



Canadian Council for Refugees
Fall Consultation
“Taking the Lead: Refugee and Immigrant Youth”
November 23-25, 2006, Montreal, QC
Consultation Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees’ Fall Consultation took place in Montreal, from 23 to 25 November 2006, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. More than 400 participants from all over Canada took part in the Consultation. The theme, *“Taking the lead: Refugee and Immigrant Youth”*, was chosen to promote youth participation and to profile the recently created CCR Youth Network, which was officially launched at the June 2006 International Conference in Toronto.

The objectives of the 2006 Fall Consultation were: to facilitate information-exchange, to offer training, to promote networking among people involved in services to refugees and immigrants and to strategize about the promotion of refugees and immigrants rights across Canada.

More than 30 sessions were offered during the 3 days of the consultation, including 3 plenary sessions, 3 Working Group meetings, 6 informal caucus sessions and more than 20 workshops. The conference program structure offered 3 or 4 workshops simultaneously, dealing with different issues related to settlement and protection. These workshops had between 40 and 100 participants and offered a participatory process. Moderators put emphasis on offering a space that is safe, and free of bias/prejudice. The consultation format allowed participants to learn about developments in particular areas of concern, and actively contribute to discussions. The participatory format of the workshops was once again very much appreciated.

To present a variety of perspectives, resource persons were selected 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 quality of speakers was noted as a positive aspect of the consultation in participants’ oral and written evaluations.

The consultation featured three plenary sessions. The opening plenary, which was attended by more than 300 participants, gave a general introduction to the consultation and offered the opportunity to launch the CCR tool kit “Pathways to Gender Justice”.

The Thursday evening plenary session offered a debate on issues related to refugees and immigrants between Members of Parliament from the four main federal parties: Raymonde Folco, Liberal immigration critic, Meili Faille, Bloc Québécois immigration critic, Bill Siksay, NDP immigration critic and Ed Komarnicki, Conservative MP and Parliamentary Secretary.

The third plenary, “Planning a strong future for the CCR”, focused on plans to make the CCR sustainable in the coming years and responsive to the challenges ahead.

The consultation also offered opportunities for dialogue between participants and government officials, including from CIC. For example, Wally Boxhill, Director of Integration and Refugee Program Delivery, CIC, presented an update from the federal government on developments with respect to the administration of settlement services.

The Working Group meetings gave participants the opportunity to exchange information, network and strategize on particular issues of interest. Ongoing efforts to address common problems were discussed by way of updates and proposals to fine-tune and enhance endeavours. Regional and provincial updates also helped participants assess the situation across Canada and take away suggestions from each other in terms of best practices and innovative initiatives. Gender-based and anti-racist perspectives provided, as usual and in systematic fashion, input and guidance as to the direction of further steps to take in CCR’s work.

The Working Group meetings also gave participants the opportunity to develop policy positions in particular areas of concern as well as recommendations in the form of resolutions, presented for debate and approval by the membership at the General Meeting, which closed the consultation. A total of 10 resolutions were adopted. In addition, the CCR processed action requests not requiring resolutions: 11 such requests were registered.

Attendance at the consultation was high, with more than 400 persons registered. Participants came from a wide range of Canadian communities and were made up of a mix of refugees and immigrants, staff and volunteers at organizations serving newcomers and representing ethnocultural communities, as well as lawyers, representatives of various levels of government and of UNHCR, academics, faith communities, social services and others involved in refugee and immigrant issues.

The refugee participation was strong, which is a result of CCR’s efforts to enhance participation of refugees in discussions and decision-making. Youth were also well represented at the Consultation, showing that the CCR Youth Network is already taking the lead.

As part of its efforts to promote and sustain francophone participation, the CCR offered twice as much simultaneous interpretation as in our past conferences (two workshops at all times with simultaneous interpretation instead of only one). This is a key condition to countering systemic barriers facing francophone refugees, immigrants and settlement workers in our conferences. We received very encouraging comments from francophone participants, which suggest that they want to sustain their participation in the future.

On the basis of the oral and written evaluations received during and after the consultation, we are able to conclude that the consultation was successful in meeting its objectives.

The resolutions adopted at the Annual General Meeting that concluded the consultation can be found at <http://www.ccrweb.ca/resnov06.html>.

II. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Opening plenary

This session served as an introduction to the consultation and gave an update on recent developments related to CCR's work. Participants were welcomed by Marcel Tremblay, from the Executive committee of the City of Montreal. Elizabeth McWeeny, CCR President, presented the CCR's Annual status report, an overview of how the Canadian federal government has addressed refugee and immigration issues in the last year, according to CCR's point of view. John Docherty, CCR executive, gave an update on the Family Reunification Manifesto. Alfredo Lombisi and Sylvain Thibault presented "Tci Radio-Refuge", a Montreal community radio show run by refugees. Amy Casipullai and Julie Lassonde launched "Pathways to Gender Justice", the CCR tool kit intended for people working in or accessing services in the immigrant and refugee serving sector in Canada, including front-line workers, service users, managers, umbrella associations, and government departments and employees. Finally, Nicholas Dubé, Madelaine Hamilton and Mirlande Demers presented the CCR Youth Network. The opening plenary was moderated by Rivka Augenfeld.

HIV/AIDS and the refugee claim/landing processes

This workshop looked at issues around the refugee claims of people living with HIV/AIDS. It offered a description of the various ways people with HIV/AIDS may be found to be a refugee in the claim process. Other issues discussed were the difficulties in entering and staying in Canada for people with HIV/AIDS; the experience of a person living with HIV/AIDS in Canada, who sees this experience as a blessing, and the small improvements in Mexico, given the next HIV/AIDS conference will take place there.

Workshop outcomes included: learning to be comfortable with living with HIV/AIDS or with people with HIV/AIDS; service providers should be less inquisitive when interacting with people with HIV/AIDS (it should be communicated more formally to service providers); we need more answers from government on why we don't hear of more successful H&C applications from people with HIV/AIDS. What would be a model of a successful H&C? Does such a model exist? NGOs should prepare country packages about how access to HIV/AIDS medicine is a problem of discrimination.

Resource persons: Sean Rehaag, Canada Research Chair in International Migration Law, University of Montreal.
Stéphane Richard, GAPVies, Montreal
Alan Li, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment, Toronto
Emmanuel Ndyanabo, AIDS Committee of Toronto
Francisco Rico-Martinez and Julie Lassonde, moderators

Working conditions in the sector

Working conditions in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector are an ongoing concern for sector organizations. Concerns have included wages, working conditions, workload and opportunities for professional development. Two reports were presented by the panellists. "On The Front Lines of Toronto's Immigrant and Refugee Serving Sector", a report released recently by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto and Family Service Association of Toronto, attempts to describe sector characteristics and conditions. Another report, "*Pour que travailler dans le communautaire ne rime pas avec la misère*", addresses

similar issues in Québec. This workshop examined the role that the sector can play in improving working conditions in the sector and learn about what others are doing.

The workshop allowed participants learn about and compare critically two different approaches, research questions and results from the research projects that were presented by the panelists. The question and answer period was used to further explore the implications of research findings for improvements in working conditions in the sector from a community-based perspective. Participants linked future strategic developments in this area to the ongoing initiative of the pan-Canadian immigrant and refugee sector to work towards professionalization and recognition of settlement work.

Resource persons: Israt Ahmed, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
Nicole Caron, Relais-femmes, Montréal
Debbie Douglas, moderator

Iraqi refugees in the Middle East

This workshop offered a brief background on Iraq, its population and the causes of current conflicts. The UNHCR representative gave an update on the situation of Iraqi refugees in the Middle East and on UNHCR's position on refugees from Iraq. There was also a presentation on the legal perspective regarding refusals of private sponsorship applications from the region: problems in interview (decision making) of a refugee sponsorship application; guidelines for interviews of oversee refugees that could assist sponsorship applicants and legal challenges to negative decisions.

Workshop participants stressed the need for more attention to the Country of Asylum Class and the importance of fairness of overseas interview and refugee determination.

Resource persons: Mohammed Dhia Issa, Iraqi Community Centre, Montreal
Chantal Desloges, lawyer, Toronto
Michael Casasola, UNHCR
Yosief Araya, moderator

Refugee women caucus

This informal session allowed refugee women to network and strategize about their involvement in the consultation and in the CCR. A detailed review of CCR structures and the Amina Malko Refugee Participation Fund was presented. The session also addressed issues such as limitations and barriers affecting refugee women's effective participation. The list of limitations identified by refugee women included: job security; immigration status; language; family reunification; social isolation; mental health/ cultural shock/ PTSD; racism; multiple roles of women; family violence; perception of host society about refugee women as victims; perception of self and society; role changes; knowledge of rights; etc.

Participants proposed several ideas: that CCR facilitate the dissemination of information about women issues, organizations, research, etc.; to develop a booklet about women's rights that includes topics such as safety, security and life in Canada; to promote access to legal support with the expertise in women and children; to provide information about services with a feminist approach; to increase CCR's efforts to outreach a wider audience; to develop and/or support organizations in rural areas that don't have services for immigrants and refugees; to promote full access for women with disabilities.

Resource persons: Carolina Gajardo & Rita Acosta, moderators

Detention: A Regional Perspective from Montreal

This workshop provided an overview of detention in Montreal, from three different perspectives. First, a legal perspective was presented on detention for identity reasons, which is a major ground for detention in Montreal. The issues covered within IRPA with regards to detention were: return to torture, secret evidence, indeterminate detention and lack of review by the tribunal of a decision to detain on the basis of identity. A specific focus was put on inherent obstacles in challenging detention for identity reasons.

A psychosocial perspective on the realities in the local detention facility was also presented by a social worker. She spoke of the negative impacts of detention, based on her observations in the Montreal detention facility, where she used to work. Problems include the impact of security procedures and apparatus; separation of family members; indeterminate length of detention; physical and mental symptoms such as depression and inability to sleep; the complexity of legal procedures and lack of information. Finally, a former detainee spoke about his experience in detention. He addressed problems such as separation from his wife and children and difficulties due to medical condition. After four years, he still feels the impact of this experience.

Participants proposed a resolution regarding lack of independent review of identity as grounds for detention. The resolution calls for CCR to demand that IRPA be amended. Also, participants identified the need to have communication between regions of Canada to understand regional differences and share information.

Resource persons: Johanne Doyon, lawyer, Montreal
 Anne-Marie Bellemare, former social worker at the immigration
 detention centre, Montreal
 M. Mohamed, former detainee
 Jenny Jeanes, moderator

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender) youth issues

The social, political and economic exclusion of refugee and immigrant youth is a major concern for organizations that work with these communities. To develop and maintain inclusive practices, we must begin to tackle the massive gap in awareness and understanding in addressing the settlement needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender refugee and immigrant youth. This panel spoke about strategies for supportive responses and good practices from LGBT youth and community workers that assist those communities. It also addressed the challenges of smaller towns in providing culturally sensitive services because of the lack of cultural diversity in the majority of the population.

One suggestion was that the CCR create a pamphlet on working with LGBT, like the pamphlet on trafficking. Another suggestion was to promote networking between NGOs working with refugees and immigrants and mainstream LGBT NGOs as well as cultural community LGBT NGOs.

Resource persons: Leonardo Zuniga, Supporting Our Youth (SOY), Toronto
 Patrick Daigle, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project, Halifax
 Nada Raphaël, HeLeM, Montréal
 Julie Bédard Mathieu, moderator

Using new media to promote refugee rights

This workshop looked at ways that groups and individuals involved in refugee and newcomer issues can use online technologies to increase collaboration, outreach and information sharing. Possibilities and options around the use of technology were presented. Emphasis was put on the fact that it's not about the technology, but about connections, mentality and access. Dealing with issues of privacy, accuracy, anonymity and trust was also discussed. An overview of all the modalities, tools, sites and services was presented and followed by participants' brainstorming on a list of uses for them in advocacy (including web office tools). A demonstration was made, using TakingITglobal, CCR Youth Network Project.

Participants identified the need to dedicate more resources to information technology access and facilitation. Participants also created an e-list of all participants for distribution of a comprehensive list of tools, sites, etc.

Resource persons: Madelaine Hamilton, TakingitGlobal.org, Toronto
Christopher Wulff, OCASI, Toronto
Heather Lash, moderator

Refugee and immigrant youth and sexual health

This workshop explored the challenges that immigrant and refugee youth face in regard to sexual decision making, such as different cultural expectations, isolation, loneliness, peer pressure, lack of knowledge and resources, teen pregnancy and soliciting prostitutes. The Socializing Forces and Hybrid Identities model/diagram was used. This diagram shows the Family/parent/culture/community vs. the "free" media driven and liberal society presented to newcomer youth through television, magazines, schools and peers. The newcomer youth is caught in the middle, dealing with his or her own internal issues of puberty, sexuality and relationships.

Workshop outcomes included: the need to consider the entire refugee/immigrant experience and particular circumstances when dealing with youth issues; the need to sensitize settlement, education, health and community resources to youth particular needs (language, immigrant experience, youth, status of living independently from the family or dependently); and an initiative to develop a toolkit for sexual health regarding immigrant and refugee families, parents and youth. It was mentioned that education for parents on how they could/should talk to their children about issues is needed, and that this education should be mandatory within the immigration settlement sector. It was also noted that ESL providers have tremendous power to integrate sexual health education into their curriculum.

Resource persons: Ewar Jalal, Sexual Assault Centre, Edmonton
Emmanuel Ndyanabo, AIDS Committee of Toronto
Mirlande Demers and Taro Hashimoto, moderators

Moving from tolerance to acceptance: Working with HIV positive refugees and immigrants

The latest Canadian studies show an alarming increase in the transmission of HIV and AIDS among refugee and immigrant populations in Canada, including a rise in maternal transmission rates. Challenges include a lack of awareness and knowledge of the issue, stigma, fear and risk of compromising client confidentiality. The workshop discussed how community organizations can move from tolerance to acceptance by developing and integrating appropriate strategies in responding to the settlement needs of people with HIV/AIDS (PHAs).

The workshop offered analysis of challenges faced by newcomers who are HIV-positive or living with AIDS. The experiences of women from racialized immigrant and refugee communities were closely examined in their links to service and policy barriers and gaps. A Toronto-based strategy that includes research, advocacy, awareness raising and training for service providers was presented to workshop participants. Panellists stressed the necessity of addressing closely the linkages to be made across sectors (health, settlement, etc.) so that newcomer people with HIV/AIDS are adequately served.

The following project was proposed for the Working Group: research barriers that refugee, immigrant and non-status people with HIV/AIDS face, develop recommendations for change in policy and practice; increase awareness and sensitivity within the CCR; develop and deliver training that would increase competencies that would serve to address barriers within the refugee and immigrant serving sector.

Resource persons: Alan Li, Regent Park Community Centre, Toronto
Amutha Samgam, Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment, Toronto
Angèle Ankouad, Centre de ressources et d'interventions en santé et sexualité (CRISS), Montréal
Debbie Douglas, moderator

Overcoming social barriers faced by immigrant and refugees youth

This workshop addressed the issues of Islamophobia, racism (with reference to the Eritrean Diaspora in Toronto) and ableism as social barriers for newcomers in Canada. Workshop presenters explained how they are overcoming those barriers. They also discussed the use of, need for and stigma attached to categorizing terms (e.g. disabled person). Lack of experience with different minority groups was identified as a root cause of discrimination.

The outcomes of the workshop included: acknowledgement of the need to pay more attention to ableism within the CCR; need for teaching refugees information technology (IT) so they can use it to network within and between different ethnic communities; acknowledgement of deplorable situation of racial profiling based on names, including the fact that some Muslim newcomers change their name, which can have negative effects on integration and create identity problems.

Resource persons: Helen Tewolde, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/Toronto
Sarah Elgazzar, Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), Montreal
Mody Macka Barry, Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées, Montreal
Raqui Wane, Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées, Montreal
Nicholas Dubé, moderator

Gender Analysis Projects

The Gender Core Group reported on work done in the past year and elicited ideas about what still needs to be done. The promotion and integration of the Gender Based Analysis Toolkit in settlement organizations throughout Canada was first discussed. Ideas were elicited for getting the kit into settlement organizations and giving a higher profile within CCR to gender based analysis and issues to change attitudes. Second, regarding the trafficking of persons, there was a report on responding to CIC's interim process for implementing the temporary

resident permit and efforts in cities to gather together NGOs, CIC, CSBA and police at the table to develop best practices for assisting victims.

There were also discussions on other realities and examples of gender based inequities that should be considered by the Gender Core Group for study and action. Ideas elicited included: network with groups in the global south for evaluating GBA tool kit and getting a broader source of resources; CCR management/staff engages in GBA; Ad hoc committee to meet with MP Joy Smith to draft a national legislation; talk with IRB to sensitize them about trafficking; to have a GBA plenary at CCR consultation to raise a gender profile.

The outcomes included: developing a gender analysis skills workshop to use GBA tool; clarify words used (such as gender) for those from cultures where this is a foreign concept; link poverty to trafficking and family reunification; make GBA a key issue in settlement organizations at different levels (management and staff).

Resource persons: Deborah Issacs, MOSAIC, Vancouver
Julie Lassonde, Gender-based analysis project steering committee
Debra Simpson and Helen Petrimoulx, moderators

Children, Youth and Torture

The workshop addressed issues of torture used against children and youth, as well as other forms of ill-treatment against children (their treatment in jails and detention centres). Participants were invited to reflect on experiences with war-affected children and the impact of torture and war on children and youth, specifically their devastating psychological effects, and their typical and atypical symptoms. Programs that serve children and youth were presented, their success was evaluated and best practices were suggested. Also, an overview of programming at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) was given. Participants discussed local issues in working with youth, and access to support and training.

The workshop prepared a resolution against torture, asking the CCR to call on the government to enact legislation that unequivocally and absolutely prohibits complicity with torture under any circumstances by any person, but in particular by any government official or persons acting in a government-related capacity.

Resource persons: Ezat Mossallenejad, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Toronto
John Docherty, moderator

Plenary session

This plenary session started with a special treat for participants: the Every Kid Choir, from the Montreal City Mission, sang “A Letter for You” with composer R. Homba, bringing attention to the nightmares faced by separated families. Then, Lucy Wells, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities, welcome participants and told the audience briefly about the Quebec situation. Participants also heard from two young refugees who presented their own calls for policies responsive to the needs of refugee youth.

The main item of the plenary was a debate between Members of Parliament from the four main federal parties: Raymonde Folco, Liberal immigration critic, Meili Faille, Bloc Québécois immigration critic, Bill Siksay, NDP immigration critic and Ed Komarnicki, Conservative MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and

Immigration. They debated themes relating to youth, family reunification and the impacts of the war on terrorism on refugees and immigrants.

Resource persons: Muuxi Adam, youth participant originally from Somalia
Shagun Randev, youth participant originally from India
Raymonde Folco, MP, Liberal immigration critic
Meili Faille, MP, Bloc immigration critic
Bill Siksay, MP, NDP immigration critic
Ed Komarnicki, Conservative MP
Julie Bédard-Mathieu and Ibrahim Absiye, moderators

Border stories: Refugee youth searching for a future

This workshop consisted of two parts. In the first hour, several young people who have lived as refugees overseas reviewed some of the difficulties that refugee youth face and some of the lessons gleaned from their own experience. Among the issues discussed was the search for safety and the difficulty of the decision to flee alone, without documents or support. They also discussed the efforts to assert or establish one's identity in a new setting, the absence of parents and the lack of a real childhood or teenage years. For girls, specific issues were addressed, such as early marriage and chores that make for less success in school and vice versa, and the problem of how to take advantage of educational opportunities that do exist in camps.

During the second hour, participants worked with resource people from the UNHCR and WUSC to define some forms of support and assistance that could alleviate hardships experienced by refugee youth, to identify who is best situated to offer this support and assistance, and to propose actions that empower refugee youth to be more involved in the decision-making affecting them.

Workshop outcomes included: The CCR could seek a partner organization to undertake a gender analysis of the situation of refugee girls as a basis for advocating for greater support for their access to educational opportunities. The CCR could encourage the Canadian government to increase Canada's contribution to the UNHCR and specifically to NGOs such as WUSC that work with refugee youth abroad. The CCR could express to its international partners the need for an international vehicle for documenting educational achievements of refugee youth who are unable to avail themselves of national educational systems in asylum countries and a UNHCR-sponsored, post-secondary education program for refugee youth in "warehouse" refugee camp situation. The CCR could invite its youth network to consider initiating a partnership ("pen pal") program between Canadian youth and refugee youth abroad – for friendship and solidarity – as one of its future projects.

In addition, at least one of the participants who had spent years living in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya wanted to convey his view that the camp would be run more effectively if there was more participation by refugee people themselves in its administration.

Resource persons: Jean Vianney Bizimana, originally from DRC, Lennoxville, Québec
Ajak Gabriel Leek, originally from Sudan, Lennoxville, Québec
Arezo Yousufzai, originally from Afghanistan, Montreal
Paulin Mpoyi Katayi, originally from DRC, Lennoxville, Québec
Asnaketch Mekonnen, World University Service Canada, Ottawa
Hy Shelow, UNHCR
Mary Purkey and Elsa Tesfay, moderators

Humanitarianism in the immigration programs

This workshop discussed humanitarianism in different aspects of Canadian immigration law, procedures and practice - both inland and overseas. Lisa Wyndels presented the approach she uses in H&C applications – simple, fact-based, non-technical - which works well. Diane Nancy Doray talked about barriers to access H&C, especially for women and children, including fees, access to advocates and insufficient weight given to “best interest of children” by agents. Rick Goldman presented the CCR’s “Lives on hold” campaign.

There was considerable exchange on differences in procedures and successful strategies across the country.

Resource persons: Robert Blanshay, lawyer, Toronto
Diane Nancy Doray, lawyer, Montreal
Lisa Wyndels, Neighbourhood Legal Services, Toronto
Rick Goldman, moderator

Youth and settlement challenges and opportunities

This workshop focused on youth settlement experiences, with a panel of three young women who had settled with different refugee programs in different parts of the country: PEI, Toronto and Vancouver. It underlined the challenges and opportunities faced by refugees and immigrants in the settlement process. Working from their individual stories, the panel offered an opportunity to discuss possible actions to better adapt the settlement process to youth-specific needs.

The major challenge underlined in the workshop was education, including the education system, language issues and access to post secondary studies. One suggestion made was to work on a tool kit on Education with an environmental scan. Another suggestion was to work with other organizations on training and awareness-raising of teachers.

Resource persons: Maria Jimena Sanchez, P.E.I Association for Newcomers to Canada
Veen Aldosky, MOSAIC, Vancouver
Malyun Afrah, Midaynta Community Services, Toronto
Loly Rico and Maggie Szczurowska, moderators

Impact of the war on terror on refugees and immigrants

In the aftermath of 9/11, it has become very easy to tar refugees with the “terrorists” brush, and to use this label to begin the process of closing down protection of refugees altogether. Changes in the laws of the western world over the past few years mean that many refugees find themselves classed as terrorists and thus refused protection. The impact of the “war on terrorism” on refugees and immigrants ranges from refusal of asylum, to interdiction, to indefinite detention without trial of “suspected international terrorists” to warehoused refugee situations.

Issues discussed during the workshop included: the security agenda is overcoming the humanitarian agenda; Canada’s foreign and domestic priorities are not committed to protecting refugees and immigrants; rising xenophobia and its impact on immigrant communities; “war on terrorism” is a tool used against a range of priorities (it has no parameters, anything can fit within the framework); interception measures fail to distinguish between those who need international protection and those who don’t; security certificate measures are used to detain people instead pursuing criminal prosecutions; some technology

companies provide surveillance and identification measures; we need lobbying re: security checks for volunteers and legal representatives.

Two resolutions were prepared at this workshop: one opposing the arming of CBSA and another calling on the government to issue regulations or guidelines that would require port of entry officers to ask persons subject to removal if they fear persecution before issuing a removal order.

Resource persons: Mohamed Boudjenane, Canadian Arab Federation
Mehreen Raza, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
Mitchell Goldberg, lawyer, Montreal
Roch Tassé, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, Ottawa
Ibrahim Absiye and Sarah Meyer, moderators

Federal and Quebec settlement programs

This workshop provided information about the current situation regarding refugee settlement in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Philippe Anctil and Danièle Boudreau (both from the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles) gave an overview of refugee settlement in Quebec, along with statistics on how many refugees were settling in different regions of Quebec by percentage. This presentation spoke to the general aspects of what settlement entails, such as housing and language training.

Wally Boxhill, the new Director of Integration and Refugee Program Delivery, Operational Management and Coordination, CIC, spoke about the reorganization of the CIC offices in Ottawa. He explained how the 'operations' has been severed from the 'policy' side of affairs in both the Integration and Refugee Branches, and are now combined. This is a significant reorganization. Mr. Boxhill also indicated that there is an upcoming National RAP conference to be held in Vancouver in February, and there are efforts to increase allowances and provide improvements for settlement agencies delivering services to refugees, in recognition of the 'higher' needs refugees are exhibiting, such as health, language, 'life skills', etc.

Panellists also acknowledged the current situation of the lack of standards in services between different settlement agencies, and the absence of parity of wages/benefits for the settlement staff in agencies across the country.

Resource persons: Philippe Anctil, Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles
Danièle Boudreau, Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles
Wally Boxhill, Integration and Refugee Program Delivery, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Karine Verreault and Lisa Bamford, moderators

Doing an integrated anti-oppression analysis

This workshop provided an introduction to anti-oppression analysis and how to apply it in the immigration and refugee context. Participants had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of different types of oppression and were provided with suggestions for how to learn more.

Resource person: Kemi Jacobs, facilitator

Information session on trafficked persons and the immigration program

The workshop provided a description of the current trafficking situation in Quebec and Canada, with a specific focus on trafficked children. Issues relating to prevention, protection and prosecution were also reviewed. Finally, the workshop highlighted the content and application of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's interim guidelines for trafficked persons.

Participants indicated that they appreciated receiving general information on trafficking in persons and on the CIC guidelines. Comments were made on the difficulty involved in identifying victims and the need for specific protection by Canadian authorities. Comments were also made regarding the various obstacles to collaboration and information exchange between representatives of NGO, community organizations and government officials. Follow-up should be done on the issues of how the CIC guidelines are interpreted and applied. The need for better collaboration between all concerned parties was also emphasized. Finally, how can we better ensure that victims of trafficking get access to the temporary resident permit?

Resource persons: Catherine Gauvreau and Mélanie M. Gagnon, International Bureau for Children's Rights, facilitators

The new Temporary Residence Permit for trafficked persons

This workshop examined the new guidelines for Temporary Residence Permits for trafficked person. Panellists each made a brief presentation about the new guidelines and then answered participants' questions. Discussions were centred on how these new guidelines contribute towards the protection of trafficked persons and on what more needs to be done. Outcomes of this session include a desire of NGOs to work with government on this issue and the importance of training frontline officials who are in contact with trafficked persons.

Resource persons: Greg Watson, Canada Border Services Agency, Ottawa
Gylène Le Clair, Canada Border Services Agency, Montréal
Michel Dupuis, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa
Loly Rico, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto
Catherine Gauvreau & Mélanie M. Gagnon, moderators

Private sponsorship applications: Post-refusal recourses

This workshop dealt with refusals of private sponsorship applications and frustrations regarding standard answers from CIC Case Management when asking for a review. This practical solutions-oriented workshop gave participants the opportunity to find out about other remedies for this situation and whom to contact to discuss options. Options include: requesting review from Case Management and judicial review. The workshop addressed the issue of minimizing chances of a refusal and enhancing success in a judicial review.

Participants learned about the judicial review process. They also initiated networking with resource people, lawyers and sponsors with experience in the judicial review process. There were thoughts about constituting a fund to engage in challenging wrong negative decisions through judicial review.

Resource persons: Glynis Williams, Action réfugiés Montréal
Andrew Brouwer, lawyer, Toronto
Gilbert Iyamuremwe, moderator