

# THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM: Outreach, Mobilization, Organizing and Accountability to Address Violence Against Women in Asian and Pacific Islander Communities

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: March 2005

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#### The Community Engagement Continuum

We have conceptualized the *Community Engagement Continuum* in order to categorize a range of community based approaches in the anti-violence movement and to clarify the goals of engagement. The four points on the continuum – *community outreach and education*, *community mobilization*, *community organizing*, and *community accountability* – are defined by the level to which the strategies used lead to increases in the community’s capacity to transform relations of power. The continuum model encourages a more strategic approach to any level of community engagement work and offers tools towards realistic step-by-step implementation.

1. *Community Outreach and Education* raises community awareness about the issue of violence against women and children and anti-violence resources;
2. *Community Mobilization* aims for active community participation and engagement supporting the anti-violence organization or addressing the problem of violence against women and children;
3. *Community Organizing* involves longer-term strategies meant to increase sustained community-based capacity to address violence against women and children. It is further divided into *community organizing (general)* and *community organizing (among those most affected)*; and
4. *Community Accountability* develops the capacity of community members to support survivors and hold abusers accountable for their violence.

#### Documentation of Innovative API Community Engagement Strategies

Innovative community-based strategies among seven Asian and Pacific Islander (API) anti-violence programs are documented in detail.

- **The Door Knocking Campaign of *Stand Against Violence Effectively Program (S.A.V.E.)*, of the *Cambodian Association of America*** (Cambodian; Long Beach, CA), describes a unique community outreach strategy for an isolated and geographically confined urban population of Cambodians.

- **The Community Needs Assessment of *Shimtu***, a program of the *Korean Community Center of the East Bay* (Korean; Oakland, CA) illustrates how a funder-mandated needs assessment activity was used to mobilize various sectors of the community to take ownership in the establishment of a community-based domestic violence program.
- **The Natural Helper Program of *Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center*** (Pan-Asian; Seattle, WA) and its involvement with the Samoan Parenting Group of the *Samoan Christian Congregational Church* (Samoan; Seattle, WA) offers an example of how an anti-violence program with a community organizing agenda can increase the capacity of community-based institutions to effectively address domestic violence within their constituencies.
- **Youth Empowerment as Domestic Violence Reduction of *Freedom, Inc.*** (Hmong; Madison, WI) demonstrates how the connection between intimate forms of violence and larger societal structures of power invites youth organized around racial profiling and deportation to take accountability for violence within their family and intimate relationships.
- **Public Shaming/Naming of *Sakhi for South Asian Women*** (South Asian; New York, NY) gives a rare example of organized public disclosure and shaming of an abuser in order to push accountability to the level of community-wide awareness and responsibility.
- **Breaking the Silence Project of *Raksha*** (South Asian; Atlanta, GA) describes the formulation of a campaign to highlight the prevalence of child sexual abuse and to encourage the community to engage in greater engagement and responsibility around this hidden and private issue.
- **Pacific Islander Men's Program by *Sharon Spencer*** (Pacific Islander; North Shore, Oahu, HI) presents community-based efforts to engage Pacific Islander men to take responsibility for their violence through comparisons with the destructive legacy of colonization and the need for community restoration.

### Community Engagement: Key Issues and Themes

- 1) Setting *community engagement priorities* encourage anti-violence programs to examine the goals of and target populations for sound community-based strategies.
- 2) The theme of *sustainability* arises in the challenges of formulating community-based strategies requiring long-term planning and investment of resources.
- 3) An issue related to sustainability is the challenge for social service programs to *integrate and support ongoing, strategic community-engagement activities*.

- 4) *Intergenerational community organizing* emerges as a promising approach to address violence against women and children particularly within communities characterized by extended family structures.
- 5) Increased levels of community engagement can require thoughtful consideration of *confidentiality* practices and policies in order to allow for flexibility without compromising this important principle.
- 6) Innovative approaches to *safety* for survivors of violence and for program staff and volunteers are responses to community-based strategies which require engagement within homes and community spaces where violence occurs.
- 7) The identification of and nurturing of *leadership* qualities among organizers and the development of these qualities among those community members being engaged are important to increasing community capacity to address violence against women and children.
- 8) The level and nature of *engagement with or challenges to larger state systems* such as child welfare and the criminal legal system are considerations for programs working towards more effective community involvement in addressing intimate and family violence.
- 9) Strategies for effective *multi-issue organizing* within programs usually confined to domestic violence or gender-based violence is another issue area raised in these documented examples of community-based strategies.
- 10) Drawing parallels between *destructive histories of colonization and the erosive effects of domestic violence* can serve as a deepening of culturally competent approaches to abuser accountability and positive transformation of male identities.

## Recommendations

- 1) Support training on community engagement and organizing for anti-violence programs.
- 2) Support community engagement and organizing among those most affected by intimate and family violence.
- 3) Support leadership development especially among those most affected by intimate and family violence.
- 4) Promote intergenerational community engagement and organizing.
- 5) Promote multi-issue and cross-community engagement and organizing.

- 6) Explore creative ways to push the boundaries of confidentiality and safety towards the promotion of greater community participation.
- 7) Promote community accountability and intervention strategies.
- 8) Support the development of culturally meaningful, engaging, and transformative anti-violence work.
- 9) Create program structures supporting sustained community engagement and organizing.
- 10) Promote long-term funding to support innovative community engagement strategies.

### Further Information and Technical Assistance

For a copy of the full report and/or technical assistance on community organizing please contact:

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