

Policies Matter When Women Experience Violence Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

To date, the Policies Matter Project has produced valuable insights into policy intersections affecting women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence. The policy action plan, in addition to a web-based tool, provides a significant knowledge base from which to design interventions for the women's service sector and for government policy.

The Blueprint report, web-based tool and action plan were produced primarily through the extraordinary effort of the Management Team, a small group of committed sector leaders. In addition, key stakeholders from nine other organizations had opportunities at every juncture to contribute as part of the Advisory Committee. Finally, in May 2013, 60 representatives from the Violence Against Women sector joined in the Blueprint Launch Forum to finalize the action plan and point toward the next phase of the project.

So far, stakeholders engaged in the process report that the results of this project are a remarkable achievement. Moving forward, the most important issues that remain are how the web-based tool will be finalized and maintained in an ever-changing environment, and how the learning produced can move the resulting action plan forward in improving collaboration and coordination in the sector, as well as the operations of individual organizations.

While the web-based tool as it has emerged is helpful in illustrating the current policy context, it will require additional resources to promote, update and utilize it for change. The key organizations that have been involved to this point will be vital to the effectiveness of this work.

The learning produced through this Project represents a remarkable opportunity to move the Violence Against Women sector forward in collaboration with other sectors, and with new vision and understanding. The members of the Management Team, and especially the Woman Abuse Council Toronto (WomanACT), are now positioned to seize this opportunity and begin bringing service providers and policy makers together to communicate about how systemic policy issues negatively affect women's lived experience. With continued work, the Blueprint will improve the lives of women by highlighting leverage points for effective policy intervention.

A. Introduction

Eko Nomos was contracted as the evaluation consultant at the beginning of the Policies Matter Project in September 2011. This report provides a summary of key activities and findings based on the involvement of Mary Ferguson, the principal of the company. Throughout this project, gender-based analysis was used as a framework for all planning, implementation and evaluation activities.

Gender-based analysis is a process that examines the differences in women's and men's lives, and identifies the potential impact of policies and programs in producing/impacting these differences. Gender-based analysis also examines the intersection of gender with other factors such as income, race, age and religion.

The project team included representatives from three partnering organizations (Elizabeth Fry Toronto, Barbra Schlifer Legal Clinic and the Woman Abuse Council Toronto), and the two consultants working on this project. The Policies Matter Project's aim was to produce gender-based information about the impact of policies and programs on women who experience violence. The long term goal is that this information will support more informed

decision-making by both policy makers and service providers. This will result in efficient and effective programs and services that are responsive to the realities of women’s lives.

B. Role of the Evaluation Consultant:

This Policies Matter Project was a developmental project and, as such, required an evaluation approach that would help to shape the project over the two years.

“Developmental evaluation refers to long-term, partnering relationships between evaluators and those engaged in innovative initiatives and development. The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change.”¹

This developmental approach allowed the evaluation consultant to become part of the Blueprint team as it moved through the various phases of the project from conceptualization to implementation and closure.

The evaluation process was founded on an understanding of the need to develop a long term relationship with the members of the project team, enabling feedback at all critical points in the project’s development. Thus, the role of the evaluation consultant was to:

- Ensure that gender-based analysis was used throughout
- Facilitate the development of a theory of change, logic model and evaluation plan
- Monitor project progress and process evaluation activities at various points in the project
- Oversee the implementation of the evaluation plan
- Provide input into a literature review
- Identify data collection methods
- Oversee the definition of policy implications
- Oversee the definition of priorities
- Provide reports
- Liaise with the project coordinator consultant
- Attend all meetings as required

C. Phases of the Evaluation Process

Phase 1: Evaluation Planning

The Policies Matter Project proposal to Status of Women laid out the broad strokes of the project, but there were many unanswered questions about the scope of the project, and the population of women on which the project would focus.

In any project, it is important to develop a clear theory of change, logic model, outcomes and indicators for evaluation planning and evaluation outcome priorities (see Appendices 3 – 6). These together provide a clear picture of what the project is aiming to achieve so that the evaluation work remains focused and relevant. Eko Nomos facilitated a series of meetings with the project team to develop these documents. Sonja Nerad from SN Management provided coordination and research services throughout the project.

¹ Learning and Evaluation for Trail Builder Initiatives in Vibrant Communities, *Caledon Institute, Spring 2005.*

The literature review and consultative research conducted by Ms. Nerad provided valuable information that was used by the team. The team engaged in ongoing collaborative analysis of research data and other learning. This allowed the project to evolve and decisions to be made along the way to strengthen the outcomes. For example, the Theory of Change that was developed in the fall of 2011 was reviewed and revised in the summer of 2012 to better reflect and guide the project toward its successful conclusion.

Phase 2: Evaluation Methodology and Activities Throughout

The following chart provides a summary of the evaluation activities, timeline, approach and summary notes on when the activities were completed.

Activity and Deliverable	Deadline	Approach and Activities	Notes
Briefing and Detailed Work Planning	July/August 2011		Completed by August 2011
Liaison and Meetings	Throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Phase 1 • During Phase 2 	Consultant attended all but 2 meetings of the Management Committee and 1 meeting of the Advisory Committee
Develop Project Theory of Change and Logic Model	October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Management Team and SN Management • Preparation of Theory of Change, Logic Model and Evaluation Plans • Finalize Documents 	Completed by December 2011
Evaluation framework and work plan finalized	December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed using base documents produced by the team 	Completed by December 2011
Focus group evaluation design and analysis	February 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis 	Completed as events were held
Priority Setting Workshops evaluation design	May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Data Collection by project coordinator • Analysis 	Completed as events were held
Output Monitoring Completed	April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Review at Management Meetings 	Done throughout
Year 1 Evaluation Report	May 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation documents included in report 	Completed May 2012
Forum Evaluation	April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Data Collection by coordinator • Analysis 	Completed May 2013
Interviews with	June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with the 	Completed June 2013

Management Team and		management Team	
Final Meeting with the Advisory Committee	June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Meeting with Advisory Committee Members and Management Meeting 	Completed June 2013

Phase 3: Closure of the Evaluation Process

Towards the end of the Policies Matter Project, the evaluation consultant collected information about the Launch Forum, documented the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Group, and conducted third-party interviews with members of the Management Committee and the consultants. The following provides a summary of the results from these three final activities.

D. Stakeholder Forum Evaluation

Forum attendees were invited to fill out an online survey in order to gauge the Forum’s effectiveness and value. In total, 14 attendees completed the survey. When asked whether the Forum met their expectations, the majority of respondents (83%) indicated that the Forum met or exceeded their expectations. None reported that it was disappointing. This indicates that, overall, the Forum was a positive experience for attendees.

When asked to comment on the “best thing” about the Forum, six of the respondents indicated that ‘networking’, or otherwise being able to meet and connect with other people in the sector, was the most positive outcome of the day. In addition, seven respondents made reference to the panel discussion as being helpful in providing access to “leadership” or “experts” in the field. Finally, a few respondents reported that working in small groups was “enlivening”, and “provided an opportunity to work together”.

When it came to “key take-aways”, respondent answers were somewhat more diverse. While three respondents made reference to the potential for web-based development, most other responses were less concrete. Nevertheless, four respondents made comments related to the “diversity” of the Forum as being especially important; it is clear that simply providing a space for individuals to learn and begin “collaborating” was “heartening”. Finally, four respondents made reference to some policy issue as being one of their key take-aways. One respondent related that they had learned that, “women’s issues are mainly due to low income”. Another made reference to the “keen political insights” provided by all participants. One respondent made direct reference to the “Charter cases that are in progress”, and expressed a desire to receive ongoing updates about them.

When asked what questions they had remaining, respondents primarily made reference to either “next steps” or “collaboration”. Six respondents expressed concern with what would happen following the project, in terms of “implementation”, “next steps”, or “continuing the work”. Three respondents made reference to “linking with others”, or the practicalities of “collaboration” as a remaining question. One respondent thought that the framework could have been explained better. Another asked, “How are clients engaged in VAW (violence against women) advocacy? What community development approaches are being utilized to have women engaged, and in time, leading several initiatives?”

When asked about current policy interventions not captured by the Forum, most respondents (79%) chose not to respond, or responded that there were none. The one response that did make reference to a policy intervention was in the area of “financial capability and inclusion”. This respondent commented that there are “huge gender connections and a need for further research” in this area. One respondent found the question unclear.

In the final question, respondents were asked to identify individuals or institutions that “might want to hear about the Policies Matter Project”. Again, most (64%) respondents replied in the negative, or not at all. “Younger populations” and “volunteers in the sector” were identified generally. One respondent commented that it “would have been good to have CWF there”, when in fact, a representative of CWF was there. Other groups or institutions that attendees identified as potentially having an interest in this project included:

- Springtide Resources
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
- Multicultural Women Against Rape
- Native Women’s Resource Centre
- Newcomer Women’s Services

E. Management Team and Advisory Committee Final Meeting

On June 10, 2013 there was a final meeting of the Advisory Committee, the Management Team and consultants. The meeting was digitally audio-recorded. The following section provides a summary of evaluative comments and next step suggestions arising from that meeting.

Evaluative Comments:

About the project

This project was, *"an experiment in new ways of convening."* Moving forward, the transparency of this project ensures that we will see all the small victories that stem from it; *"It's accountable, it's ethical. I love it."*

About the Blueprint Forum

The Forum was perceived as a first step toward continuing effective collaborative work.

"Certainly the issue of poverty reduction came up... if we could simply get the next phase of the poverty reduction targets to focus on women, we would have achieved a very, very big victory, because at the moment they are not putting a gender lens on it... [That talk] was very stimulating to the group, and that's one of the reasons you see that specific phrase around poverty reduction coming up in those results."

About the web-based Tool

All the feedback on the web tool was positive, in particular with respect to the design and the designer. Expectations were exceeded in this regard.

- *"It's impressive for me, it's like 'wow.' It's so accessible. You make it so accessible and right there."*
- *"It gives me goose bumps."*
- *"Look what you've done with this. This is amazing,"*
- *"It's an excellent way to show people how complex are the issues."*
- *"What a treasure."*
- *"...This can and will support organizations to independently identify their strategic primary instructions."*
- *"We can use this to avoid repeating work already completed and instead put resources where they can be most effective."*
- *"...The Blueprint tool comes in really handy in terms of making people aware."*
- *"This will help us to work with our own agencies to join in the work of the coalition."*
- *"This is going to change the landscape of policy."*

- *"This tool will empower people to contact government offices and ensure that they speak to and follow their policies."*
- *"This is amazing. I never imagined that this was going to be that good."*
- *"I think that it is an excellent piece of work that has to be promoted."*

Suggested Next Steps

"There are three things to do immediately: Governance plan, dissemination plan, and prep for a November forum."

Governance

"Something that could be easily accessible or updated in house... at least until we get some additional support for it to continue in a bigger, broader way."

The questions of governance that need to be answered include:

- Who takes control?
- Under what terms?
- Who is authorized to post material?
- Who is authorized to access material?
- Are there crowd-sourcing options, and what are they?
- Who will perform the administration tasks?
- Where will the funding come from?

Dissemination

"So what's the dissemination plan? [It needs to be] reasonable and feasible, given the resources that are available to us, and where we can leverage existing networks."

"...Part of the beauty of this kind of tool is that we don't have to be the sole promoter of it, that the whole idea is that it takes on a life of its own and becomes communal property."

The following organizations and networks were identified for potential dissemination and continued engagement:

- OCASI
- CLEO
- CAS VAW
- VAWN
- WomanACT
- Provincial Associations
- Elizabeth Fry Chapters
- Canadian Association of Women's Shelters
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Women's World Congress

Plan for a Violence Prevention Month November 2013 Forum

"The whole purpose of this [project] was to give us some kind of collective presence, because we're all disparately doing things, and if we have a forum and then followed it up with a lobby at Queens Park, and we handpicked a

couple of things and we could brief a couple of receptive ministers or even the Premier herself on these areas of impact... I think the visual is really impactful - and maybe we will have made it."

Forum activities may include:

- Prepare a presentation of new developments
- Discussion and analysis as to what needs changing
- A place to review and update policies
- Opportunity to visually engage provincial funders
- Time to decide on collective advocacy issues: where efforts are, where they should be, where they can best be focused, where to align with others
- A sector meeting, revisiting current priorities before moving forward
- Reactivate the VAW group "*working in the intersection of justice*" to participate in WomanACT-hosted forums
- Put a gendered lens on lobbies that need them, finding allies in other sectors
- Developing a pre-election strategy
- Preparation to bring issues forward to the inter-ministerial committee

F. Project Team Interviews

The Policies Matter Project provided an opportunity for the 5 members of the project team to engage in a developmental process. All members agreed that the way the team worked together was unique, and warranted evaluation. The evaluation consultant thus engaged a third party to conduct interviews with each of the team members as a way of closing the process and gathering perspectives. The following provides a summary of the collective assessment learning resulting from these interviews.

Evaluative Comments

Design:

Overall, interviewees liked the model of working together as a team with the combination of the Management Committee, evaluator, and coordinator. Comments included, "the committee works well together and the consultants are professional" and "the design works well".

One of the first meetings was about commitment, realities of hours etc.: "We developed Terms of Reference to better understand the commitment of each organization – we all knew our roles and tasks from the very beginning." The Policies Matter Project design was an "iterative process... the proposal was vague, which made it challenging. There was enough there to get going, and we knew what the first component would be. As it was undertaken, we were able to figure out what the other components would look like and put in place the systems and processes needed. [The] design came out of the Management team and consultants... 5 of us did the detailed design... once the design was done, it was quite effective."

In summary, the Management team expressed satisfaction that, while there was initial flexibility in the scope and responsibilities of the project, the iterative process allowed the individual team-members to work closely together and develop the process organically.

Engagement of the Team:

The level of engagement was seen as one of the strengths of this project:

“The Management team was incredibly engaged.”

“They also know the context well, have strong relationships within the sector and made key activities of the project happen through their networks.”

“[The] analysis and dynamics of that group was extraordinary... [This] led to the success of the project.”

“Everybody made [engagement] a priority... there was work and analysis going on that you find very rarely.”

The Advisory Committee and other key stakeholders, however, were seen to be less engaged; many stakeholders in this process were “very busy... [sometimes] women over-commit”. Advisory Committee members may not have been equally committed because, “[their work is] higher level, [and] less involved in the day to day”. In addition, “though less engaged, many Advisory Committee members were responsive and would follow up outside of meetings, providing input.”

The Woman Abuse Council was at the centre of the team: “the ED and 2 Board members who formed the Management Committee were very engaged. The rest of the board was very interested... [and while there] wasn’t the best turn out with the one meeting, [this was] not indicative of the project necessarily... they are revitalizing.”

“More peripherally, people participated, [but were] not necessarily engaged... [Yet,] the consultations had good participation – during those events, people were very focused and interested.” The project engaged with a diverse cross-section of people; “[those with] lived experience, different kinds of women, service providers, policy-makers, experts. [The project] definitely focused on immigrants and newcomers.”

It is clear that stakeholders and participants in this project had differing levels of engagement. While the Management Team was deeply engaged, and worked very closely together, the Advisory Committee appears to have taken a less active role in conducting the project. That is, the Advisory Committee members appear to have acted more individually in providing additional knowledge, experience and input on the ideas, findings and collaborative work that the Management Committee produced.

Objectives

When asked about the objectives of the project, all but one of the objectives were perceived as having been exceeded, achieved or mostly achieved

1. *Conduct a gender-based analysis and needs assessment to identify institutional and other barriers to women’s safety, particularly newcomer/immigrant women, with an emphasis on involving the women:*

- Achieved (2)
- Mostly achieved (2)

Robust policy analysis produced a living document that is in the process of being updated for a third time; policies and legislation are constantly changing.

2. *Organize and co-ordinate a focused discussion within the organizations that support women who experience violence to develop solutions that address priority issues related to women’s safety within the policy context in Toronto:*

- Achieved (1)
- Mostly Achieved (3)

This occurred in a variety of settings through an extensive consultation process with women with lived experience, service providers, Advisory Committee meetings, at the Management Team level, at the May 16 Forum, and with

the Project team. The team took “a whole bunch of steps to get there... [It] had to happen iteratively... with different groups, as it’s a complex issue.”

3. Develop a Blueprint for Action that provides VAW stakeholders, including service providers and policy makers, with a roadmap of initiatives addressing policy issues:

- Exceeded (2)
- Mostly achieved (2)

The Blueprint “illustrated the collective impact of different policies and legislation on women. The tool presents this dramatically.” The result was, “way beyond what we imagined... [It] ended up with a document and the online tool.”

The term “roadmap” is debatable because there is no one clear path; “at the beginning [we] didn’t know what it would look like, [but] developing a tool that could be useful... [We were] very, very happy to see that [and] received only very good feedback. The group’s opinions are hopeful in terms of how they can use it – you can see all the intersections – it gives you goose bumps. The fact that they can click and see quick and easy how this is impacting their clients – makes it easier to be understood by funders and policy-makers.”

4. Identify one collaborative project to pilot with organizations that work with women who experience violence:

- Exceeded (3)
- Mostly Achieved (1)

There are already two new projects, and there are likely more that will come out of the May 16 Forum. The two current collaborative projects have secured funding to support implementation. These aren’t Policies Matter Projects specifically, but are illustrative of how the project incubated ideas, and avenues for the pursuit of change: “There will be more as the website goes live and people take ownership of it.”

5. Engage the service provider community in the learning process:

- Achieved (2)
- Mostly achieved (2)

The process of gathering information during this project resulted in engagement on the part of those providing information – “they provided input, learned something and contributed.” This was also a main outcome of the May 16 Forum. The information and tool coming out of the project was completed only as a result of the feedback and discussion that took place at the Forum. It is expected that service providers will be engaged “more in the next phase.” There is also the ongoing challenge of finding resources to support this ongoing learning.

6. Enhance communication and collaboration with partners in the broader human services systems, including criminal justice, child custody and immigration, in order to strengthen women’s safe access to legal services:

- Mostly Achieved (1)²
- Mostly not achieved (2)

The tool and information gathered has created the platform for this to happen in the next phase of the project: “Now that we have the information and tool we can move to including them, [and] set goals for addressing those policies that are putting women at risk.”

Gender Approach

² One of the interviewees was not at May 16 Forum and so couldn’t respond.

A gender based approach was the “perspective through which we looked at all of the activities of the project.” The Management Team “looked at policy and how it impacted women, how the gender of someone makes the impact different [in terms of] policy, systems, lives. The matrix document lays that out really clearly... contextualized why this report, why gender gets forgotten, why to do this kind of analysis... [I am] pleased with that outcome.”

The analysis was clearly undertaken with a dedicated gender-based perspective and the tool and report are presented as such.

Policy Agenda and Blueprint for Action

There was general agreement that a policy agenda was brought forward at the May 16 Forum, during which the participants identified three priorities. High-level actions were identified, “[but] we need to figure out how to move forward with them.”

Gaps identified were:

- Organizations serving aboriginal women
- Policy-makers
- “Robustness” of the action plan
- Strategic analysis
- No ownership of the agenda and action plan; “who will keep it going? How [can we] create collective ownership?”

“The Action Plan identifies a number of possibilities, particularly around bringing VAW and poverty reduction sectors together using gender-based analysis. [There is] similar energy around housing. The work to date creates a good foundation upon which to build outcomes.”

Partnerships and Collaborations

The team identified a number of partnerships and collaborations including:

- With the broader human services systems:
 - The project brought people together who don’t work together often, or at least regularly: “Communication has started.”
 - A platform now exists to enhance communications: “The project and product legitimizes the reality of these issues and the capacity of the sector.”
- Other partnerships strengthened:
 - Between members of Management Team, BSCC and Elizabeth Fry.
 - VAW and refugee sector (OCASI)
 - WomanACT is in conversation about potential partnerships
- Engaged stakeholders: “Can all see themselves and their role in the sector; came together at the Forum, and now in the priorities there is a clear priority for coordination within the sector.”

Building Knowledge

Knowledge about women’s safety and policy increased for all those involved in the project. We now have “greater understanding of the complexity of policies and legislation impacting women. The tool provides a visual of how their work [in the] sector relates to the bigger picture of how women are impacted... [This] provides a path towards solutions.” This knowledge production is seen as “one of the biggest accomplishments of the project.”

“Service providers have understood intuitively that women are facing multiple policy and legislation barriers, but the project took all the policy issues, collected them in one place, and dramatically presents the fact that policies are designed in isolation of each other and have a collective negative impact on women.”

The results of this project allow “individual women to see how the system affects their ability to get ahead... [They] may feel less personally to blame [as a result].”

This project shows the “usefulness of providing information as a means to create change.”

The service provider community talked of many “ah-hah moments... [and] validation. The tool helped them to see why they work so hard and don’t get very far; [to] see how systemic it is.”

From interview responses, it is clear that the Policies Matter Project has enhanced the knowledge of both individual participants, and the sector at large. The Blueprint tool is perceived as a helpful intervention, allowing individuals a deeper understanding of complex, high-level policy interactions.

Next Steps/Recommendations

The team members had consistent agreement about key themes:

- Policies in and of themselves may or may not hurt women, but their collective impact is increasingly problematic.
- The VAW sector will be effective only by engaging with people from other sectors; “otherwise they just duplicate the work.” Capacity for engagement and collaboration “always boils down to relationships and a few key leaders who are committed at the strategic level and not getting stuck in the day-to-day.” Sector leaders “need to remind stakeholders of what we’ve committed to, and support that ongoing attention.”
- Coordination, collaboration and integration are priorities.
- Management Committee: “their priority needs to be putting some systems or structures in place to [prevent] the project [from] becoming static, [or] sitting on a shelf or website somewhere.”
- “Need to be intentional about using gender-based analysis in all activities and projects that develop out of this project.”
- “Need to realize that we are at the tip of the iceberg in understanding the policy context. The policy context is very complicated and is changing constantly.”

The Web-Based Tool

- A need to finalize it and make sure that the tool is accessible; make it “easy to use so that it can assist in continuing the discussion beyond, and equipping service providers”
- Need to develop protocols around who can change it
- “This site needs to be curated by a senior level person who understands the importance of this and can use it to galvanize the sector”
- “Who will take this work forward?” Both leadership and accountability are needed
- The tool “has the ability to become a provincial and federal site capable of influencing things in a very interesting way”
- Key people must be engaged to move the Policy Agenda and Blueprint for Action forward

Role of WomanACT (Woman Abuse Council of Toronto) in the Next Phases of the Policies Matter Project

- Demonstrated leadership in this project; WomanACT “Has always been cross-sectoral [and] positioned itself as a bit of a hub around policy issues”
- “The community wants us to take leadership and be part of the bigger picture even more”
- Need to make sure that the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is adequately resourced for its role in the next phase of this work
- “The Woman Abuse Council is in a position now that it can take the agenda forward”
- “Positioned itself to be the driver for this work; needs to assume that role and keep working effectively with stakeholders... that can be easier said than done; policy work is hard, long-term and labour-intensive”
- “So important for Woman Abuse Council of Toronto to position itself as a convener and facilitator of action, to support that cross-sectoral action”
- “Structure [of the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto] might look different than what it looked like before; we’re going to develop task work groups [with] specific people working on specific issues”
- Ought to be “strategic about what we do and how we do it... our way of working is going to change... I believe we are ready to move into policy windows... we have a lot of supporters who want to work with us”
- “There are strong people on the Board, but is the structure conducive to it playing a key role? Are there enough active people on the council? Are they the right people to move it forward? Is there an opportunity to look at a redesign around these priorities as a sector with limited resources?”
- “Woman Abuse Council of Toronto is the only organization with a dedicated policy mandate. [One] would assume for that reason [that] stakeholders expect them to take a key role. This is the opportunity for the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto to figure out how to organize itself around these and take advantage of this huge opportunity”
- “Woman Abuse Council of Toronto needs to step up, go back to the funder to get more resources, seek support of specific decision-makers and other funders”

Dissemination for Broader Engagement:

- “Develop a communication strategy to engage the broader human services system and policy-makers”
- Need a plan for strategic dissemination of the results of this project, e.g., send to key ministers, stakeholders, bring results of this project to upcoming conferences

- Priority setting that happened at Forum needs to be vetted through different groups of stakeholders; need to get more concrete and streamlined around moving those areas forward; there is no actual action plan
- Are there strategic policy thinkers among service providers?
- “Project resulted in identification of clusters of people to work on areas of interest; hopefully connected by a common vision set out in the Blueprint”
- “Different stakeholders will take the lead on different parts... finish one and move on. [This] will result in people having a better capacity to think through policy”
- “[We] need an engagement plan... that is strategic”

Concluding Comments

- There was consensus that the project moved the sector forward.
- The vision is refreshed, and people are focused; “an opportunity to engage in critical issues.”
- Primary strengths of the project include: Management Committee continuing to work on the project; members of the Management Committee having complementary skills, experience, background, and a shared commitment to ensuring it moves forward
- Weakness: the proposal wasn’t well defined at the beginning, “but allowed us to be creative which is necessary when working with such complex issues.”
- “Primary strength is to recognize that we need to be part of the solution in addressing systemic issues, and those we have to be committed.”
- “It was awesome to be part of this conversation, to see people committed and willing to be part of the solution... refreshing to see that again. [I’m] very excited and happy.”
- The project produced information that wasn’t available before.
- “Management Committee was made up of different kinds of people, which was helpful for a non-linear process. [The] people at the table were critical for success.”
- “The primary strength of the project was the articulation of the complexity of policies impacting women and identifying the five determinants of safety. These will resonate with lots of people... they’ll be using those into the future.”

G. Summary of Findings

Analysis of the Blueprint Forum Survey, the interviews and the discussion at the final meeting of the Management Committee and Advisory Committee demonstrates that the Policies Matter Project has made a remarkable contribution to the VAW sector. A strong commitment from a core group of leaders has produced a new and innovative tool, the Blueprint Tool, for visualizing the diversity of conflicting policy and legislation that impacts the lived experience of women, and the work of those who serve them. This centralized knowledge bank is key to creating new opportunities for communication of and collaborative advocacy about policy issues that negatively impact women who experience or are at risk of experiencing violence.

While the initial guidelines for this work may have lacked clear focus, the iterative nature of the Management Committee’s work resulted in a process that achieved, among other things, significant consultation across the sector, consensus-building and learning interactions across the human services system, and a very effective tool. These are all strong outcomes for the project.

It is clear, however, that the work begun by this project is not finished, and indeed requires ongoing management, facilitation and sector-wide consultation. Most importantly, the methods by which the Blueprint Tool will be

managed in the future, and who shall be responsible for ensuring its continued accuracy and efficacy, remain to be determined. Further, there is a clear need to ensure, as work continues, that more stakeholders are engaged. While the core leadership of this project to date has resulted in a clear and effective illustration of priorities for the sector, these priorities must now be developed into a strategic action plan and communicated to key decision-makers in government, and throughout the VAW sector and the human services system.

H. Next Steps

1. In concert with the Advisory Committee and the Management Team, develop an accountability and management structure for the Blueprint Tool.
2. Engage a larger group of stakeholders in reviewing and refining the Blueprint Tool.
3. Approach identified stakeholder groups with opportunities for collaboration on focused projects in each priority area.
4. Develop a strategic action plan to address the priority areas identified and agreed upon at the Forum. This involves discussing ways in which identified priority areas may be incorporated into organizational mandates and program directions.
5. Identify key partners to assist in leading strategic policy initiatives.
6. Apply for funding to develop the Blueprint Tool as an interactive, online tool enabling continuous updating, broad communication, and collaboration on policy development.
7. Refine the priority policy areas, develop a strategic action plan for addressing these priority areas, and restructure operations within organizations to effectively take action.
8. Conduct a forum in November 2013 to unveil the next phase of development, focusing on the work already done, the new opportunities for collaboration it produces, and an action plan for achieving priority results identified during this forum.
9. Disseminate the Blueprint Tool widely: to policy makers, government agents and agencies, leaders and workers in the VAW sector and the human services system serving women at risk of or who have experienced violence, the media, and the public at large.