















## WHY FOCUS ON COLLABORATION WHEN ADDRESSING GBV?

Immigrant-serving agencies are often the initial and main point of contact for newcomers to obtain assistance in Canada. Service providers in these agencies require training, resources, and information about GBV. However, it's important to recognize that a complicated issue like GBV cannot be solved by any one sector alone. Collaboration is a key strategy and a best practice for GBV prevention and awareness work with newcomer, immigrant, and refugee communities.

Collaboration between the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors is about working together towards the common goal of ending GBV. When supporting diverse communities, it's important that service providers across sectors share their skills and knowledge. For example, service providers in the anti-violence sector may have specialized training around risk and safety, while those in the immigrant-serving sector may have insight into how the experiences of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees can impact how they encounter GBV. Collaboration is a lens we can apply to all aspects of GBV work to increase knowledge and capacity across sectors.

#### Through collaboration, we can:

- Foster strong relationships, so that we are not isolated in our work or limited in our capacity to provide support through referral when necessary.
- Better support clients by coordinating services, allowing multiple service providers to form a circle of care around a person or family experiencing GBV.
- Work with the communities we serve to create new strategies and solutions for addressing GBV.

This resource was created as part of the *National Gender-Based Violence Settlement Strategy Project*, a national strategy to address GBV in newcomer, immigrant, and refugee communities. The need for increased collaboration within and between sectors was identified in our initial needs assessment, which included a survey for service providers as well as interviews with GBV experts.



# HOW CAN COLLABORATION HELP FOSTER INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO GBV?

Intersectionality recognizes that every person's identity is made up of many categories that shape their experiences, such as age, race, gender identity, ability, and many more. Newcomers, immigrants, and refugees have many intersecting identities that may impact their GBV risk and the ways that they can access support due to discrimination and other forms of systemic inequity and oppression that are rooted in our society and institutions.

Due to these unique intersections, newcomers, immigrants, and refugees experiencing GBV may have a range of safety needs that cut across multiple systems, such as immigration, employment, language, income support, healthcare, integration and belonging, and education, among others. Collaboration between sectors is a strategic practice for addressing the intersectional needs of GBV survivors and their families.

The following chart lists some of the current needs or gaps in service identified in our research, as well as solutions that collaboration can offer.

"For me, collaboration is about the relationships that you build over time. It requires that we have spaces where we can show up and be our full selves, where we can connect and feel a sense of belonging, where we can be kind to each other, where we can laugh together and work towards collective goals. It's really about being in community."

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# **NEED**



# **SOLUTION**

Models of violence prevention or awareness **don't always reflect the intersectional realities** of racialized and migrant women's lives. A one-size-fitsall approach to violence prevention or intervention just doesn't work. **Improved coordination** can help address gaps that clients experience when trying to navigate different systems and/or sectors. At the same time, collaborative partnerships can be leveraged to foster systemic change.

There is a **lack of knowledge** about the fundamentals of migration, and limited awareness of racialized and migrant women's intersectional experiences of violence.

Sharing information between sectors allows us to **build a common base of knowledge** that will benefit us all.

Staff serving immigrants and refugees are less likely to have received training in trauma- and violence-informed approaches than anti-violence staff.

Those in both sectors reported a lack of training about GBV supports for refugees and newcomers (especially non-status or undocumented people).

By building relationships between providers with diverse expertise, we can **address gaps** in professional development and service provision and better meet the multiple needs of clients in a holistic way.

Service providers in the immigrantserving sector sometimes provide anti-violence services such as counselling, safety planning, and risk assessment. Likewise, those in the anti-violence sector sometimes provide settlement services such as needs assessments and language training. Increased knowledge exchange, communication, and even joint case management between sectors can help ensure that service providers are equipped to address the intersectional needs of clients.

There is an increased likelihood of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout for service providers working in these sectors.

Collaboration can be an **important source of social support among service providers,** providing a space for collective care and mutual support. Organizations can also benefit from increased knowledge sharing on best practices for reducing vicarious trauma and related issues for staff.



# WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF EACH SECTOR?

The immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors each hold different areas of expertise and specialized knowledge that can support newcomers, immigrants, and refugees experiencing GBV. Yet, each sector also has its limitations and challenges. By sharing our knowledge and skills, we can enhance both sectors' capacity to collectively support clients.

As illustrated in the image below, each sector has expertise that can be helpful for preventing and responding to GBV. Note that these are general areas of strength at the sectoral level that may overlap in specific organizations or in the skill sets of individual service providers. Expertise can also vary across time and region: the information below is based on our project's research and consultations conducted across Canada between 2019 and 2021.

"One of the things that we've learned over the years is that the more people that can share information appropriately, about a growing risk situation, the more likely we are going to be collectively able to create better safety plans."

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In addition to the strengths of each sector, there are also common frameworks, goals, and approaches that are generally recognized across both sectors as important for GBV awareness and response. Our research showed that many of these approaches are aspirational for organizations, and that service providers want more training in areas like anti-racism and anti-oppression, for example.

#### **FEATURED RESOURCES:**

To help advance training in these areas, the project partners collaboratively developed and launched an online course called *Bridges to Safety*, which provides a common base of knowledge for service providers across the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors. We also released a series of webinars in 2020 that provide further information on the topics discussed in this section. You can access these resources here:

www.ngbv.ca/online-course www.ngbv.ca/webinars





# BUILDING BRIDGES TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

COMMON GOALS

SUPPORT NEWCOMER, IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

CONNECT CLIENTS WITH APPROPRIATE SUPPORT & SERVICES

# **KEY FRAMEWORKS, APPROACHES, & TOOLS**

Anti-racism & anti-oppression
Intersectionality
Cultural Humility & cultural safety

Trauma & violence-informed Survivor centered Safety planning

Risk assessment
Asset mapping
Social determinants
of health





# HOW CAN WE COLLABORATE MORE EFFECTIVELY?

It's not just about collaborating more. Effective collaboration requires capacity building, that is, ensuring that service providers have the time, skills, resources, and systems to build and sustain partnerships.

In the remainder of this resource, we share helpful tips and strategies for building capacity for collaboration, as identified in our research and experience collaborating on a national project. The three strategies featured in this resource include:

- **Resource mapping:** Discover resource mapping a practical strategy that organizations and service providers can use to foster a strong network of collaborators in their local region.
- Enhancing skills and competencies: Explore how organizations can support their staff to increase skills and competencies required for effective collaboration. Service providers can also use this section to reflect on individual areas for professional development.
- Establishing and strengthening partnerships: Reference this section for tips on building
  intentional partnerships. Tools for reflecting on the success of our partnerships both large
  and small are also provided.

## LEVELS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a practice that occurs on multiple levels, whether it's between individual service providers, organizational partners, or between whole sectors. In this project, we have identified the following four levels at which collaboration can simultaneously thrive.

Collaboration at each level is equally important, and no one level can function optimally without simultaneous networks and partnerships flourishing at all levels. This presents both challenges and opportunities for service providers who want to build effective collaborations.

# WORK SHEET

Use the following checklists to assess your current strengths and challenges for each level of collaboration potential.

# **All Levels: Common Approaches and Frameworks**

There are several common approaches and frameworks used in the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors that allow us to engage in GBV work in a way that prioritizes client safety. These include anti-racism and anti-oppression, intersectionality, cultural humility and safety, trauma- and violence-informed approaches, and client/survivor-centred approaches, among others.

	A STRENGTH/ REGULAR PRACTICE	A CHALLENGE/ AREA FOR GROWTH	NOT SURE/ NOT APPLICABLE
Consider how systemic, institutional, and/ or interpersonal racism and other systems of oppression and power imbalances might impact a client's situation.			
Reflect on and challenge personal biases and stereotypes about clients' cultural backgrounds, and commit to learning more without placing the burden on them to educate you.			
Understand trauma and violence and their impacts on people's lives and behaviours; use this knowledge to create emotionally and physically safe environments.			
Place clients and their rights, needs, and wishes at the centre of your work in supporting them.  Avoid taking over any decisions for clients - present them with clear information and resources while supporting their choices and allowing them to take the lead.			
Other practices:			

#### **Level 1: Between Individuals**

This most often refers to collaboration between individual service providers, and can sometimes be referred to as case coordination. Case coordination is part of a trauma- and violence-informed approach that avoids putting the burden on the client to repeatedly explain their situation to different providers. When working together on cases, providers must ensure that client confidentiality is respected in all communications. Before a client consents to coordination between providers, they must be informed of the limits of confidentiality (i.e. when providers have a duty to report, such as when there is risk to children).

Collaboration between individuals can also include how we approach our relationships with clients. A more collaborative approach where we work together with clients values their agency and choices, while making efforts to reduce power imbalances between service provider and client.

	A STRENGTH/ REGULAR PRACTICE	A CHALLENGE/ AREA FOR GROWTH	NOT SURE/ NOT APPLICABLE
Work collaboratively with other service providers to form a circle of care around clients. This is often achieved through specific practices, such as making "warm" referrals, case conferencing, knowledge sharing, and exchange.			
Build collaborative relationships with clients, in which their agency and choices are recognized and prioritized.			
Other practices:			



# **Level 2: Within Organizations and Between Teams**

Collaboration within organizations can refer to exchanges between organization leaders and frontline staff, as well as the coordination of multiple teams and programs within an agency. Having a workplace culture that encourages collaboration is an important foundation for our work with clients.

In some cases, collaboration between teams may involve more than one organization. For example, the GBV team in an immigrant-serving agency may work in connection with an external GBV organization.

	A STRENGTH/ REGULAR PRACTICE	A CHALLENGE/ AREA FOR GROWTH	NOT SURE/ NOT APPLICABLE
Meet with the different teams within your organization to learn more about what they do, when you might need to coordinate with or refer to them, and if you share any purposes or goals that could be worked on collaboratively.			
Foster a workplace culture where staff provide social support to each other, in ways that may reduce vicarious trauma or burnout.			
Other practices:			



# **Level 3: Between Organizations**

Collaboration between organizations may include formal or informal project partnerships. It can also involve coordination of services, training opportunities, and knowledge exchange. Oftentimes collaboration at this level is inspired or led by individual leaders and/or GBV champions at an organization.

Effective collaboration means that organizations find and contribute to additional resources together - not compete for them. This can be more complicated in cases where there are systemic inequities between organizations or sectors. For example, our research found that immigrant-serving and anti-violence organizations are funded differently, with anti-violence often relying on more precarious funding avenues. Part of meaningful collaboration includes ensuring that each side of the partnership has a level playing field on which to engage.

	A STRENGTH/ REGULAR PRACTICE	A CHALLENGE/ AREA FOR GROWTH	NOT SURE/ NOT APPLICABLE
Reach out to organizations who have expertise relevant to your training or programming needs.  Offer your help or resources to them in turn.			
Take steps to ensure that each side of the partnership has a level playing field on which to engage.			
Develop appropriate internal tools and surveys to evaluate collaborations with other agencies or partners.			
Other practices:			



## **Level 4: Within and Between Sectors**

This includes provincial/territorial or national networks within a sector, cross-sectoral tables or initiatives, and advocacy work or educational campaigns led by champions or leaders. These sectoral-level connections can help to build a network that organization leaders can use to overcome their individual limitations and reach out for information and support. Besides reaching out in times of crisis, it is a best practice to be available to meet on a regular basis to exchange ideas and stay updated.

	A STRENGTH/ REGULAR PRACTICE	A CHALLENGE/ AREA FOR GROWTH	NOT SURE/ NOT APPLICABLE
Participate in workshops, committees, or events to learn more about the work being done in different sectors and to build connections.			
Promote the resources and tools of umbrella organizations in your region.			
Other practices:			



# WHAT IS RESOURCE MAPPING?

Sometimes referred to as asset mapping, resource mapping is a practical tool that can help:

- Identify and document important resources, services, and programs in our communities.
- Build bridges between the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors, as well as other sectors involved in GBV or settlement work.
- · Recognize and respond to the needs of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees experiencing GBV.
- Prepare service providers with the necessary resources before a client walks through the door or a crisis occurs.

"Even meeting basic needs like where to live, what to eat, where their children will go to school ... immigrant and refugee women have so many other issues they have to deal with... violence is sometimes far down the list."

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Resource mapping doesn't have to be a big project. You can begin by contacting local organizations and community groups to find out more about their services.



Your organization or others may have similar lists of resources and services in your area. Do a brief online search or ask around your organization to find out what already exists before beginning your mapping activity.

# PRACTICAL STEPS TO GET YOU STARTED WITH RESOURCE MAPPING:

- Determine what geographic region your resource mapping will include. Will it be your neighbourhood, city or town, or province or territory? The bigger your region, the more general the resources will be. With smaller regions, you can include more details.
- Consider which services and programs you are most familiar with in your region. For example, service areas you work in or collaborate with regularly, or service areas where you have strong relationships with other people in the field. Maintaining and sharing up-to-date lists of these resources is key.
- 3. Consider which services and programs you are least familiar with in your region. For example, services in a completely different sector, services that are new to you, or services that have been hard to connect with or that you haven't collaborated with before.
- 4. Collaborate with your colleagues. Find out if they have experience with the sectors you do not, and vice versa. If you find common gaps, aim to find out more about the work that organizations in these areas do and find common issues you can use to connect.

# WHAT KINDS OF RESOURCES DO I MAP?

The list below includes a wide range of services that may be relevant to supporting newcomers, immigrants, and refugees experiencing GBV.

Other:



In this section, we outline key skills and competencies that help facilitate successful collaborations at all levels.

# 1) SELF-REFLECTION

#### **Individual Reflection:**

- Reflect on how your intersecting identities such as gender, race, and class result in you holding a more or less privileged position within society. This largely depends on the degree to which society values these various identities.
- Take responsibility for your own education do not expect people who have been marginalized to educate you about the oppression they have experienced.
- Consider how you and/or your team champion the cause of GBV awareness in your work and in your life, and how you can build on that.
- Recognize your own expertise and capacity, while seeking to grow with the help of your umbrella organizations and networks.
- Keep gratitude at the forefront of your working relationships let others know that you appreciate their contributions.

#### **Organizational Reflection:**

- Learn more about the newcomer, immigrant, and refugee communities in your region, including their histories of migration, colonization, religion, language, and culture. Recognize the challenges they may face in the settlement process as well as their hopes, dreams, and sources of strength and resilience.
- Centre the voices and experiences of underrepresented groups in programming, staff training, and human resources. Assess the extent to which your organization consults with diverse immigrant and refugee communities in the design of programming and in your hiring practices.
- Strengthen awareness with staff and clients about Canada's colonial history and the ongoing legacies of cultural genocide and systemic discrimination experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Encourage recognition among newcomers that we are settlers on this land, and work to build solidarity between migrant and Indigenous organizations and groups.



# 2) CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### **Open-Mindedness and Appreciation:**

- Recognize your strengths and limitations as a service provider, and how your perspectives are shaped by your worldview, cultural influences, and personal experiences.
- Celebrate and actively show appreciation for diversity in your collaborations.

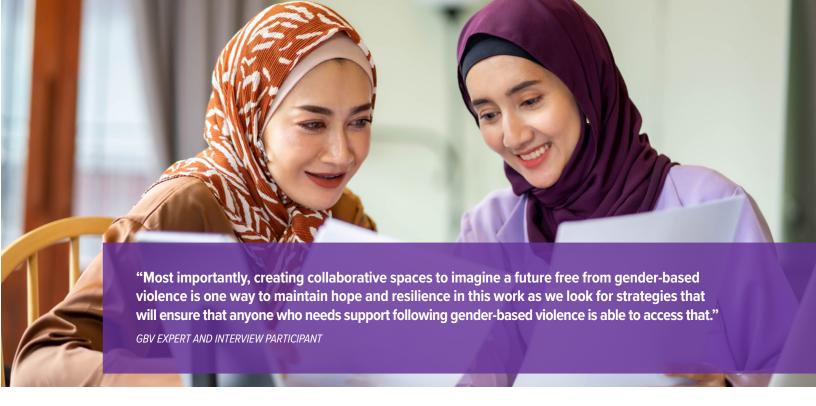
# **Giving and Receiving Feedback:**

- Ensure that you are not offering unsolicited feedback. When unsure, ask before providing feedback.
- When giving observations or suggestions for improvement, be specific with your feedback. Feedback
  about what does work is just as important as what doesn't especially when we are specific about why
  something works well.
- When receiving feedback, ask clarifying questions and summarize what you've heard to ensure understanding. Consider professional feedback an opportunity to learn, not a criticism.

## **Flexibility and Adaptability:**

- Acknowledge that there is more than one right way to approach a problem. Aim to bring different ideas together in a collaborative way, not a competitive one.
- Be attentive to what others are saying and use active listening to resolve conflicts.

Whenever you bring people together you can expect that there will be some challenges, such as conflict, communication issues, and differences in perspectives or approaches. Collaborative relationships also do not exist in a vacuum: they are not immune from unequal power dynamics and external conditions outside of your control.



# 3) COMMUNICATION AND CLIENT ADVOCACY

# **Shared Language and Clarifying Meaning:**

- In order to ensure understanding when collaborating, make an effort to clarify unfamiliar terminology, such as acronyms and specialized terms.
- Recognize that language can hold different meanings to different groups and is constantly evolving (for example, reclaimed terms that may be derogatory to one but empowering to another). When in doubt, mirror the language used by those who have lived experience or expertise in the sector.
- While making every effort to use the right words, remember that making mistakes is part of learning. Remain open to learning and being gently corrected. For example, when using a wrong pronoun, acknowledge your mistake, correct it, and move on.

# **Boundary Setting and Assertiveness:**

- Set and honour boundaries in your collaborative relationships being clear about expectations
  and capacity limitations can prevent individuals from over or under extending themselves. Being
  able to say "no" and set boundaries is also important on a personal level, to avoid burnout and
  compassion fatigue.
- Ensure that communication channels within collaborations remain open, and that all parties are able to share their needs, expectations, and concerns in a straightforward way.
- Be assertive when advocating for clients. Assisting clients in navigating systems such as immigration, health, and education can call for letter writing, making telephone calls or accompaniments to ensure that clients' rights are being respected.

#### **Client-Centred Approaches:**

- Communicate nonjudgmentally so that service users feel deserving, heard, understood, and accepted. Help clients identify their strengths through active listening, keeping the conversation open, and reflecting back the thoughts the client shares.
- Be prepared to use your position and experience as a service provider to advocate on behalf of clients (i.e. when they are facing systemic barriers), while prioritizing their agency and voice.



# HOW DO WE BUILD EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS?

Partnerships are important for building capacity, sharing resources, and utilizing community organizations' strengths and expertise to enhance client-centered services. Building partnerships and collaborations at all levels is a best practice and is encouraged whenever possible in this work.

Some important steps to consider when developing new partnerships or building upon existing ones are as follows:

- Share a vision of success: Agree on a set of project goals and ideal outcomes that clarify the
  mission and priorities of the collaboration.
- **Establish transparency of viewpoints:** Create an environment in which partners can communicate openly, allowing the collaboration to address partners' differing priorities, as well as find the common priorities that unite them.
- Build a common base of knowledge and commit to information sharing: Find consensus
  among partners as to what knowledge is most relevant, and continue to share new information
  relevant to the collaboration's efforts.
- Communicate the strengths of each partner: Acknowledge each partner's unique contributions, and recognize their distinct expertise, resources, and networks.

These steps have been adapted for this resource from **The Intersector Project.** 

**Note on Sustainability:** The keys to sustaining collaborative partnerships are preparation and adaptability. We recognize that external factors such as changes in funding, policies, and staffing can have an impact on collaborations. It is good practice to consider these changes beforehand and to revisit them often, to plan how the collaboration can adapt and continue to move forward.

# HOW DO I EVALUATE MY PARTNERSHIPS?

Evaluation is a type of research that can help us to identify what is working well, and what areas need further development. We can use evaluation tools to encourage ongoing communication with our partners and to resolve conflicts or differences as they arise. These tools may include direct feedback, surveys, and regular check-ins.

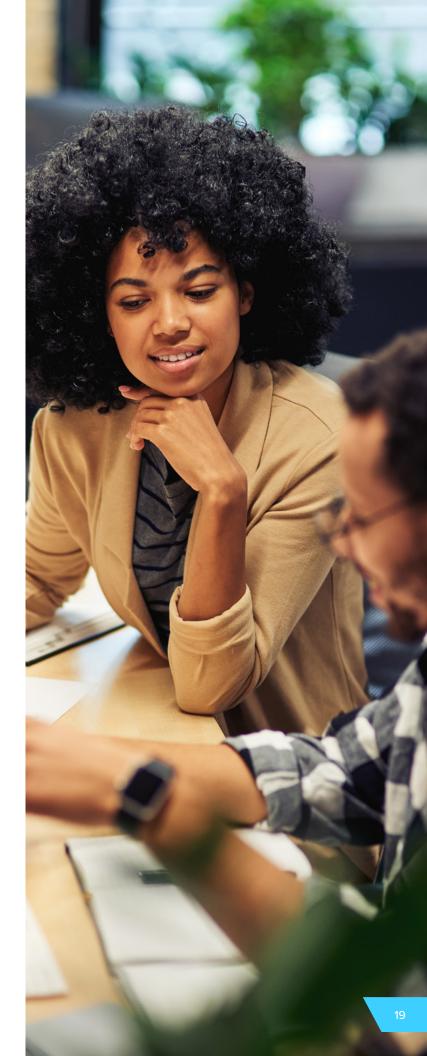
When evaluating a partnership or project, it is important to consider both the health or functionality of the collaboration, as well as its impact. Evaluation is valuable throughout different stages of a project or partnership: from development through to long-term sustainability.

# **Healthy collaborations will tend to:**

- Promote shared ownership and responsibility for the collaboration.
- Acknowledge and address differences in power and experience to create an inclusive space for everyone to contribute.
- Learn about the strengths and limitations of each participating organization.
- Determine the ideal structure of the collaboration and ensure that each member understands their roles and responsibilities.
   For example, some groups may work better with clearly defined roles and leadership, while others may prefer to be a self-organized community where anyone can lead.

#### Impactful collaborations will tend to:

- Ensure that the collaboration is the most effective approach and that it is not duplicating other efforts in the community.
- Learn more about the community the collaboration serves from the perspectives of different members.
- Share a vision of what members want to accomplish through the collaboration, and use this as a guide when evaluating decisions.
- Consider what lessons from the collaboration can be brought to member organizations' own work, and track how it is impacting that work.
- Devise a way to measure the impact of the work being done and communicate it to the public and stakeholders.





# NATIONAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SETTLEMENT STRATEGY PROJECT

Our project team has learned a great deal about building collaborative partnerships since forming in April 2019. Collaboration has been an important part of the development of all of the project's tools and resources, such as our national strategy, online course, and webinars. It is also the foundation of our Champion Network, where community members, service providers, researchers, experts in the field, and those from different sectors have contributed and benefited from the collaboration as it strengthens work across sectors.

The cross-sectoral learning and co-development that has taken place within the project at every level is a key approach in our work, which we know is essential given the complexities of GBV. You can read more about the partnership and project here: **www.ngbv.ca/about-us** 

Some key features of our collaborative partnership include:

#### **Logistics:**

- Bringing together representatives of umbrella organizations with staff hours dedicated to project outcomes
- Engaging consultants, researchers, and subject matter experts in the project
- Having a structured partnership with guiding agreements and principles
- Using formal and informal evaluation tools to collect feedback at regular intervals

## **Process:**

- · Building trust, getting to know each other, and learning more about the work that each of us does
- Regularly discussing and reflecting on challenges and opportunities
- · Moving forward focused on outcomes and activities
- Being flexible and keeping the lines of communication open
- Hosting events across sectors to invite feedback on resources

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

By bringing together the knowledge and experience of those in both the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors, we have co-created a number of resources that can be utilized by service providers and organization leaders to increase their capacity to support newcomers, immigrants, and refugees experiencing GBV. Here are just a few examples of what the project partners have accomplished through collaboration so far:

### Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy: Building Capacity & Collaboration

This strategy fills a gap identified in our research at the national level, setting out five key priorities for the immigrant-serving sector in collaboration with the anti-violence sector in Canada.

Read the strategy here: www.ngbv.ca/gbv-strategy

# Bridges to Safety: Building the Capacity of the Settlement Sector to Respond to Gender-Based Violence, Together with the Anti-Violence Sector

*Bridges to Safety* is a comprehensive, nationally available, introductory online training course on GBV for service providers in the immigrant-serving and anti-violence sectors.

Take the course here: www.ngbv.ca/online-course

## **Champion Network**

After completing *Bridges to Safety*, participants will be invited to join our Champion Network, a community of practice where service providers continue to be involved and mobilized in their own work and communities through shared learnings, tools, and goals.

#### **GBV Awareness On-Demand Webinars:**

# Gender-Based Violence Awareness for Service Providers Working with Newcomers, Immigrants, & Refugees

These on-demand webinars released throughout 2020 cover a range of topics including risk assessment, allyship, and engaging men and boys in GBV awareness and prevention.

Watch the webinars here: www.ngbv.ca/webinars

#### **Setting the Stage:**

#### Organizational Framework for Responding to Gender-Based Violence

This framework aims to enhance awareness that client safety related to GBV should be considered and prioritized in organizational policies and protocols, and offers recommendations for organization leaders in the immigrant-serving sector.

Read the framework here: www.ngbv.ca/organizational-framework

# **GET INVOLVED**

Using a collaborative lens, not only in the project itself but in our work at all levels, has allowed our project's process of resource development to be part of the shift towards working together, learning from one another, and uniting more around the topic of GBV. We invite you to add your voice to the conversation by enrolling in our online course and joining our Champion Network, or contacting us directly for more collaboration opportunities: **www.ngbv.ca/connect-with-us** 

For more information about this collaboration tool and other project resources, check out our website: **www.ngbv.ca** 











