventions: the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, on the occasion of the latter convention's 50th anniversary. Andrew Brouwer reviewed the main provisions of the two conventions, in the context of the challenges worldwide faced by stateless persons. He also gave an overview of Canada's record with respect to stateless persons, as a country signatory to the 1961 Convention, but not the 1954 Convention. Participants then did group exercises to deepen their understanding of the Conventions.

Resource person: Andrew Brouwer, lawyer

Moderator: Monica Abdelkader

Economic Exploitation of Migrant Workers

This workshop looked at migrant workers' experiences of different types of economic exploitation in Canada, situating these experiences within a larger global view of Canada's shift towards temporary labour migration. The overlap between economic exploitation of migrant workers and human trafficking was also discussed.

Presenters in the workshop gave an overview of Canadian immigration policy in the context of its increasing shift from focusing on permanent residency to a temporary workforce. Within this policy shift towards temporariness and precarity, one presenter pointed out parallels between making the migrant workforce temporary and making refugees temporary with Bill C-49 (now Bill C-4), as well as making sponsored spouses and partners' permanent residency conditional and thus potentially temporary.

The presenters gave cases of different types of economic exploitation of migrant workers, such as recruitment fees, wage theft, exorbitant charges for room and board, etc. Some of these cases amounted to indentured labour and human trafficking. Cathy Kolar discussed the case of several Thai and Mexican workers from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in the Leamington area who have now been identified as victims of human trafficking. The presenters also discussed examples of migrant workers and their allies organizing for change at the local level, both to raise public awareness and to try to effect legislative changes.

Suggestions for action that came out of this workshop were:

- mobilize for collective action for the expansion of Bill 210 in Ontario from Live-in Caregivers to cover all other Temporary Foreign Workers
- build on service models from other jurisdictions such as Alberta

Resource persons:

Cathy Kolar, Legal Assistance of Windsor

Josephine Eric, Migrant Workers Family Resource Centre, Hamilton

Syed Hussan, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change/No-one is Illegal Toronto

Moderators: Jean McRae, Inter-cultural Association of Greater Victoria and Alexandra Ricard-Guay, CATHII, Montreal

Young Francophones in Majority Anglophone Areas: Issues and Challenges

This workshop focused on programs and services offered to newly arrived Francophones in majority-Anglophone regions of Canada. Speakers from Ontario and Moncton spoke about the programs and services being offered by their organizations, as well as some of the challenges they face (the resource person from Winnipeg was unable to attend due to illness). Presenters focused in particular on the services available for young Francophone newcomers.

One challenge faced by Francophones in majority Anglophone areas is young people's resistance to attending school in French because of the pressure to conform linguistically in a majority Anglophone community. However, these youth often don't have access to the support they require to be successful in English schools, and may end up dropping out of school. Participants discussed resources and ideas for dealing with this challenge.

Resource persons:

Randa Meshki, Centre ontarien pour la prevention des agressions/Travailleurs d'établissement dans les écoles, Toronto

Carlo di Bonaventura, MAGMA-AMGM, Moncton

Bintou Sacko, Accueil francophone de Manitoba, Winnipeg (regrets)

Moderators : Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI and Sébastien Mandeng, Mission communautaire de Montréal

The Role of Men in Ending Violence against Women

This workshop spoke to the agency and responsibility of men to end violence against women. Resource persons underlined the importance of men in breaking the silence and becoming active in the struggle to end violence against women. The resource person from Toronto gave a summary of the services provided by his organization to encourage abusive men to take responsibility for their actions, to become self-aware and accountable, to fundamentally change their mindsets and to challenge the trivialization of abuse. The resource person from Montreal focused on the epistemological and historical underpinnings of abuse of women, looking at the dynamics of domination and power that set the framework for the reproduction of abusive behaviour along gender lines.

Participants in the session were invited to the caucus the following day to continue the discussion on engaging men to end violence against women, and to use the new CCR web page on serving newcomer women in situations of violence.

Resource persons:

Angela Marie Macdougall, Battered Women's Support Services, Vancouver

Adolfo Garcés, Counterpoint, Toronto

Alain Philoctète, PRISME, Montreal

Moderator: Sylvie Laurion, RIVO, Montreal

Judicial Remedies for Overseas Refugee Refusals

This workshop provided an overview on the legal aspects of dealing with a refugee refusal overseas. The presenters assisted participants in understanding how to seek a remedy for a negative decision. Barriers and issues unique to overseas applicants seeking access to justice were discussed, along with how they have been overcome in the past and how broader access to judicial remedies can be created in the future.

The two lawyers presented a judicial review of recent negative decisions from Cairo, and explored the judicial grounds for argument as well as the judicial review process of the cases. They offered advice to others planning to submit applications for review. The third resource person gave a summary of the Quality Assurance Project carried out by CIC in 2008 and made public in May 2011. This summary covered the quality of decisions, how decisions document assessment of Convention Refugee status and Country of asylum definitions, the procedure for women applicants with gender based claims, and credibility assessment. It was noted that the report discloses some gaps in decision making but doesn't address them in depth, focusing on the positives.

Resource persons:

Andrew Brouwer, lawyer

Tim Wichert, lawyer

Liz McWeeny, Thunder Bay

Moderator: Jenny Hwang

Deportation of refugees and permanent residents after trial and sentencing: fair treatment or creating 'double punishment'?

"Double punishment" occurs when permanent residents are punished twice for committing a crime: once when they serve their sentence in prison within their country of residence, and a second time when they are deported. This workshop included stories of individuals and communities impacted by double punishment, as well as exploring the intersections of criminality and immigration. Discussions were based on the legal, social and political perspectives of this issue, and participants had the opportunity to engage in a discussion on how to address the issue of double punishment in Canada.

An action request for CCR members came out of this workshop: the action request was to raise awareness about double punishment. The Youth Network will make tools and resources for this available on the Youth Network website.

Resource person:

Barbara Jackman, lawyer

Moderators: Hatice Celik and Monica Abdelkader

The Challenge of Telling Refugee Stories

This workshop focused on the challenge of telling refugee stories to the public by asking: how can we create an empowering, yet safe space for refugees to share their stories, opinions and ideas? Resource persons addressed the particular challenges of trying to raise awareness about refugees through the media and other tools for showing the human face of the refugee issue. Such issues include how to protect the integrity and safety of refugee claimants while telling their stories, especially when they have families in their home countries that could potentially be put at risk by their going public. The question of empowering refugees rather than simply depicting them as victims was also discussed. Participants heard from the Newcomers Speakers Bureau, which does public speaking training for newcomers who are willing to have their stories told.

A fruitful discussion on these issues was held, and participants explored ways that refugee advocates can work with journalists to tell refugee stories. Strategies such as visual aids to tell stories (photos, art, paintings, etc.) were discussed, as well as communication strategies for putting a face to an issue.

Resource persons:

Jennifer O'Brien, journalist, London Free Press

Tanya Chute Molina, Mennonite New Life Centre, Toronto

Sandra Cordero, Newcomer Speakers Bureau, Toronto

Moderators: Eunice Valenzuela, Kitchener and Freddy Wangabo, Fredericton

Updates from government

The presenter from CIC gave a detailed presentation on settlement programming. She provided an overview of CIC's settlement and integration mandate and governance model and outlined the evolution and core principles of integration policy. She explained the Modernized Approach, which combines all previously existing programs into one (the Settlement Program), providing greater flexibility and streamlining the administration of settlement service delivery. Her presentation reviewed settlement service delivery and funding. She concluded with a look to the future, noting that CIC's Settlement Program Terms and Conditions are due for renewal in 2012/13, and that CIC will be focusing on ensuring services meet clients' needs and on achieving a balance between accountability and administration.

The presenter from CBSA gave updates on implementing Refugee Reform at CBSA. One key CBSA role is reducing the existing backlog of failed refugee claimants, and CBSA has received funding to remove an additional 4,200 failed refugee claimants over three years (2010-2012). CBSA is also responsible for some regulatory amendments, notably regarding exclusion of the automatic stay of removal (for claimants from a Designated Country of Origin or with a Manifestly Unfounded Claim) and changes to the Deferrals Policy (establishing a list of criteria for consideration by removal officers when reviewing an application to defer a removal). The proposed regulatory changes will be published in the summer of 2011. CBSA is also developing the Assisted Volunteer Return (AVP) pilot. CBSA is reviewing whether regulations are needed

and mandated. The proposed AVP will be similar to already existing programs in the EU and Australia (the UK in particular was a model). The pilot will run in the Toronto area.

Resource persons:

Lucille Leblanc, Director General, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Leah Johnston, Refugee Reform Project Management Office, CBSA

Moderator: Wanda Yamamoto

The Impacts of Lost or Mistaken Identity Documents for Youth

Lost identity documents or inaccurate information on ID can have serious impacts on the lives of permanent resident youth in Canada. This workshop looked at the problems associated with trying to replace lost or mistaken permanent resident cards for newcomer youth, and possible solutions and actions.

The first presenter gave his personal testimony as a refugee who came to Canada with his name misspelled and the wrong birth date on his ID. He explained the context in the refugee camp, where all registration was hand written, people had fled without their documents and dates couldn't be checked because of the impact of conflict on institutions. The presenter described the difficulties of dealing with Canadian bureaucracy in order to correct these mistakes, and the dangers for young people who are unable to work or access services due to lack of ID and end up "falling through the cracks".

A settlement worker from Winnipeg gave an overview of the challenges in helping young newcomers to Canada to obtain or correct lost or mistaken identity documents, as well as the impacts on youth. He discussed the causes of mistaken identification, such as illiteracy, children born outside of health facilities and thus not having records of birth, parents' lack of documents to prove relationship to children, etc. He went on to describe barriers that youth face in making successful applications for new or corrected ID (notably lack of supporting documentation). The impacts of missing or incorrect ID include difficulties in obtaining other important documents such as driver's licenses, and the effects of false date of birth on school placements as well as retirement age.

Participants were invited to contribute to the Youth Network's research project on the impacts of missing and mistaken identity documents on permanent resident youth. (ccrweb.ca/en/youthID)

Resource persons:

Taro Hashimoto, Strategic Alliance for the Advancement of Immigrant Children and Youth
Agou Anyieth Kur, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc., Winnipeg
Aurelio Madut Danto, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc., Winnipeg

Moderators: Mustafa Delsoz and Monica Abdelkader

Sponsoring LGBT Refugees: The new kids on the block

Sponsorship for LGBT refugees is an emerging area of interest and concern for LGBT community members and allied refugee sponsorship groups. This workshop brought together individuals with direct experience in sponsorship and protection of LGBT persons to discuss the barriers, challenges, opportunities and learnings to date.

The workshop covered the situation of LGBT people in countries where they are criminalized for their sexual orientation, as well as the process of sponsorship, and some of the challenges for LGBT applicants within the existing system. Resource persons addressed some of these challenges, including the identification of refugees and how LGBT refugees can connect with Sponsorship Agreement Holders. Resource persons also discussed the need for appropriate settlement services and longer term integration and support programs for LGBT refugees. Recent initiatives such as sponsorships by community churches and the recent allotment of funding from CIC to Rainbow Refugee Coalition were also touched upon.

The discussion resulted in the suggestion of actions to be put forward in the Overseas Protection and Sponsorship Working Group, including the need to preserve and expand the source country class; the question of how to create a special process for LGBT refugees; the problems of Visa-office Referred lists for groups that would like to sponsor LGBT refugees (confidentiality issues). A suggestion for a future workshop on settlement services for LGBT refugees, focusing on resources and best practices, came out of this session.

Resource persons:

Yosief Araya, Refugee Sponsorship Training Program
Brian Brenie, Metropolitan Community Church, Toronto
David Pepper, Rainbow Refugee Committee, Toronto

Moderators: Glynis Williams, Action Réfugiés Montréal, and Sean Rehaag, Osgoode Hall Law School

Convention Compliance for Refugee Children: How is Canada doing in non-refoulement, right to be free from detention and family reunification?

The purpose of this two-part workshop was to explore the extent of Canada's compliance with the Refugee Convention in the areas of refoulement, detention and family reunification. Participants reviewed CCR activities relative to each area and brainstormed about potential activities the CCR could undertake to promote greater compliance.

Resource persons explored Canada's compliance with the Convention in terms of refugee children. In the area of non-refoulement, the first presenter examined the situation where there is a conflict between the Refugee Convention and Hague Convention, as seen in the case of Josette Rosenzweig. Participants also heard about the detention of children who arrived on the Sun Sea and barriers to family reunification for unaccompanied minors in the refugee system.

Discussion of this issue led participants to suggest the creation of a separate regime for refugee family reunification, with a relaxed definition of the family class, less onerous document requirements and expedited processing.

Resource persons:

Heather Neufeld, South Ottawa Community Legal Services

Gary Anandasangaree, Canadian Tamil Congress

Geri Sadoway, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Toronto

Moderators: Chantal Tie and Steven Rempel

Refuse to be Abused: Standing up against racial profiling in Canada

This workshop was designed to tackle the nation-wide problem of racial profiling, through a series of group exercises, and the power of real life accounts. The workshop began with a participatory Cross the Line exercise that had participants stand up and answer a series of twelve thought-provoking and personal questions by stepping over or on the line. The resource persons discussed racial profiling in the context of different institutions including school, work and social housing. A video entitled Rexdale Unmasked was shown, which addresses the racial profiling issues in Toronto with a specialized police squad. Participants discussed possible solutions to this complex societal issue faced by many minorities and refugees alike.

Resource persons:

Charles C. Smith, Cultural Pluralism in the Arts, University of Toronto at Scarborough

Ishmael Mohamoud, Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Moderators: Aaleem Mohammed and Munira Abukar

Changing National Narratives on Immigration, Integration and Inclusion

In recent years there has been an alarming increase in negative attitudes towards mostly racialized immigrants and refugees. This workshop explored the growing anti-immigrant and refugee discourse, particularly within government and other political spaces. The need for community and stakeholder/activists to take a lead in countering this discourse was underlined, and there was a focus on creating a dialogue around challenging and changing the re-emerging negative narrative on immigration, integration and inclusion, with the aim of leaving participants with concrete ideas, tools and a network of collaborators to create a positive narrative. Resource persons discussed the role of the media, access to media, framing media stories, engaging the media, etc. Examples of community responses were also explored.

A fruitful question and answer period concluded the session, where participants were able to connect with the media representative and the other panellists. There was a good discussion on raising awareness about newcomer issues and framing the discussion within an historical and political perspective.

Resource persons:

Uzma Shakir, Director of Equity, Diversity and Human Rights, City of Toronto

Hai Tonthat, MIIC, Winnipeg

Naheed Mustafa, freelance writer/broadcaster/producer, Toronto

Moderators: Debbie Douglas, OCASI and Sylvain Thibault, Mission Communautaire de Montréal

Racialization, Labour Market Access and Political Mobilizations

How and why is poverty racialized in Canada and how does this affect newcomers' access to the labour market? This workshop looked at community-based initiatives for action and accountability on employment justice for racialized people. Group discussion in this workshop led to several suggestions for possible actions by the CCR to address this problem:

- highlight to the media and to politicians how and where disadvantages for people of colour are statistically clear in relation to the general Canadian population
- research and give media and political visibility to the apparent progress of employment equity in changing the face of the Canadian banking sector and its apparent employment equity practices
- support electronic, media and political means for ethnocultural groups to network and build coalitions in support of similar causes such as the current class action lawsuit on behalf of current and former Filipino Temporary Foreign Workers for Denny's restaurants
- encourage all immigrant/refugee service organizations to develop advocacy programs to support visible minority citizens, immigrants and refugees in gaining self-esteem, political experience and enhance their skills
- encourage all employers to provide paid internships especially for ethno-racial immigrants, refugees and citizens, with tax credit benefits for these employers
- encourage provincial governments, school boards and educational organizations to link formal ESL and LINC training to Cooperative Education, but also to accessing networks and potential employers

Resource persons:

Adriana Salazar, Mennonite New Life Centre, Toronto

Erie Maestro, Migrante BC, Vancouver

Amy Casipullai, Colour of Poverty- Colour of Change Campaign

Moderators: Anton Lovink, Coalition in Ottawa for Refugees and Tanya Chute Molina, Mennonite New Life Centre

The 1951 Convention 60 years on: A progress report

Taking the international perspective, this workshop examined the state of the 1951 Convention on Refugees, 60 years on. It addressed questions regarding the Convention such as: is it still relevant? Is it adequate? What challenges will the international protection regime face in the years ahead and how can they be met?

The resource persons covered the history of the Convention, its main elements and its limitations. The issue of Protracted Refugee Situations as a tool for externalizing asylum was discussed, as well as the Convention as a moral hazard, since there is a gap between the rhetoric of UNHCR and reality, especially regarding the durable solution of returns. It was felt that a significant challenge faced is that the nation state will probably never subscribe to full promotion and protection of refugee rights. Participants felt that commemoration of the Convention is a good opportunity to address gaps and for countries to make pledges.

It was suggested that a workshop at a future Consultation should be on environmental displacement and statelessness, since statelessness conventions may have the most relevance for the environmentally displaced.

Resource persons:

Howard Adelman, Professor Emeritus, York University

Jennifer Hyndman, Professor, Departments of Social Science and Geography, York University

Michael Casasola, UNHCR

Moderators: Gloria Nafziger and Gilbert Iyamuremye

Responding to Trafficked Persons

This workshop was held in two parts, with the first looking at trafficking based on labour exploitation, focusing on those not entering on work visas. The second part examined resources for work with trafficked persons: what exists, what gaps there are and what the next steps should be. In the first part, resource persons discussed the international aspect of forced labour, potential indicators for the incidence of forced labour in Canada, and different aspects of forced labour such as marriage and trafficking. In the second part Timea Nagy of the organization Walk with Me presented on that organization's work with law enforcement agencies and identified the gaps that still need to be addressed. Christina Harrison Baird reviewed progress on the CCR's trafficking project (funded by Justice Canada).

This workshop resulted in recommendations for a toolkit for awareness and best practices, and a handbook on how to start working with trafficked persons.

Resource persons:

Louise Dionne, Comité d'action contre la traite humaine interne et internationale

Shelley Gilbert, Legal Assistance of Windsor

Christina Harrison Baird, Project coordinator, CCR trafficking project

Timea Nagy, Walk with Me

Moderator: Loly Rico