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Evaluation of Healthy Relationships for African Families

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1. Introduction

The issue of violence against women and domestic violence in particular is important internationally with multi-country (see for example WHO, 2005), country specific (see for example ABS, 2013; Pelser et al., 2005) and smaller studies (see for example McCloskey, Williams & Larsen, 2005; Koenig et al., 2003) examining its prevalence and impact; and responses to it (Raj & Silvermann, 2002) along with its impact on settlement (Rees & Pease, 2007; Fisher 2009). The African communities in Perth have had long term concerns about domestic violence in their communities and a strong desire to address it. Community driven research (Fisher, 2009) was undertaken with five communities (Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Somalia), the findings of which were returned to the communities for discussions on 'ways forward'. After consultation and discussion among members of the respective communities, the notion of training for community leaders who provide in-community support for domestic violence was considered valuable and led to a successful application for funding from the (then) Office of Multicultural Interests in 2010 for the running of a pilot project known as Healthy Relationships for African Families. This pilot project was evaluated and a report produced in 2011 (Fisher, 2011).

The success of that pilot project and a desire from other African communities to be involved in efforts to address domestic violence in their communities led to successful applications from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) (now Department of Immigration and Border Protection) (involving communities from South Sudan, Liberia and Ethiopia) and from the



Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACHSIA) (now Department of Social Services) (involving communities from Sierra Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea) to undertake projects within these eight communities. These projects are known as Healthy Relationships for African Families (HRAF).

An important part of any project is its evaluation. This evaluation report provides evidence as to what worked well in the HRAF projects and what could be improved, along with understanding of their impact (positive and negative) on those involved. An evaluation is also important to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and experience that has the potential to influence future projects (both within the agency and more broadly) and avoid duplication of effort across agencies.

To these ends, this evaluation addressed four main areas:

1. Design of the Project
2. Impact of the Project on Participants
3. Impact of the Project on Partnering Agencies
4. Future Directions





2. Healthy Relationships for African Families Projects

Refugee background communities have resources, capacities and strengths that can be tapped into in responding effectively to domestic violence, building capacity of community leaders to understand the impact of domestic violence and motivating them to initiate change within their communities is significant in the path to preventing domestic violence (Dimopoulos, 2013). These resources were mobilised in the HRAF projects. A description of the projects follows.

As noted in Section 1, this evaluation covers two projects – one funded by DIAC and one by FACHSIA. The projects shared the same design. A total of eight communities were involved in the projects. Unfortunately during implementation of the FACHSIA project, the project officer was absent on extended sick leave with the project eventually continuing under alternate stewardship when it became clear the original project officer would not be able to return.

The projects were designed to be ethno-specific and underpinned by a human rights perspective. The ethno-specific aspect of the design recognised that many community members from the involved communities preferred to (and did) seek support and information, at least initially within their own community around domestic violence issues; and recognised that misinformation and confusion existed in refugee background communities regarding laws, services and practices in a western context related to domestic violence. The involved communities have been in Australia for varying lengths of time and the design of the projects took into account that both less well



established communities and individuals, and those communities that had been established for longer, may struggle with family life. Through the project a means whereby those struggling could be assisted by established community members was provided. The project design built on the concept of empowering influential community members to initiate discussions in their own language and communities, and assist community members to express their concerns. In this manner, information presented is accommodating to language and respectful of culture. Receptivity of the information, therefore, is likely to be enhanced with a concomitant increase in understanding of the Western Australian context, and increased opportunity for solution identification.

The projects were designed for a three year period and based on a train-the-trainer (Community Educator) model. During this timeframe community leaders were to be trained who would, in turn, train community educators and this would culminate in community conversations about domestic violence and related issues ensuring the involvement of a larger numbers of community members.

The training of community leaders was designed over an extended period, facilitated by a range of individuals and agencies. Major topics for the training included Healthy family relationships; Unhealthy family relationships; Responding to domestic violence; and Helping and referring victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Community leaders were also provided with skill development in group facilitation and provided a session on strategies to use as a community educator and when facilitating community conversations. During the early part of the training





period, participants were introduced to the community conversation model in preparation for the community conversations to follow.

The following tables provide a snapshot of the components of the design for the two projects.

Community	Length of the training	No of community leaders trained by ASeTTS
Ethiopia	7 weeks	2
South Sudan	7 weeks	2
Liberia	7 weeks	2
DR Congo	7 weeks	2
Guinea	7 weeks	2
Somalia	7 weeks	2
Burundi	7 weeks	2
Sierra Leone	7 weeks	2

Community	Length of training	No of community educators trained by community leaders	Community conversation held during
Ethiopia	4 weeks	9	October 2012; March 2013
South Sudan	4 weeks	9	October 2012; March 2013
Liberia	4 weeks	10	October 2012; March 2013
DR Congo	4 weeks	5	June 2013 June 2014
Guinea	4 week s	6	August 2013
Somalia	4 weeks	7	April 2013
Burundi	4 weeks	7	February 2014
Sierra Leone	4 weeks	7	May and July 2014

Table 1 & 2: Components of the Design for HRAF Projects



Given the participatory nature of the projects, it is appropriate that a description of the projects also comes from a project officer:

The project was actually...it became two projects with ...the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and it's uh.. my particular project and the Department of Families (Housing) Community Services and Indigenous Affairs... The Department of (Immigration and Citizenship) funded one. It targeted three communities: The Sudanese, South Sudanese, the Liberian, and the Ethiopian Community. And it commenced in late 2011. And then the other uh.. project.. targeted five communities, the Sierra Leone, the Somali, the Burundi, the Congolese, the Guinean community. So eight communities in total. What we did at first in 2011 (in the DIAC funded project), we identified...community leaders from each of those communities.. those were community leaders that had taken part in the pilot project. So what we did, we approached them and asked them to nominate those amongst them who would want to take part in the actual project. So they would nominate two from each of the communities, two leaders and those two leaders, we trained for seven weeks. So what happened in those seven weeks? We had.. a program, a course... which we divided into mainly three sections.. because we were approaching this issue of domestic violence from a holistic set of point of view. So we were doing healthy family relationships and using that as conduit to get into the subject of domestic violence. So the seven weeks.. were divided into... healthy relationships between couples...healthy relationships between parents and children, healthy relationships...between the youths and parents. So the intergeneration conflict came into that and then interfaced within that – In that was the domestic violence topics. Yeah. So...seven weeks of that. So by the time seven weeks were over, these two community leaders from each of these groups was to identify ten of their community members that they could train to become community educators. So... collectively, there were gonna be .. 12 community educators. So two, the initial primary participants, the trained ones, who would recruit ten others from each of their communities and there would be 12 in each community so that would make about 36 of them. So ... they would train these ten for four weeks and on the same sort of topics. Yes. Now after the seven weeks, we did





*develop a... folder for the community leaders which they could use to train the ten. And ... That proved very handy... for them as they delivered their information. And now, by the end of the four weeks then, all 36 ... they held a meeting to see how they had fared with the information, whether there were questions surrounding probably the law in relation to domestic violence, in relation to the child protection system, just issues that they thought needed clarification and we brought in professionals ...from legal aide, from ... the Department of Child Protection and we held a meeting and they said, "Okay. We know this and we know that, but we don't know this and that. Could clarify this and that?" And we presented – After the first I guess, section where we trained the seven ...or where we had the seven week program and trained the six, we handed out certificates of attendance and it also important for us to hand out certificates – certificates of attendance for the next batch. But we did that at the meeting, to round it up. Rounded it off nicely...for all of them. Yes. Then...it was in September of 2012 that we started on community conversations. And the community conversations were really meant to run so thatthey recruited a minimum of 20 of their community members. And they would come together and we would set tables, if they wanted that. – That was their original idea – Just to have them sit around tables with two community educators at each table and anyone can make conversations. So what was meant to happen was that ...a community leader would pose a question because we would approach the topic of... healthy family relationships through questions to get the people talking and one of them would be writing what the... community was saying and how they'll be sort conducting the discussion. So that was generally the setup overall.
(Project officer)*



3. Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Design

A case study research design (Stake, 2003) was utilised for the evaluation of the two Healthy Relationships for African Families (HRAF) projects. The initial intent was to evaluate each project independently and then undertake a cross-case analysis to look for differences and similarities between them. Participants from both projects, however, were together in focus groups rendering a project-specific analysis unrealistic. As such, the projects have been evaluated together. This is not deemed problematic given the projects utilised the same design, they were run concurrently and there was opportunity through-out implementation for project officers to 'learn from each other', albeit on an informal basis.

3.2 Evaluation Participants

The evaluation involved two groups of participants: leaders and community educators from the 8 communities involved in the HRAF projects (n=23) and staff involved in the projects from ASeTTS, Department for Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) and Multicultural Women's Advocacy Service (MWAS) (n=7)





3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from community leaders and educators through a series of focus group discussions (May-October 2014). The sessions were scheduled to last for two hours, were audio recorded after consent and transcribed for later analysis. Although the focus groups were run in English, interpreters were required for two of the sessions. The focus groups were held at the offices of ASeTTS (Perth and Mirrabooka).

Data from agency staff and the project officers for the two projects were collected through face-to-face in depth interviews (4 one-on-one interviews and 1 group interview). Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 ½ hours , were audio recorded after consent and transcribed for later analysis.

Data collected from community leaders and community educators informed aims 2 and 4. Data collected from project officers informed aims 1-4 and data from other ASeTTS staff and partner agency staff informed 1,3 and 4. These latter participants also provided perspective on Aim number 2 as appropriate.

To address the evaluation aims, data were analysed utilising content analysis as described by Hsieh & Shannon (2005). As such, transcripts from the interviews and focus groups were read line by line and significant statements and phrases that addressed the aims were identified and coded as



concepts. Through a second level coding, concepts were clustered together to form categories which were individually examined and refined to ensure internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity.

An audit trail of analytical decisions was maintained to ensure transparency in, and scientific rigour of the analysis and an accurate representation of participant views.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the process of the evaluation, evaluation documentation and content of the interview and focus group guides was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Western Australia (Approval Number - RA/4/1/6672). Copies of documentation are included as Appendices 1-6.





4. Results

The evaluation sought to answer questions about the projects across four main domains:

Design of Projects, Impact of projects on participants, Impact of projects on partner agencies; and, Future directions.

These domains provide the structure for the results obtained for the evaluation.

4.1 Design of Projects

4.1.1 Appropriateness of the Project Design

As noted previously, the design of both projects was based on a 'train the trainer' (Community Educator model). One of the rationales underpinning this choice relates back to participatory, community-driven research that was undertaken in 2008-09 addressing the understanding, nature and impact of domestic violence in five communities from an African refugee background (Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone) (Fisher, 2009) where findings indicated that community members preferred to turn, initially, to their own community members for support in addressing the issue. It was also recognised, however, that there was limited capacity within the communities to respond appropriately in an Australian context and to ensure that the limits to support were well known and adhered to.



The formulation of the specific model proposed for both HRAF projects was based on two separate factors: how to how best to accommodate community members' desire to receive appropriate information within their own community and, information on a United Nations agency model utilised for HIV projects on the African continent. This model involved working with community leaders, in communities, and was focussed on what was termed 'community conversations'. The issues of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence were both seen to be associated with stigma and, therefore, it was suggested that this model might be appropriate for the HRAF projects. As noted by an ASeTTS staff member

So we kind of took that idea [UN community conversations model] and blended it with the information that had come out of the research and decided to go in that direction; that there would be this train-the-trainer model where we train some community leaders who would in turn train some community educators, and that would lead to having these community conversations. (Agency staff member)

There was no real consensus in the findings of the evaluation as to whether this model was appropriate for the projects being undertaken. Community leaders and educators, roundly supported the approach, albeit with some minor suggestions for improvement. Agency staff participants were more equivocal, citing positive and negative aspects of the model and suggesting ways that the model could be 'tweaked' and hence, improved for the local context and the issue of domestic violence.





4.1.1.1 Positive Aspects of the Design

There were a number of positive aspects of the design that participants in the evaluation (agency staff, project officers, community leaders and educators) highlighted. The design was seen to reflect the community driven nature of previous research and projects related to domestic violence, and an ideal way of reaching a larger number of community members. The model utilised, therefore was seen to facilitate broad involvement rather than a focus on community leaders. It also enabled discussions and provision of information about domestic violence in a culturally secure manner that engendered trust

I would say the design of the project was great. Yes. The idea of having leaders train their community members was excellent because it...was a way of reaching people, through a medium that they would be a lot more familiar with, in – in terms of, I guess uh.. just having someone in your community start a discussion with you about issues that (are) common to all of you. It was a really good way of reaching people. And having said that, I guess uh.. from my experience.... it was a good method. (Project officer)

I feel the model is good....that whole train the trainer, passing information from community leaders to members of the community, that was excellent because it wasn't people who were foreign to the community members coming to....interact with them (Project officer)

I think it's a great model because it makes it easier to reach everyone. So through them, they [community educators] will be able to know who they trust because, as a staff, you would not know in the community what is going on. But them, their selves (sic), they know what is going in the community and how to involve with the community; who to call, who not to call, and who to trust. So it's easier. That's why I think it's a great model (Agency staff member)



The reach into communities was also seen as a positive aspect by partner agencies:

HRAF gets right to their community, the families who are directly impacted. And I think there's a danger for us as services providers to bring the African leaders together cos we're just reinforcing: you're the male leader and we are saying that that's what you are. The people we really want to get to are down here [in the community]. So we need organisations like ASeTTS to get there. (Agency staff member)

Additionally, the model adopted focussed on community perspectives about the issue and how it could be appropriately addressed in the communities in a western (Australian) context. Through this, local level understanding was facilitated and enhanced; and discussion was built on these emic understandings and challenged where appropriate.

they [community educators] got the proper message and they knew how to handle the group. They knew how to respond to the questions that came from the community members. And also, all the community members who participated in those community conversations participated very well. They took it very seriously.....here, we just saw the perspective of the community members about the issue. And they discussed about the issue; they discussed about the causes of the issue; they discussed the possible solutions, which was the beauty of the project. So in that case– I really think the model is a good model. (Agency staff member)

Community leaders and community educators embraced the model and offered no alternatives that they considered would be more appropriate. Typical of responses to questions about the appropriateness of the model was provided by a community educator:





I think we have Train the Trainer so the people who got the training can go out there to other people who are unable to attend here. Spread these messages out. Form a community that talk about these issues. Make everyone to understand – make everyone be on the same page because, you know, if you are working together in the same page, hardly can have problems. (Community educator)

4.1.1.2 Negative Aspects of the Design

Despite the positives of the design of the project and the model adopted, some negative aspects were highlighted.

There was some 'nervousness' about train the trainer as a model in the area of domestic violence. This sense stemmed largely from the perceived lack of control over what trainees would impart to those they trained (ie, the consistency of the message) and, in particular, the potential impact on the safety of women and children should an inappropriate message be conveyed and/or community educators overstep their limits in terms of providing support, as safety is a fundamental component of best practice in domestic violence support and service delivery (FDVU, 2004).

I am nervous about it... I think talking to some of the people en-route, I would say that some of that [what they were saying] would have been taken in a positive manner. I think some of it would have worked in reverse....It would have a negative impact in the community in the sense that you should be very careful about who you've picked and you can't be in that process. That can actually be used to actually push it [the issue] underground rather than elevate it up. (Agency staff member)

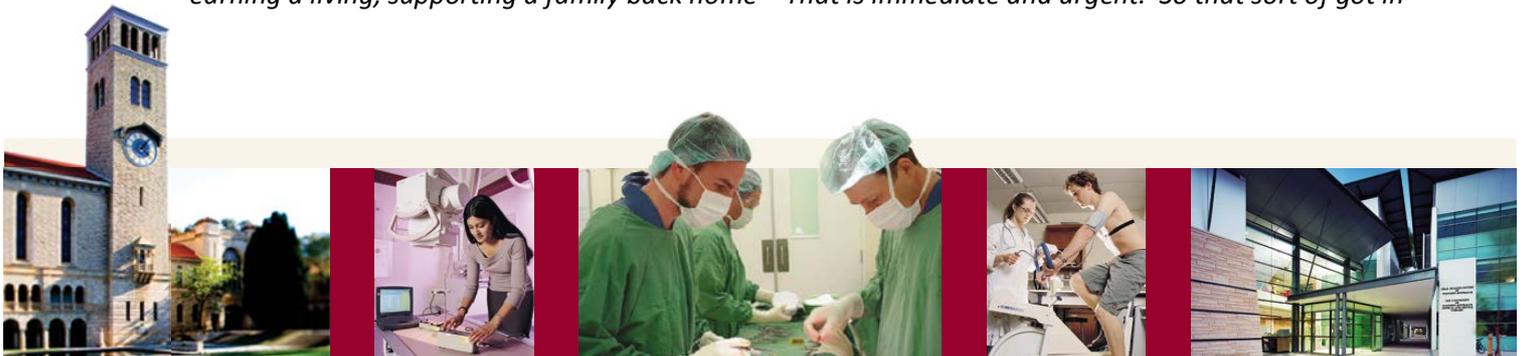


Those closely involved with the project did not necessarily see this as an important issue, because they perceived they were privy to conversations and contact with community educators that reassured them that a consistent message was being delivered and they were checking their information if they were unsure, and they were making referrals:

I guess (Community educators became), more aware of their role as the project was running and...it is my feeling that, because every other time I had a phone call from somebody saying to me, "By the way, uh.. do you have the number that – Could you give me that number again because I want to talk to this person about this and about that." And so, I have had phone call to me from a community leader saying to me, uh.. "We are talking with this family and I want to do this, uhm.. if it's right." So they check in, but certainly, they are aware of their role. (Project Officer)

Additionally, despite a general positivity regarding the model adopted, it was suggested that it did not translate as hoped from addressing the issue of HIV on the African continent to addressing domestic violence within an Australian context. This was seen to stem from two distinct issues: HIV is an illness (domestic violence is not) and the immediacy of the impact of the issue

when you're talking about a medical issue, people see the effects of it in terms of...deaths, illness in the community, and...it would be very, very, urgent for them to get to pass on the message. On the other hand, while...the same model was fantasticthe actual effects of domestic violence would not be as easily seen, not as tangible. The changes not as tangible as a medical platform, where people will be saying, "Oh. Okay. So.. if we do this, this will happen." Immediately, you see (the changes). I mean they felt it [domestic violence] (but) they felt that.. it was not urgentPeople are busy and – Yes – We are talking about domestic violence. Yes. But "My husband beats me, but I can cope. I've got to work. I'm going to work." The bigger picture would get lost. The idea of... making money, earning a living, supporting a family back home – That is immediate and urgent. So that sort of got in





the way of the outcomes that were meant to be achieved with the project simply because even if the model was excellent, it just did not correspond as much to the urgency that would be important for them to see in the situation. (Project officer)

There were concerns also, that the site for the projects, ie, metropolitan Perth, is very different to the rural location where the model had been utilised previously. That is, a metropolitan western setting may not be as appropriate as a rural setting in a developing country with regard to the overall utility of the model:

this type of design worked in countries like Sri Lanka because we worked in rural areas. And when we organise community meetings...even people passing by just come and join and come in; so even uninvited people just come... it is not the case in Australia because in Australia, time means money. So, therefore, it was really hard for community leaders to get people into these discussions. (Agency staff member)

probably if you were looking at it in a situation like in Ethiopia or in other African countries where they rolled out that kind of model, they were usually not necessarily doing it in urban areas. They were doing it in rural communities. And, of course, in rural communities – while people are still very busy ... there's a lot less external distractions going on. So if someone comes into a community and starts running workshops and stuff, everybody's gonna be quite interested, and it's gonna catch the people's attention and stuff rather than in a situation like here, where the people that we were trying to engage in the project ... had millions of distractions going on...Some had English classes. Some had to work. A lot of people had shift-type work, children, other concerns and anxieties and frustrations around the whole settlement process anyway, plus other demands their community were putting on and plus then we were saying, "Please come for six weeks' training," or whatever and then organise your communities into community conversations.....In terms of the basic model, I think that we hadn't taken into account enough, the kinds of pressures that were on the people that were involved. (Agency staff member)



As evident in the previous quote, the model was deemed to place quite a burden on community educators. This burden, however, was seen to extend beyond extra impost on their time. It extended to maintain the integrity of the messages received in training and actively delivering them in their communities.

You are putting a lot of faith and a lot of trust in this group of people to go back out to the community and educate. (Agency staff member)

And a leap of faith that those selected are the 'right' people was required:

I have to think about the leap of faith...that it's the right people(involved). Because, communities are so diverse and we [Agency] introduced somebody a few years back and as a consultant for a specific African community and in hindsight found out who was actually quite violent personally, at home. (Agency staff member)

The design of the projects, through not taking the busyness of participants' lives and their competing priorities sufficiently into account was seen to impact negatively on the ability to maintain momentum and engagement with the community across the project timeframe. Participants in the evaluation, both project staff and community members reflected on the impost the project had (this is discussed at a personal level in Sections 4.1.2.2 and 4.2.2 below) and a resignation that momentum, once lost, may not be able to be regained. Strategies were implemented by project officers in an attempt to address this:





To keep the project in their minds (my strategy was) was to call them often and to say to them, “Well, this is happening. What are you doing about this? How are you doing?” Just... to keep connected with them...even just finding out how they are doing - How's your job going now? And just so that they knew that I was not just interested in pushing the project forward, but interested in them as people and how they were. And so, in between ... I would say to them all... remember we're gonna have this to do, so you'll be able to do that. ...Another thing that I did to try and ... motivate them to keep going, was to seek their opinion like about ... how they would like things done, what they would like to do. (Project officer)

Despite these strategies, a number of community leaders and educators did not feel fully supported during periods where project activities were lower:

But the only problem ...is no follow-up from the trainers. So, you know, when you run a project, you need to run kind of catch up with the people who was trained and ask for feedbacks (sic); also check if there's anything... we need to add (to the training or project). You know, when you do a training you have to follow up, to find out if that is the easiest to getting the services. But, everything just went 'bang' died. (Community educator)

The issue of ensuring that leaders approached and recruited diverse section of their communities to participate is an inherent issue in community development work and was also raised as a potential issue with the model adopted for the HRAF projects:

I've always wondered whether we'd have tended in some of the communities to end up with a cluster of educators or leaders who represent a part of that community but don't necessarily represent another part of that community. And that is an ongoing challenge for any community-based project



that you do try to reach out to enough of a spread of peopleAnd we need to make sure that we do do that because we are a community-based organisation in a sense... we don't have total access by any stretch of imagination, but we do probably have a slightly broader access. But it's just something you have to watch and then monitor, and I don't think we've got it covered in this project by any means. (Agency staff member)

Overall, the project design provided a means whereby a large number of community members could be potentially reached. Additionally it facilitated a process whereby relevant and important information would be provided to community members in a culturally secure manner. There were, issues related to working in partnership and the overall timeframe for the projects, however, that were highlighted. These, it was suggested, could be learned from in future projects. They are presented in the next section.

4.1.2 Learnings from the Project Design

The implementation of two projects running almost simultaneously meant that the respective project officers were able to 'learn from each other'. Although it was not formalised, there was significant and useful interaction between the two project officers, and hence support for each other.

She [other project officer] did a good job organising speakers, and she orientated me to who's who. And that was well-documented and – but I think that I was relieved that she was there doing something. She was relieved. So we worked really, really well together. (Project officer)





Therefore, on a day-to-day basis, inter-projects learnings were occurring and able to be applied. Apart from these learnings, a range of issues were highlighted about the design of the projects that evaluation participants considered could or should be being done differently in future projects. Much of this discussion related to processes that occurred at the time the initial FAHCSIA grant was being developed, particularly around the issue of partnerships and engagement, and uncertainty about how the project design would 'roll out'. At this broad level, the timeframe for projects was also an area of concern. More specific challenges to implementation are presented in Sections 4.1.2.1, 4.1.2.2, 4.1.2.3, 4.1.2.4 and 4.1.2.5.

4.1.2.1 Partnership

ASeTTS working in partnership with MWAS appears to be both natural and logical. Each agency has specific expertise which complements the other when responding to the issue of domestic violence in African refugee background communities. As noted by one participant in the evaluation:

obviously they're [MWAS] experts. They had the expertise in gender-based violence and working with that situation, which we didn't necessarily have at the same level....But we had....the connections to the communities and an understanding of the settlement issues and those kinds of things. (Agency staff member)

The insights that MWAS were able to provide was seen to add to the utility of the design:



At the beginning, the valuable contribution they [MWAS] made is they did really make us think about what we were going to offer in terms of training because we aren't experts in domestic ...or working with survivors of domestic violence. So it was important that they said what they had to say to us about protecting the safety of people and making sure that people understood what their boundaries were and all of those kinds of things. That was very important for them at the beginning. (Agency staff member)

The involvement of other agencies, particularly Department for Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS) was also appropriate with that agency noting the positives that have resulted from their involvement in the projects.

The actuality of the partnership, however, did not match its inherent potential, particularly that between ASeTTS and MWAS. Largely, this was seen to stem from the short timeframe for applications and uncertainty at the development stages of how the projects would 'roll out'. Less than optimal consultation and collaboration with partners and the communities was seen as resulting from both these factors and impacted on ensuring all partners were aware of and supported the proposed model, and were aware of, and had agreed to, their respective contributions. As one evaluation participant noted:

What did strike me is that we had put in for funding without a very clear idea about how it was all going to work with the partner agencies and I guess uh.. because it had never been done before, it was difficult to foresee some of the challenges that would come up and ...that there was a lot of time wasted in the beginning....not intentionally wasted. ... we probably needed to have really thought out how it was going to be with the partner agencies, maybe not even at the stage of an MOU, but at least a draft of how we think it could work and work from there. (Project officer)





4.1.2.2 Timeframe

There was no consensus among participants in the evaluation regarding the optimal timeframe for the HRAF projects. Some considered that, given the community development nature of the project and the complexities of the issues involved, a longer timeframe would have been advantageous. In terms of the community development nature of the projects one participant noted:

It's almost like we spent the two-and-a-half years of getting this project up But it's almost like only now we've got that momentum and we're ready to go. And it's sort of taken us that long....This really needed to be a five-to-seven-year program. (Agency staff member)

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The added complexity of undertaking projects related to domestic violence in refugee background communities, with the concomitant issues of cultural transition was also considered to make a longer timeframe more salient:

It's about making an impact on people's attitudes and beliefs and around a very, very sensitive issue, which has – which is sensitive in mainstream Australian society. It's a sensitive issue in any society. But when you're dealing with a group of people who are also trying to adjust to ... a whole new culture as well. I think that just compounds that.....We needed a lot more time. (Agency staff member)



Because of the impact of past experiences of torture and trauma and in recognition that dealing with issues like domestic violence in the community takes time and must be undertaken in a culturally secure manner, an extended timeframe given this context was seen as valuable:

...Families have all these pressures on them, you know, that come from atrocities. So we need to have projects like HRAF working alongside them that are not condoning and judging and having a go. ...We need to be able to keep these conversations going round the table or the pot of soup or whatever. We just have to keep those channels open, I think. So if we could keep that going—five years would be right, I think. (Agency staff member)

Community leaders and educators were largely silent regarding the timeframe for the project. They did feel, however, that recruitment of community members was difficult (see section 4.2.2) and it could be argued that an extended timeframe may have been advantageous in facilitating recruitment, provided regular contact was maintained with project officers to ensure continued motivation and momentum. In one community, however, a leader reflected on the time required for community education:

So we thought the project in general is good. But ... we didn't get an opportunity to get time to talk to our people to give enough information. Because this project is like education; you can't give education in one day and you think everything is right....It's like to raise a child; you raise a child, you still give information, you give information, you give confirmation... the project in general is good, but we still need more time to teach our people in our community. (Community leader)

A short 2-3 year timeframe was considered appropriate for the focus on education, but when the desired outcome is to impact beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, a longer timeframe is needed:





To raise awareness (of domestic violence in the community), which was one of the aims of the project, (and) to have the community members aware of what support agencies are there. And to ...help them know that there are leaders in the community that they can go to... Those three elements can be achieved. And you see the thing is we're not hoping to change behaviour necessarily because that would take even longer than the two years.

Others, however, considered that the timeframe for the funding was sufficient:

Two years was long enough. I had the feeling that we could've had the project of this nature and made the length of time that we did these activities a lot shorter because what did happen is that they [community leaders and educators] tended to feel - from my discussions with them - that it was long drawn out. (Project officer)

That being said, many participants in the evaluation considered some restructure would be advantageous. Breaking the timeframe into component parts – something akin to a work breakdown structure typical of many projects – was considered appropriate and a strategy to maintain both momentum and community engagement:

One of the things we might have done different is structured it so that we had objectives that were short term objectives ... And for them to be – “Okay – So this is happening. This is what we are doing now and that's it for now”. (But) we retained people who sometimes felt that they could not commit that length of time [2 years], and then (we) sort of ended up dragging them along and...they were really pressured to be with us for that period of time when they thought, “Oh! I'm so tired.”So I do not feel the two-year period was ideal. It might have been if it had been broken up into different...sections, whereby there were big outcomes for certain sections of it. (Project officer)



Similarly, having greater clarity with timelines and developing them with the community leaders to ensure they were appropriate in the community was seen as a way in which the model could be improved:

Cut (the timeframe) in half and be a lot clearer in the time lines and think it through and if possible, try to get dates from the leaders. Obviously, that would have to be a bit flexible, so everyone's clear; not just us, but they [community leaders] are. They've got – "Do you want to do this – and does it suit you?" just really thinking it through and sitting down with each leader and sort of saying "Is this right?". (Project officer)

Another suggestion was to try to condense the time between training and community conversations so that momentum between the events was not lost:

I really think that it's (an) effective design. But the criticism that I have about the design is that the training sessions – there was too much of a gap between the end of the training sessions and the start of the community conversations 'cos the way it was put together was you train the (number of) different communities and then you start again. So a lot of momentum got lost... if you had two people to facilitate the training that would be fine...., you had a week off (after completion of the training). And then it was all fresh in their minds and the enthusiasm is still there and then you go into the community. (Project officer)

4.1.2 Challenges to Implementation

There is no doubt that the HRAF projects were very challenging, for project staff, partner agencies and community members alike. The following section highlights the main challenges identified in the evaluation of the projects.





4.1.2.1 Engaging in Discussions About Domestic Violence

The issue of domestic violence is a sensitive issue in all communities and creating a safe space where it can be brought out into the open and discussed was seen as a particular challenge. An agency staff member placed this challenge in the context of not only the sensitivity of the issue, but the complicating belief that many community members held regarding the legitimate role of the state in intervening in 'family issues':

when I was listening to these community conversations, I understood that most of the African countries do not recognise domestic violence as part of their domestic law. So most of them mentioned thatgovernment does not have to do with it. So family law, especially domestic violence law, is not part of their – what do you call it – experience. So I think that is one of the reasons that I think these people face difficulties in understanding this whole legal context stuff because all these years, they believe that, “Well, who wants to know about our personal issues? These are our personal issues. So why does DCP(FS) or why police wants to know about our issues? So these are our issues.” But one thing; they came here [Australia]. They realised that it was no more a personal issue. I think there was a conflict in that. (Agency staff member)



4.1.2.1 Getting Community Together

One of the major challenges faced by project officers and community leaders and educators during implementation was bringing the community together for discussions. The busyness and complexity of community members' lives combined with the sensitivity of the issue to be discussed, rendered this challenge all the more problematic:

The first (challenge) would be getting them [community] together, that is the hardest part – and also getting them to talk openly because domestic violence is a big issue. And some people feel intimidated talking about it in front of certain people, considering that there is male and female – everyone there. (Agency staff member)

The people who most need to understand this [domestic violence] (there) is resistance and denial and just the time you know of – to organise a meeting. It's very time-consuming, and you could give it your all, and try every possible tactic. And you still don't know how many are going to turn up. And it took a lot of their [community leaders/educators] time and it comes out that they were very disappointed. And it's not all the time but sometimes. (Project officer)

The difficulties that were experienced in getting community members together were mirrored in the difficulties that leaders experienced in recruiting community educators:

For me (recruitment of community educators) was difficult... You will call someone on the phone. They will give you their assurance like – Yes – I'm going to come. But at the end of the day, they turn you down... So it was really, really difficult to get people. But in the end... after they started coming..., things were going on fine. I think we had about four Saturdays of training with them. And nearly every one of them attended the training... But...it's very, very hard. (Community leader)





It was difficult (to recruit community educators) because we had four weeks of training and we have different centres....When you call people, people would say, "Oh. I'm not familiar with that place that you want us to go in. How am I going to get there?" So I think as a leader, we have sacrificed a lot to even – To the extent you haveto take him where you're supposed to have the training. And it was like, "Where can I go? What can I do?" You see, the fuel sometimes, "Oh. My fuel is getting finished." But in another way, I have to take that person. So I think it was not easy. People are also busy and people – Some are also thinking, "Why are they calling us? What information do you need from us now?" So all those things comes. Some would agree at the first, but when they go down and think of this thing, they will say, "Sorry. I don't have time." So it was very difficult. But at the end, we managed. (Community leader)

The reflection that 'at the end, we managed' attests to the commitment and hence, ownership of this issue among the community leaders who participated in the projects (please see discussion at Section 4.4.2

A corollary of the issue of recruitment and a challenge in the HRAF projects was ensuring that a range of ethnicities from the various communities were included in the projects.

Some of the challenges, especially were when we needed to recruit... ten people. So saying to them [Leaders], "If you're just going to recruit your brother and your sister and your mother (it's not what is needed). You need to go out into the community." Some of these communities are made up of different ethnicities and I remember speaking to some of them [Leaders] and saying so. They were like, "Oh. They don't trust us. We don't trust them". And "they wouldn't go". And I would say, "So how do you – As a leader, how will you work around that so that you would recruit from all the



different ethnicities?" If (it's) ten people you need, they can't just come from one ethnicity. So that was the challenge. It was quite difficult. (Project officer)

4.1.2.2 Time Commitment

The project was seen to impact significantly in terms of time and commitment on the community leaders and members. This impact was at two levels – initially having to commit for a period of two years, often in the absence of any understanding of what they would be doing that far in advance and, additionally, in terms of the commitment that was required for training sessions.

A project officer reflected on her interaction with a community member with whom she was discussing involvement in the project as well as the implications of engaging participants who were not 100% committed:

From the year 2011 to 2013, some felt –“My goodness!” ...There was one lady I remember who said to me, “Oh. Look, I don't know where I'll be (in two year's time).” ...And I had some drop out. I had some saying, “Oh. I'm not coming.” I had many times the community leaders said they can't make it this week and I've started work. And these are the same people we're dragging along. But, you know, there might have been more satisfaction from them if we had said to them, “Okay. Look, this a two year project. If you want to be involved throughout, that's fantastic! But these – these are the outcomes, these three months. We will train you, train others, and this is the space of time”. And let's get on with it. (Project officer)





Training sessions were considered to be one of the most valuable parts of the being involved in the project (see section 4.2.4), but despite this, the length of individual sessions was seen to be burdensome and, as such, were perceived to have, potentially, been achieved in a shorter time:

I think the sessions as stipulated in the design for FACHSIA.....were too long. People do not want to be there for five hours on a Saturday or Sunday. So that was quite unrealistic....I'd make it shorter. I'd say three hours because we could have the same amount discussed....You can really....bring it together, put more and more and more thought into what's gonna work and what's gonna hold their attention right at the beginning before anything starts, of course by speaking with them and getting it right. (Project officer)

Relieving the overall time commitment for community leaders and educators was seen as important. It was recognised that they led busy lives with many competing demands on their time and they encountered difficulties dealing with this:

Well, their commitment with their jobs and because they think that if they can't go to their own job and this is something – they can come, they can get paid something, but it won't cover what they would get from their real job. So sometimes, it's difficult for them to say, "Okay, I will be there," and not to come because they are the leader. And also, it's difficult to say to their employers, "We can't come because I'm working with the community." So that is the pressure they're facing. (Agency staff member)



4.1.2.3 Ensuring a Consistent Message

As noted in Section 4.1.1.2 ensuring that a consistent message is received across layers of training was seen as a negative of the ‘train-the-trainer’ component of the projects - mainly for reasons of safety for women and children. Ensuring that the message was consistent was seen as a challenge for the projects and as there was no *formal* mechanism built into the project design to monitor this, was seen as an issue for some evaluation participants. Typical of responses was:

That [ensuring a consistent message] was a huge challenge and a huge worry because they [leaders and community educators] walked away from the trainings with a lot more knowledge. You could tell just from discussions.....but I had no idea of knowing how that translated.....Are the participants absorbing it but then behaving in their old ingrained ways – and that’s what I couldn’t know.... (But) I still think it’s better to have had it [training] than not to, but it’s a bit of a quandary. (Project officer)

There is evidence to suggest, however, that at least to the level of the training of community educators and facilitation of community conversations, the messages delivered in the initial training of community leaders were filtering out as per initial delivery:

In terms of the passing of the message from that initial cohort of trainees who then trained the community educators...[the respective project officers] were obviously very involved ... So I think there was almost like a safety valve in there in a sense that from those two layers... there wasn’t much room for the message to be distorted, although...there were sometimes some very lively debate that went on in terms of disagreement about what was being said, which is fine also because that’s part of the learning process....ultimately, the job of the community educators and their leaders was to – in part, whilst it was also like providing information, it was about clarifying misunderstandings and misconceptions that existed. Because that came out in the (previous) research as well; they existed.





So it wasn't just about giving information. It was also about addressing beliefs or views that were held that may not have been correct, which was part of the point also of involving the mainstream agencies when we called them in for the training. (Agency staff member)

Some leaders delivered the exact message that we discussed during the training... but some...tried to use examples from their own community, own country, to make others understand. But I would say all – I participated in four community conversations. So all the leaders who delivered the session actually delivered the exact message, what we told them during the training, but using different, I would say, examples. But they did that very well. (Agency staff member)

Incorporating a 360 degree feedback loop was considered one way of overcoming the potential regarding ensuring the accuracy and consistency of information that is cascaded through a train the trainer model to the community:

I think in many instances, if you are running a project for victims of DV I think I would be focusing more on potential outcomes to change. Positive outcomes can come out of using some of the knowledge and changing things in a certain dynamic....You can go ahead and you can do some of that basic education. But I think you then need to have very good professional expertise in there to handle sorts of peer workshops..... And if you don't have that [professional expertise], that's the misinformation that can go into the community....Because [with professional expertise] then you've got some evaluation of what person two has taught person three, four, and five. What are the channels this person has gone to for person three, four, and five? And then give the person three, four, and five an opportunity to talk to your professionals to make sure that the understanding is in fact correct. (Agency staff member)



Conversely, having a plan in place at project development to mitigate against inconsistent information was also seen as a potential way of mitigating its effect:

It comes back to that initial grounding. And if it is not correct, then you know that you've got an issue at this particular community now because this information is there. And how do you then respond to that? Was there a plan to respond to that? I don't think there was and that would be my concern. (Agency staff member)

4.1.2.4 Recognition for Participation

An ongoing issue for projects such as HRAF relates to providing some formal recognition of participation to community members, either through payment (discussed in section 4.4.2) or provision of a certificate or lower TAFE level award. This was noted in the 2011 Healthy Relationships for African Families evaluation (Fisher, 2011) and remains an issue for community member participants involved in the HRAF projects. The issue of the provision of certificates was highlighted by project officers as well as community leaders/educators. A community leader noted:

in all these problems, we don't have certificates. And you know what certificates mean in Australia 'cos anywhere you present that certificate... you know what this person is capable of doing. And then we can have African people in some of those places that problems are happening 'cos if we are there...anyone who is having problems, they can look up to us (if we have a certificate). (Community leader)





For many participants, however, the issue is more than the provision of agency developed certificates. Credit towards a TAFE qualification or similar was seen as recognition of the skills and knowledge obtained as a result of participating in the training.

Not just something you print out on a printer that says, "Thank you very much." ...I used to work with women and kids doing a Cert II Leadership, and That would really suit a lot of people... 'cos it's got a project component and it's quite well designed; so something like that. ...but it wasn't in the budget. It doesn't necessarily have to be on DV, a Cert II on DV. (Project officer)

The issue of providing recognition towards an award, or the provision of a certificate has been investigated by ASeTTS previously, but because they are not a recognised training organisation, they are unable to progress it. Working with TAFE is potentially one way forward, and highlighted in the previous quote, but given financial and human resource implications, progressing along this path could be highly problematic in the absence of designated funding.

4.1.2.5 Generating Trust in Agencies

Developing community leader trust with agencies that are potential paths of referral for women and children experiencing domestic violence was an important outcome for the projects. The manner in which training was delivered, therefore, had to enable 'non-negotiable' issues to be organically introduced and addressed in a culturally secure manner. In this way, community leaders would



understand that accessing these agencies when issues present beyond the scope of what they themselves are able to do, is not only desirable but vital. This appeared to have happened in the training and, given its success and centrality to the success of the projects should be replicated

(working with) partner agencies... some of these agencies are deemed as, not enemies so to speak, but they're not really trusted...and so, one of the challenges...that we experienced was ... having community leaders take the advice, so to speak, positively... about handling domestic violence in the community because we are not trying to make them domestic violence workers, but what we were saying...is that they really need to be referring, not taking matters into their own hands (but) there's a certain lack of trust about someone going to an NGO. They're [agencies] seen as government people who should really not know anything about a person's personal business. So those were some of the challenges ... but the message that we were trying to pass on is that this agency is working with us and they are a good agency. They are there to help and confidentiality will always be maintained when you go to those agencies. (Project officer)

4.2 Impact of Projects on participants

As previously noted (see section 4.1.2.2) the projects demanded a large commitment from community leaders and educators and motivation across an extended timeframe. In this section, the positive and negative impact personally on community leaders and educators are presented. (Impact on partner agencies is presented in Section 4.3.





4.2.1 Positive Impact on Participants

Overall, there was much more discussion about the positive impact of participating in the project than on the negative impact. At a general level, the feeling was that participation in the projects positively impacted both personal and professional life reflecting an increase in both confidence and in knowledge, and increased respect within their communities.

I saw that a lot of them finally felt like they could do something here in Australia. I remember one leader telling me, "We've done this [project] for so long. Let us show them [community members] what we've been doing." And they gained confidence... A lot of them even as they went along, found themselves actually having to ...correct their thinking.... So certainly, there was a lot of learning that took place. (Agency staff member)

More specifically, there was recognition that domestic violence is an issue in all communities.

Well, I'm very confident that there's a lot more understanding of the laws. ...But I really do think that people are more prepared to talk about it [domestic violence], especially if you say, "This is not a Sierra Leone problem or a Congolese problem. It's a Swedish problem; it's an English problem; it's an Australian problem." ...And I think (now) they sort of realise that also. (Project officer)

An increase in confidence and knowledge was accompanied by an increased knowledge of the services available to support those experiencing domestic violence and an enhanced relationship with agencies, particularly DCPFS (see also section 4.3 – Impact on partner agencies):

Over the two-year period, there was that awareness about, and this went both ways, service providers, especially Department of Child Protection (and Family Services) being aware of community



leaders and their influence in the community to a certain extent. And that really, to ...achieve positive outcomes in the community the Department of Child Protection (and Family Services) really needed to work together with community members and so, that collaboration did get enhanced somewhat. (Project officer)

The issues highlighted in the above quotes from project officers and agency staff are mirrored in the perspectives of community leaders and educators. Community leaders reflected on the knowledge they had gained through the training offered in the projects, particularly notable is the emphasis on responding within Australian law and context and the respecting the extent of boundaries of support that can be provided by community members:

I've never done something like this that I involve myself into it and I got the benefit of it [involvement] with this program. We started from day one up to the end with some new faces. But we started this from the scratch and we generally got to the end of the project. The project is very fantastic and the program is very fantastic. I think most of us go to our community with things according to the law of this country.... It had given even time a little bit, to have peace of mind because we have been solving most of our problems at home among us at the community. Right now, I think there's a bit of peace with me. (Community leader)

I think it [project] has helped... I think it has opened our wider understanding especially being in this country because you are not supposed to do this, or it's not supposed to be like this. So we understood that what (we) can... do to maybe move from our ways... Sometimes we have some things [practices] that you say, "Okay... Can I move out of it and maybe come to here adjust my life, or myself in Australia?" So I think the project has really opened our eyes up to see those things ... and by the time we maybe go down or talk to someone, at least you have the knowledge. And also, they [partner agencies] have given us that opening that when you go through a very serious domestic violence, you have to know where to go or what to do because it will not only end with us, but if you





found that it's going so deep...go to one of the organisations or maybe one of the multicultural offices to help.... So I think we went through all those things at the beginning. It was good. It was very helpful. (Community leader)

4.2.2 Negative Impact on Participants

As previous sections suggests, the predominant negative impact on participants in the projects was the commitment required – both in terms of the time devoted to the project and the motivation to continue across this extended time frame. This burden was seen to fall particularly on community leaders as their reach into their communities and their ability to recruit community educators and community conversation participants was central to the success or otherwise of the project, as was support for them to maintain motivation

It required a lot of commitment from all involved. Yeah. So community members and project leaders, leaders especially the leaders. It required of them to have ... the drive, to have a lot of motivation. They certainly had potential to have the capacity to reach the people, but they needed to feel it in them. The method, in my opinion, was excellent. I guess what we [ASeTTS] needed to sort of cultivate in them first is that real... motivation to get going. (Agency staff member)

Community leaders and educators also reflected on the difficulties they experienced in recruiting community members and felt that more support could have been provided through project staff 'checking in' with them to see how they were progressing with the recruitment – a kind of moral support if you like – and also to seek feedback on the training and ascertain if it met their needs.



This latter issue was identified as a 'hole' in the project and one that impacted on them and is akin to the discussion in Section 4.4.1.3 regarding providing trainer access to all levels of trainees. The following quote is typical of leader and educator discussion around this topic:

After the training the person should have called you, ask you, "How are you going? How are you're projects going? Do you need any help? What do you think we need to add in this training? We don't get all this feedback because it's really hard for usSo we need a follow-up. (Community leader)

4.2.3 Knowledge Dissemination and Use in the Communities

It was evident from the data for this evaluation that the projects were very successful in providing appropriate information at a level that enabled participants to use their knowledge in their community to what they perceived as to be to the benefit of their community. For some participants this knowledge was used solely within their own families. Others were able to provide information and support across their own community. The following examples provide evidence of how this is occurring.

Not everybody can approach to us to talk about their family issue, but some who come, we try to use what we learned from here [project]. We've been success in this area. Of course, sometimes it's hard if somebody didn't call you.... I do the best I can. And I do this, having knowledge is very important 'cos they don't know if it's [domestic violence] a law in this country . Domestic violence is happening in the country but they don't know if this is right or this is not...I remember one day we used to call the community meeting. We were talking about those issues after completing our training. We call





community members. So they were asking and also questioning and we try to answer the best we can and I think it's working now. (Community educator)

People call me when they have a problem. Especially if they cannot speak direct to the person they want to solve the problem with. I think if they call me I can give them an idea from the experience I've got from here [training]. I've been using that so many times to help other people so – I mean, we've been there like when we have meetings. At the same time, we give other people our knowledge to talk about their own problems, because people are shy sometimes so they don't want to be the first one to let things out so when you start talking about it then other people also bring their problems to be discussed. But, you know, it just staying there the community is big so we need to explain it out. (Community leader)

I remember [name of community leader] telling me that it helped them solve an issue in the family as well with teenagers – teenager's issue with the parent – and another one is [name of another community leaders]....So she told me as well that it [knowledge gained from project] helped her solve a domestic violence issue also in the (name of) community. So they've been doing really well, and it gave them the confidence - because when you have knowledge, you have the power. (Agency staff member)

Others still were able to use the knowledge gained in communities other than their own. A project staff member commented:

For example, [name of community leaders]. He says to me he had really solved lots of issues in various African communities, only not just with [his community]: There has been a big issue involving various communities, and he used this model and this knowledge that he had known from ASeTTS to solve that issue. So there was a really big impact in their community, in his life, and give him confidence to solve issues. (Agency staff member)



Project participants were also able to share their knowledge in a range of forums and events. Importantly, participants across ages appeared confident to do this:

*I've heard that many of them use their knowledge at community meetings off their own bat, in church or faith groups and even some of the younger ones at the university on International Women's Day.
(Project officer)*

In one community in particular the desire to maintain communication and information about domestic violence has led to a 'system' being implemented that will facilitate this:

*So now, they [community] have a system. So they met every fortnight, and they have identified elderly people from their community who all the young people can contact to solve their issue, which is related to domestic violence. So it is a good thing...I think it is good to see that happening here.
(Agency staff member)*

The other area where participation in the projects has impacted is that some community leaders described how, through the knowledge gained through the projects, agencies – in particular the police – were actively seeking them out to provide assistance and support when they were addressing a domestic violence or related issue in the community. As noted in section 4.3.2 involvement in the project led to employment in one of the agencies for a project participant.





4.2.4 Most Useful Parts of the Project for Participants

The training that was undertaken by community leaders and community educators was universally perceived to be the most beneficial component of the projects. This is a welcome finding as the provision of training that is thorough, appropriate and well received by participants is a cornerstone to project success. The following quote captures, in one place, a wide range of perceptions and comments evident from community and agency evaluation participants alike:

The most useful, certainly for the participants for this, the first initial training phase, the phase one, where we had the seven-week program, that one was very useful 'cos that's where we've gotten all that information to – to them. We had the presenters coming from Legal Aid, Community People, Parenting WA. So we had that happening and that was very useful for them. We had the police coming in. And I would say with the community educators, the second phase, was also quite useful, because we discovered with some of the ones that were recruited they were some very, very motivated people. Some ... said, "Oh. I wish I knew this." So the first and second phase (was the most useful). (Project officer)

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Coupled with this, it was perceived that having a clear and unambiguous understanding of what was often referred to as the 'non-negotiables' was really useful for participants, and this is evident in the quotes highlighted in section 4.2.1 and further exemplified here:

I think I the increased understanding of those non-negotiables [eg, legal context and implications; limits of providing support] and the more relaxed way of discussing more issues around DV (were the most useful). (Project officer)



It was suggested that it was difficult to gauge the usefulness of the community conversations because of variable engagement of community members and difference across conversations in terms of delivery. As one project officer put it: “Were they useful – well – yes and no”. Despite this, however, there was a sense that through the community conversations “the seeds may have been planted” around the potential to be engaged in discussing and addressing domestic violence.

4.3 Impact of Projects on Participant Agencies

Partnerships were at the core of this project design for it to roll out smoothly and come to a successful conclusion. The core agencies involved in the projects were ASeTTS as the project managers and holders of funding; MWAS who provided input into the training and advice in the early stages of the project around ensuring the safety of women and children and DCPFS. The implementation of the projects impacted positively and negatively each of these agencies and the respective findings are individually presented.

4.3.1 Impact of the Projects on ASeTTS

As the agency receiving the funding for the projects, ASeTTS had overall responsibility for project management and the successful implementation and closure of the projects. The HRAF projects were the first of their kind to be undertaken within the agency and, as such the agency was able to





learn a great deal from running them. These learnings, although difficult at the time were seen to be positive and, in the longer term could have a positive impact on the agency in terms of capacity to run future similar projects.

All managers [ASeTTS staff involved in the projects] ...kept saying, "We've never done anything like this before." So this was a huge learning experience. So I thought that was really positive... We got a lot of feedback from the community leaders and I thought that was really good because they made us aware of certain things that we didn't know of..... And so...we have learned a lot about families. We learned quite a lot about ethnicity. (Project officer)

Despite the complexity and 'newness' of the projects any perceived negatives regarding their impact on the agency appeared to be re-cast as learnings to take forward to future projects – particularly related to applying for funding for similar future projects.

I wouldn't say that (there were negatives)....maybe I should point out the ones that were....learning experiences with a project like this..... working with funding body... (It) Taught me as project officer and maybe by extension the organisation that ... we need to have a funding body that will understand that some outcomes may not necessarily be the ones that eventually that will (be delivered, because of the community development approach)... It taught us with this project because it is a people project, it's a project to do with very many various problems, that we needed to be very, very aware for the next time what we're promising. Because we may not be able to fulfil the promises. (Project officer)



4.3.2 Impact on Department for Child Protection and Family Services

DCPFS spoke almost exclusively about the positive impact that involvement in the HRAF projects delivered to them. HRAF was seen to provide contact and 'reach' in to the communities that DCPFS itself had not been able to achieve:

HRAF is perfect....the linkage with the community, their relationship that the elders and the communities have with the workers from ASSETS give me a link ...I think because of the way that HRAF involves the Department, not through the backdoor but in a partnership approach. (Agency staff member)

HRAF goes way deeper than, I think, any other form of information or presentation or workshop that we could do. (Agency staff member)

An outcome DCPFS hoped to achieve from involvement in HRAF was to begin to breakdown misconceptions, suspicions and wariness evident in the communities about the Department and its work .

What we were really keen to do is do is to try and break down the barriers between the department and the communities...I think there's a lot of preconceptions or misconceptions about the Department, about the work that we do, a fear of the Department. I know a lot of communities who just don't want to engage with us. They really fear the work that we do. ... Domestic violence is just such a taboo subject that we don't want to get to the stage that it's always crisis-driven, that we don't go out to the communities all the time when there's these extreme domestic violence cases. So we're always looking for ways to link and what projects that we can work alongside the communities





because ASeTTS (has) got direct linkage with us, we can bring anyone they want. If they want somebody that's a senior manager, we'll supply it. So that then makes the community realise that we're serious as well and they trust (us). (Agency staff member)

The changing relationship between the Department and the communities is clearly evident in the following quote. Despite a beginning relationship characterised by antagonism and disdain, a community leader involved in the HRAF project now holds a position at DCPFS:

I came in and as usual (to the training)...the reaction is less than positive....And they [a few of the leaders] were very dismissive. [Name of Leader]...said, "You caused our community so much grief, so much drama. You know, our community are terrified of the work that you do. We heard rumours about things that happen in the community, that it's all the Department's fault. You don't listen to us from African community"... And there was this real barrage... [But] at the end of, we had a bit of a debate with all the leaders about who was who and what was going on and at the end, I said, "Look...You're key in that community. I need to work through you if we're gonna ever reach out to your community. How can we do that?"So from there, we had coffee... We had an African family that came in. We asked him for advice and how we should work. He felt listened to and to cut the long story short, he's working for us now. He's our family resource employee..., he's doing more than I can ever do in my people as a community outreach worker.....But that came down directly from HRAF. (Agency staff member)

4.3.3 Impact on MWAS

For MWAS, developing a networking relationship with ASeTTS was seen as the benefit of involvement in the HRAF projects. Ideally MWAS would like to have been involved and had input into the project design, but given some of the issues highlighted in section 4.1.2.1 this did not occur.



As noted previously also (section 4.1.2.1) ASeTTS valued the input that MWAS did make regarding protecting the safety of women and children.

To develop the relationship with ASeTTS, MWAS made some concessions, but resource constraints meant that they were able to offer no more:

From our point of view... the benefit to us was to develop a networking relationship with ASETTS, a goodwill relationship.... We did say to ASeTTS, "Look, we're gonna have to charge you for some of this." But our charges were extremely low in the sense that if we went to charge what we would normally look at, you know, for doing that sort of stuff [client support]...it wouldn't be financially viable for ASeTTS ...cos it wasn't planned in their project. So we said, "Okay. Good will exercise we'll do it...And a couple of the leaders did make contact with us about clients in their community and the girls [agency staff] did that work with them. But that was it because we didn't really have the resources to be able to do anything more in that respect. (Agency staff member)

The outcome for MWAS was that they did meet some of the community leaders, but a hoped for increase in clients being referred to the agency did not eventuate.

There was some discussion but no consensus in the evaluation data regarding whether or not what partner agencies actually delivered what they agreed to. This confusion and disagreement can be seen to be potentially be an extension and surfacing of the uncertainty at the start of the DIAC funded project regarding how the model would work and how the project would roll out across the





timeframe. Clearly the short timeframe for the submission of funding applications, and the busyness of agencies played into this.

the idea was that [name of agency] would actually be quite an active partner and – particularly in training and ...what we had hoped for was that they would actually provide a bit of a backup to the community educators and the community leaders to be able to provide some advice and stuff and that they'd also have a bit of a – there'd be a really good referral system that would start to happen. The reality was that that didn't happen, and I think there were a couple of issues (that led to that occurring). (Agency staff member)

An alternate perception was also apparent, however:

the time aspect (impacted). The fact that sometimes we needed them to do something, [name of agency] would not be available to do something because they're also very busy ...But I do know that what they committed to, they fulfilled. (Project officer)

At the end of the day, I think what we agreed to do in those initial discussions and what we delivered was identical. (Agency staff member)

4.4 Future Directions

Looking to the future, issues of sustainability, of community 'ownership' of responding to domestic violence and the focus for future projects were discussed as part of the evaluation. The findings for each are presented here in turn.



4.4.1 Sustainability

Sustainability of the projects was a top of mind concern, particularly among the community leaders and community educators. They saw the benefit in the projects both to themselves and to their communities and were, understandably, keen to see them continue.

Community Leaders and educators did not offer up any alternatives to a train-the-trainer model moving forward. As such, the findings presented in this section rely on data from agency staff. Three possible options were discussed in the interviews: Incorporate discussions of domestic violence into other activities that are being held in the community; adapt the African learning Circle model; and consider a model that provides mentoring and support for trained community educators.

4.4.1.1 Incorporation of Domestic Violence into other Community Activities

Incorporating discussion of domestic violence into other community activities was seen as a way of facilitating dissemination of information about it as well as keeping discussions happening in the absence of specific project funding. Facilitators of training in the HRAF projects were able to incorporate domestic violence back into discussions when their focus changed. Therefore, it was seen that it would be a small step to incorporate such discussions into conversations during community activities. A project staff member noted:





Just think up of things they might actually want to do within the community. Even maybe uh.. have a store where maybe – maybe sort of motivate them in a way where we say, “We’re going to do this activity and – and then we’re going to have – You can sell them at the end, make money for the community.” Maybe just motivate them more, but sort of maybe have a session where we’re making candles and we’re talking about these issueseven if it is bead making.... Maybe they make dolls... the women come together, ...but then we weave in those issues. That would ensure sustainability. It would keep – It would keep it alive. (Project officer)

4.4.1.2 Adapt the African Learning Circle Model

The African Learning Circle was perceived to be a model that was seen to be running efficiently and productively in NSW and, if it were not perceived in the community to be ‘just one more thing’, it could potentially be used or adapted for use with the African communities in WA. Sessions could be incorporated that focused on domestic violence into a larger program, hence keeping the issue ‘visible’ in the communities and discussion about it continuing.

Advantages of the learning circle model include that it is democratic and inclusive and culturally secure in the communities and participants are involved as individuals, not by virtue of a position in the community. Hence it would extend the reach of discussions of domestic violence deep into communities:

the African learning circle...or the learning circle model...you don’t have to be a community leader. Anybody who wants to show up on that day to that meeting because they’re interested in that particularly issue can show up. And they don’t have to claim that they’re representing the South Sudanese community or the Guinean community or whoever. They can just turn up because they’re



interested in the issue. And so people are less likely to feel that they can't turn up because they've got no official position...they can just go as an individual. And I think that is probably a more democratic way really to get input. (Agency staff member)

Their [African] learning circle model, that would be the good one to get all the African(s) down; a majority of them would be there. (Project officer)

Despite the model not being technically owned by any particular agency, in reality a commitment is needed from an agency prepared to secure and provide resources to develop and support it and possibly to also provide a space for the running of the sessions. ASeTTS was seen as being well positioned to run this model because of its strong relationship with the communities and because there were seen to be individuals who could competently facilitate the learning circle model among ASeTTS' current staff.

Adequate resourcing of the model, however, was seen as vital. Should such resources be available, it was considered that there was significant potential for the African Learning Circle model to facilitate discussions around domestic violence specifically, but also provide an avenue for incorporating discussions about domestic violence in other sessions because its interrelationship with a range of other issues.

So (if) it's done properly and funded...the whole idea of it is not for them [facilitators] to talk and of African-origin people to listen, but to ...try to be informal and not to go for too long. So it's ten til twelve or something or even less....Might be a way of just keeping the issue [domestic violence]





moving along. And the good thing that the circle is it could be (about any issue) Let's talk about it - you could bring those issues [domestic violence] into totally unrelated subjects. (Project officer)

4.4.1.3 'Community Educator Support' Model

As is apparent from previous sections (particularly section 4.1.1.2 and 4.1.2.3), the issue of ensuring a consistent message was a clear concern inherent in the train-the-trainer model, despite anecdotal evidence that a consistent message was in fact being transmitted through the layers of training. One potential option to have greater certainty that messages *are* consistent, (as well ensuring limits to providing support are respected), is contained in a model that where professional support for trained community educators is provided. Through this model, an opportunity to de-brief would be available. This was seen as a potential way to ensure discussions and information around domestic violence continued and was disseminated in the communities whilst ensuring that the aspects of train-the-trainer which were highly valued – community members themselves providing support and information in the community, the delivery of information in community language and in a manner that is culturally secure were retained. Adopting such a model was also seen to impact on sustainability because community educators would feel supported and, hence, some of their burden lifted.

To me, sustainability comes by developing some real support for your volunteers [community educators] ...And you virtually have to create a base which has to link with professional service that can feed into that. Whether that is through regular support workshops between the volunteers and the professional...Or whether you are having weekly or once a year, (get together). But I think the



model has to have that link. They [community educators] have to have direct access to people who ... can answer those really difficult things. So I think, if you're gonna do something like that to provide that sort of thing [community-based support], you've got to be linked with something that could give those people [community educators], continual ongoing access. Like the peer support mode, but the support has professional understanding of the issue... It comes down to the fact then the people that you're choosing can't be coming because you're paying for them... They're coming because they really want to come. And which case you're going to hear from them a lot more than just that one meeting. ... So then that can be sustained longer term. (Agency staff member)

If this model were to potentially work, a number of issues would need to be addressed:

I think it [community educator support model] could (work). I think if we had someone who understood the community and probably preferably somebody who had one of those community backgrounds themselves and was appropriately qualified in relation to understanding issues that are around domestic violence in the Australian systems, etc. – yeah, I do (think it could work). I think probably part of the issue – I don't think we can expect that necessarily people from the communities will just necessarily automatically come and just consult with that person. I think that person has to be very proactive. (Agency staff member)

4.4.2 Community Ownership of the Issue

The literature tells us that when a community has ownership of an issue, has been involved in developing interventions and supports, they have much greater chance of being sustainable (see for example Kelleher, Murphy & MacDougall, 2007; Tsey 2009) . Domestic violence has been seen as an important issue in the communities for a number of years now, and previous research undertaken to examine its nature, understanding and impact was driven by the communities and actively involved





them across the research process (Fisher, 2009). Some time has now elapsed since that original research and so, revisiting community ownership of the issue is, therefore, timely.

The manner in which community leaders and educators actively participated in focus groups, particularly their praise for the training which enabled them to support their community members and provide information in the community, suggests that domestic violence is still an important issue in the communities and one that they have and want ownership of. Additionally, evidence of this sense of ownership is apparent in the manner in which the topic generated vigorous discussion in community discussions:

When they were discussing about the issue, they really felt the issue as their own issue. They recognise it, and they – all of them wanted to do something about it because they all knew that if the family structure is not going to work, it will raise numerous problems in the future in terms of their children and other stuff. Therefore, they all wanted to have a healthy relationship with their partners, with the children, things like that. So in that case, they really own the issue and they really wanted to have solutions for that. (Agency staff member)

Whilst there appears to be a sense of ownership of the ‘issue of domestic violence’ there did not appear to be the same level of ownership of the HRAF projects. This was particularly felt by ASeTTS staff and became visible in community leaders and educators, particularly through their discussions about payment for involvement (see below).



Recognition of this limited community ownership of the projects was succinctly reflected on by ASeTTS staff:

there was always that slight sense that people were doing us (ASeTTS) a favour by showing up to the meetings or showing up to the trainings. (Agency staff member)

and

we did tend to think this was still an ASeTTS project, which we were asking them to participate in, rather than it being a community project which we were providing some facilitation and support for. (Agency staff member)

This problem may also have its genesis in the short timeframe that are given for the process of grant submission. As reflected in the quote below, the timeframe necessary for appropriate consultation to develop a project that was 'community driven' was not available.

the reality is when you've got a grant sitting in front of you that you got four or five weeks to put on paper and apply for – fortunately, we did have contacts in the communities to talk things through with, but probably it really did need a much more comprehensive consultation and planning process to happen before we had the project. And if we could have built that into the funding and said, "Well, we wanna use the first four to five months as the planning and the consultation process," that would have been probably a much better way to go. (Agency staff member)





Additionally, the community members seemed confused as to where one project ended and another started, or whether or not the pilot Healthy Relationships for African Families was indeed a 'project'. More clarity was needed.

I imagine a lot of groundwork would need to be done in terms of preparing – preparing participants, preparing community members. First of all, having sessions with them that empower them, that would make them feel the ownership of it...I did suggest this at one point that if – While this project certainly had been borne off the consultations to community leaders, at the end, when it came down to applying for funding, they were never notified that that was being done.... So it wasn't – it wasn't from them. A lot more consultation, a lot more giving it over to them. (Project officer)

A corollary to participants' sense of ownership is that of the impact on it of payment for participation. A finding of the original research (Fisher 2009), also apparent in the evaluation of the Healthy Relationships for African Families original pilot (Fisher 2011) and discussed widely in this evaluation is that of participants wanting recognition for involvement whether that be through certificates/awards (see section 4.1.2.4), or through payment. Despite payment being made to assist with petrol costs and for running training or community conversations, the following quote typifies the many responses advocating payment for involvement:

And then when we're coming for trainings... I think they need petrol money 'cause they'll be leaving everything to come here. We need petrol money. We need – We call it in Africa like a stipend that can help us. That will also encourage us to come any time there is an organisation....That will motivate us to come. (Community educator)



A similar dynamic was noted by project staff. For example:

As we went along they [community leaders/educators] thought it was a project that belonged to other people that they were working on. And sort of felt that It wasn't theirs. That ... they needed to be properly remunerated for the time that they were putting in whereas what a project like this would've needed would've been for people to actually feel it and to carry it even when there was not that monetary remuneration. A lot of it is heart. A lot of it has to do with heart and... commitment. (Project officer)

There was general agreement among agency staff, however, that payment changes the dynamics of the relationship between community members and the project and potentially impacts on ownership of the issue – and hence sustainability.

I personally don't believe that we should pay for people to come and discuss because the benefit goes to them. So then, it is not a good idea to pay for people to come and give their ideas. (Agency staff member)

I think there are others that are involved in it because it's important for them to be seen to be involved in it. And the financial—what's the word? Entitlements have to be there for them to participate. And for me, that's a real worry. I take two steps back because even in the (domestic violence) field, you do a whole of a lot every day that's got nothing to do with what you're paid to do. So if you're trying to be a volunteer but there has to be a remuneration for you to be interested in it - that sends off alarm bells to me. (Agency staff member)





4.4.3 Focus for Future Projects

Evidence from this evaluation has shown that domestic violence is considered by community leaders and educators to be an important and serious issue in their communities and one that they want to be able to respond to appropriately. Previous research undertaken with communities (Fisher, 2009), however, highlighted an intersecting concern around issues relating to parenting and raising children in a western context. As such, it was important for ASeTTS to understand whether domestic violence was considered the most important issue for the communities, and if not, how discussions around domestic violence can be present in discussions of non-domestic violence issues.

Parenting issues and issues related to children highlighted in the 2009 report (Fisher, 2009) were still considered very important by participants in the HRAF projects. Indeed the issues related to children sparked extended and deep discussion in the focus groups with community members, leaders and educators, testament to its importance, and also identified by project staff in the evaluation.

What we did discover is that while domestic violence could hurt and it could be...a heavy blanket over the home - the children and how they were faring, and the problems with teenagers: those weighed more heavily on the hearts of our participants. (Project officer)

A typical response from community member participants in the evaluation:

The Australian law says you can't hit your child... and this thing is bringing a bad impact in...and is leading for most of them to be on the street. We are very concerned about this.... You can't beat them; you can't do anything, so they go out of hand so they end up on the street. So if there are any - if the government can make another project concerning the child and the parents so that we can be



able to control our kids for them to grow up in a way we want for them to grow up in, as good disciplined, children. (Community educator)

In the context of depleting project funding, perspectives on how domestic violence discussions can be incorporated into discussions on other priority community issues was sought. It was found that with the HRAF project, inevitably community members wanted to discuss issues related to children and parenting. Because of their intersection, project staff noted that “we just did incorporate it” and the intersections between the issues that facilitated this were highlighted:

13-year-olds assaulting their mothers ... That is still family domestic violence ...But intergenerational conflict...when that happens and it escalates to violence certainly, we can weave in all those. We can find a way, and I guess that's what we tried to do. (Project officer)

Well, the thing is that there are causes for the domestic violence. It's not something that a man will just get up and hit someone. There is something that started that. So it would be children issue that you couldn't solve with your partner; you disagree on it, escalate it. It becomes domestic violence or something to do with your relationship with your partner regarding finances or how you raise your children, how they behave outside, who to have as friends or what – all of these. And then it's escalated. ...So that's how it is. Yeah, we can't really just say, “Okay, we talk about domestic violence.” Okay, what are the causes? It goes back to these, all these issues. (Agency staff member)

This understanding was echoed by participants in focus groups. For example a community leader noted:

So all those areas like child issues, family issues – they're all in the same boat because of this and this happened, because of that and this happened. So if you want to find a solution to one, you'll basically find the solution for all of them. (Community leader)





Moving forward, the models described in sections 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.2 were seen to offer a number of opportunities to ensure that discussions and information around domestic violence is given ongoing presence in the communities.

Given this discussion, and diminishing funding, the question becomes, what engagement would HRAF participants like to see from ASeTTS around issues of domestic violence. There was consensus that ASeTTS should retain a presence in domestic violence. Where ASeTTS was seen to have the most appropriate contribution, however, varied. There was a sense that, given ASeTTS reputation and previous work in the area, it would be illogical for this not to continue. Additionally, because of ASeTTS' specific expertise with torture and trauma, continued involvement in the area could potentially add a great deal to knowledge and evidence:

I thought that this level of investment and the reputation that ASSETS has in regard to this [domestic violence], and the effort the community members have put in, I would find it very odd just to drop it. And the more we do it, the more we can understand the relationship with trauma.... But what I think is a shorter project that you might only need to do two days a week or – I think it would be a real shame if they just left it. (Project officer)

One of the difficulties with competitive funding was the 'pitting' of agencies against each other in securing funding when it would be much more productive for them to be working in partnership. The fostering of partnerships with agencies working in the domestic violence, multicultural and



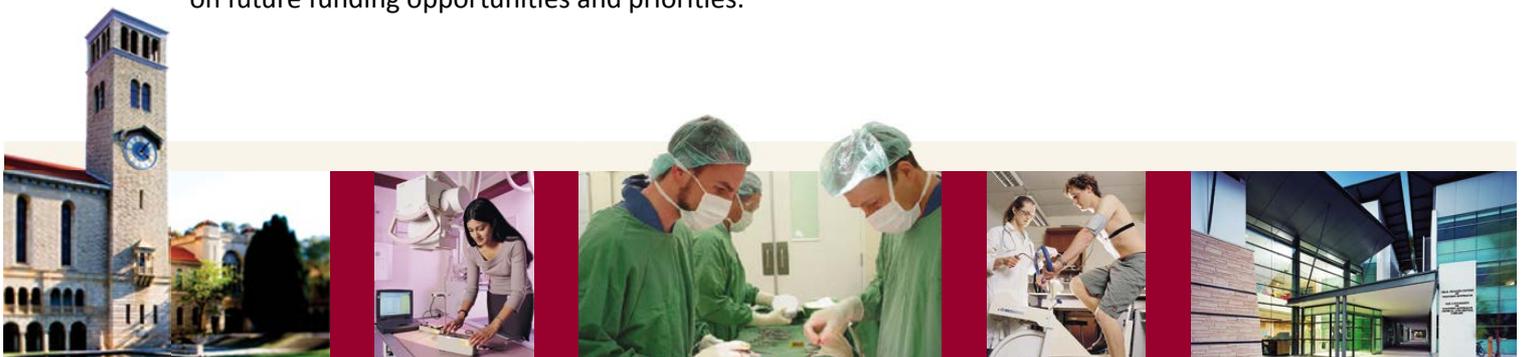
related sectors and through those partnerships bringing expertise to collaborate and 'fill gaps' was seen as a productive way forward for ASeTTS in relation to domestic violence:

When we know what other NGOs are doing in that sphere, then they [ASeTTS] will be able to sort of tap into the gaps that are there because what I do realise that (in) the NGO sector – There is a lot of repetition of activities and... (ASeTTS needs) to be very, very aware of what these people are doing or what those people are doing so that maybe we can collaborate with them to fill that need ...partnering with them where we'll get funding ... or on our own and partner with them to do this and to do that. (Project officer)

Perhaps it is appropriate to leave the final word on ASeTTS' ongoing participation in the domestic violence space to a community leader as, ultimately, it is ASeTTS that has the very strong relationship with the communities:

Some parents – some of them where they're faced with a lot of problems. They call. They say, "What can we do?... What can you say to us? How can you help us?" Then we can also give an idea or opinion. "You can do ... this, if you can agree on this, I think it will help". So I think ...that we appreciate it [training] and we say if we can carry on with the training – More training, more people. I think it will help us. (Community leader)

Essentially the leader is asking ASeTTS to stay active in the area, and continue to support the communities through future projects. The format of those projects, however, will no doubt depend on future funding opportunities and priorities.





5. Discussion

There are a range of programs the aims of which are to support refugee background communities to deal with family issues in general and domestic violence in particular (see for example Victorian Department of Justice, Robert John Wood Foundation). There are, however, limited evaluations published that either describe the program in detail or report on its efficacy or effectiveness. Dimopoulos in her Domestic Violence Clearing House Issues Paper (Dimopoulos, 2013) relies very heavily on the research that was undertaken here in Perth in 2009 (Fisher, 2009) to provide evidence of how domestic violence is conceptualised and experienced in African refugee background communities. That research and the evaluation of the pilot Healthy Relationships for African Families (Fisher, 2011) are among this very limited literature in an Australian context. As such, the evidence being generated from this evaluation of the HRAF projects will add substantially to the body of available knowledge to support future projects on domestic violence in refugee background communities.

The design of the HRAF projects: domestic violence training for leaders, who subsequently trained community educators culminating in the running of 'community' conversations on the issue within their respective communities, was based on a model previously used by the UN in developing countries primarily around the issue of HIV. The model meant that a large number of community members could be reached with information about, and potentially support for, domestic violence. The information was able to be disseminated by community members themselves and could



potentially reach deep into the communities to both men and women. This has been reported as 'good' practice in the literature (Dimopolous, 2013)

Whilst the model was generally well received and incorporated a range of components that community leaders and community educators considered were important and are reflected as important in the literature, (for example having information disseminated in a culturally secure manner by members of the respective community/ies and in a manner that does not ostracise men) (Bonar and Roberts 2006) it was a challenging model to implement (both for project staff and community leaders and educators) and may not have transferred as seamlessly as was hoped.

The model required what was termed a 'leap of faith' that the 'right' people were involved in the initial training and recruited as community educators. The 'right' people were seen to be those individuals who would actively deliver the messages to their community, but also deliver them in a manner that retained the integrity of the information received in the initial training (discussed in section 4.1.2.3).

5.1 *Learnings from Project Design*

Two broad learnings about the design - the appropriateness of the timeframe for the projects and the importance and centrality of partnerships in smooth implementation of the projects and their





ability to meet outcomes - are salient for the evaluation findings. More specific challenges in project implementation are discussed below (section 5.2).

The findings regarding the appropriateness of a 2-3 year timeframe were mixed with some support for that duration, and some evaluation participants considering it to be too short. Additionally, some considered it was appropriate, but needed to be restructured to maintain community leader and educator motivation and momentum. For those who considered the timeframe to be too short, their concerns were largely related to the community development underpinnings of the projects, the complexity of the issue of domestic violence, the imperative to have information disseminated in culturally secure manner; and the 'busyness' of the lives of community leaders and educators. Community leaders and educators reflected on the difficulties they had in recruitment, potentially reflecting all these issues.

A collaborative approach was central to the HRAF projects design. Arguably, the key collaborations were those between ASeTTS and the communities, and ASeTTS and MWAS: the latter because of the input of MWAS into the training and, what was anticipated, input into providing a referral pathway for communities; and the former because of evidence in the literature that communities be regarded as key partners in the development and delivery of information in relation to domestic violence (Dimopoulos, 2013).



The role of the communities was evident in the HRAF projects but could and should be built upon for future. It is noted in the literature that the success of collaborative efforts depends heavily on the development and fostering of relationships among partners (Wolff, 2001a) - critically before, during and after a project's duration (Dimolopoulos, 2013). Relationship building should also occur at both individual and institutional levels (Allen, Watt & Hess, 2008) with collaborative relationships seen as generative, that is, not simply an end in themselves (Fawcett et al., 2000). Within collaborative partnerships, the literature suggests that information exchange and the inclusion of motivated participants with the skills and capacity to participate is central (Butterfoss, Goodman & Wandersman 1996). This is important for the HRAF projects because uncertainty of roles and obligations of the respective agencies at project implementation and the perceived less than optimal ownership of the projects by community members could potentially have been avoided or resolved by ensuring both buy-in and commitment from all collaborators.

Collaborative efforts, such as that between ASeTTS, MWAS and the communities in the HRAF projects have potential beyond the scope of the HRAF projects as they have a high level of potential to build community capacity as the benefits gained among partners could be transferrable to goals for lasting community change (Cramer, Atwood & Stoner, 2006). Thus collaborative efforts have been constructed as being important because they enhance members' knowledge and understanding of each other, and also of their respective organisations (Javdani & Allen, 2011).





There are difficulties, however, inherent in the interplay of partnership building and applying for government funding. Funding agencies impose strict guidelines and short timeframes in which to respond. This effectively means that it is unrealistic to attend to issues around partnership, collaboration and project involvement when grant funding is announced. Such endeavours, as the literature suggests, should be ongoing so that partnerships are formed and ready to respond to grant opportunities as they arise. Hence it is vitally important that ASeTTS fosters ongoing contact, networking and relationship building both with communities and with agencies across a range of sectors including domestic violence, law, health, justice – both mainstream and multicultural. It is also important to ensure a partnership is maintained such that respective partners are able to openly discuss potential models and their respective implications, and have strategies in place to minimise any risk as well as having (resourced) processes in place during project implementation to monitor for negative impact. The tight turnaround times for grant applications and therefore, the limited timeframe for securing involvement of partners and shoring up their contribution, as well as full consultation with communities, may be implicit in the communities not displaying a sense of ownership of the projects evident, for example, in their desire for payment for being involved. It is also implicit in the difficulties that MWAS had in meeting the involvement that ASeTTS had envisaged.



5.2 *Specific Challenges in Project Implementation*

It is beyond argument that the HRAF projects were complex and, the ‘newness’ of the project design for ASeTTS and the project officers meant that there was no previous experience that they could draw on for guidance. Due to this, a number of challenges to project implementation were identified. The sensitivity and complexity of the issue of domestic violence meant that discussion of it in a public space was difficult in many communities. This was coupled with a belief evident initially among some community members that ‘family issues’ are personal and the state has no role to play in them (Fisher, 2009). The sensitivity of the issue, cultural factors around the appropriateness or otherwise of discussing issues such as domestic violence in public and/or a mixed gender setting, and some suspicion of why this issue was being discussed, coupled with the complexity and ‘busyness’ of the lives of community members, meant that community educators also encountered many difficulties in bringing their communities together in community conversations. A reflection of a community leader that “at the end we managed” is indicative, however, of the importance of the issue in the communities and the communities’ ownership of it.

Over and above the issues associated with bringing the community together, there was some uncertainty as to the extent that people from diverse ethnic backgrounds were able to be included as community educators and participants in community conversations and challenges to doing so. A number of the communities involved the HRAF projects are diverse in terms of the ethnic backgrounds of their members. Despite the challenges that exist, it is important that genuine





attempts are made to include members in their diversity and avoid the impact of approaches that are sometimes adopted in some government departments and service providers, where community leaders are approached to provide 'authentic' cultural understandings. Such practices may not adequately incorporate the diverse views in the broader community (Dimopoulos, 2013).

The extended timeframe for community leader and educator involvement – approximately 2 years, was seen as challenging. Many community leaders found it difficult to commit to a project for two years without any real knowledge of what would be happening in their lives two years hence, but managed it all the same – more evidence of their ownership of the issue. Despite a range of strategies put in place by project officers, it was difficult to maintain motivation and momentum in the context of being unable to commit fully to the project. This was particularly notable at the time of recruitment where there was less face-to-face involvement from project officers. The literature provides no guidance on how difficulties in maintaining motivation and momentum in projects with an extended timeframe and variable involvement can be overcome. Available evidence points to working in partnership with communities and having designated project staff to support participants and ensure the project is progressed. Both these strategies were contained in the HRAF projects. A possible partial explanation for the decreased motivation and momentum may lie in the perspective that, although communities retained a sense of ownership of the 'issue' of domestic violence, as previously discussed they were not as connected to, and had a lesser sense of ownership of the 'projects' designed to respond to it.



Moving forward it was suggested that a shorter overall timeframe, (but developed in consultation with communities) with more detailed short term objectives could be included to maintain motivation. Similarly, a restructuring of the overall implementation plan, whereby there is a shorter gap between training and community conversations could work to retain momentum and motivation and these ideas should be given consideration in future projects.

Over and above the overall time commitment required for the project, that required for each of the sessions (essentially a whole day for each session) was seen as a burden on trainees. It was suggested, however, that the sessions could be shortened while retaining the scope and depth of the content. The training, however, was cited as the most useful part of the project for community leaders and educators and, as such its integrity must be retained – even if that requires the same timeframe for training that was allocated in the projects. The belief that training was the most useful part of the project is consistent with the findings of the pilot Healthy Relationships for African Families evaluation (Fisher, 2011). Participants in the training for that project reflected positively on their training, despite the substantial time commitment and investment of emotional energy. Although HRAF training demanded a considerable commitment from participants across a number of weeks, having trainees engage in it and receive it positively was central to the success of the projects. It is recognised in the literature that those delivering information about domestic violence in the community are as critical to the process as those receiving the information (Dimopolous, 2013). As such it was vital that community leaders and educators, who proceed to provide information and potentially support for domestic violence in their communities, were involved in





intensive training. Gaining knowledge around domestic violence, however, is recognised as being challenging (Dimopolous, 2013) as it can lead to considerable questioning about self-held assumptions and attitudes around domestic violence. Evidence of vigorous exchanges at times in the training attests to the challenges to self-held beliefs and assumptions that did occur for participants.

One of the issues raised about a 'train-the-trainer' model was concerns that the messages and information about domestic violence in an Australian context provided during initial training may not be able to be sustained across the layers of training with concomitant implications for the safety for women and children as safety is an important issue and underpins service delivery and support in Australia (FDVU, 2004). Adding gravity to these concerns was the lack of formal mechanisms built into the project design to monitor the dissemination of information. The findings of the evaluation show, however, that at least to the level of community consultations, the consistency in message was apparent. Implicit in the concerns for safety raised here is, potentially, the assumption that concerns around women's safety in mainstream do not exist in refugee background communities. This assumption should be questioned however, and indeed there is now a developing body of literature in the area of domestic violence and emanating from Australia, that questions the notion that the safety of women and children is a uniquely western value or concern (Dimopolous, 2013). Whilst it is important to avoid assumptions that all respected community members would adopt an 'appropriate' attitude and/or commitment to addressing domestic violence, it is equally important to respect that most do and the observations of this evaluation support this. Similarly, through focussing on the consistency of message we may well be feeding into arguments about cultural



essentialism and ignoring the agency of community women and their resistance to violence (Dimopolous, 2013).

The reflection made by a project officer and reported in the findings that it is preferable to have training than not to have training (see page 35) is an important one. One of the aims of the projects related to education and information: about domestic violence and about community educator boundaries in providing support in the community. It appears that we might be placing requirements on the communities involved in the HRAF projects that we do not place on mainstream communities. That is, there is no 'policing' of information disseminated by community members about domestic violence in mainstream communities irrespective of whether they have been to information sessions, have attended short courses about the topic, received their information from community education campaigns or from professionals in the sector. For example, when women return to violent relationships after accommodation and support from mainstream women's refuges, (which they often do), the assumption and belief among refuge workers is that at least they take with them more information about domestic violence and their options. Although there is widespread belief that it is preferable that women do not return to violent relationships, when they do there is no sense that the 'system is failing' and it should be changed. The suggestion that we should not be providing training, information and education to community members to facilitate them disseminating relevant and appropriate information in their communities and providing initial support to individuals and families, therefore, appears anomalous.





That being said, should concerns remain about women's safety, providing a feedback loop for community leaders and educators back to a professional in the area, is one means of mitigating this. One of the models proposed that incorporates this is a 'Community Educators Support' model and is discussed in more detail below.

Recognition for participating in the projects, whether it is through financial payment or through the provision of certificates or other forms of awards is an issue that was initially raised in previous research undertaken (Fisher, 2009) and also a topic of discussion in the evaluation of the Healthy Relationships for African Families (Fisher, 2011). As such it needs to one that is addressed and fully explained to community partners prior to future projects. The crediting of the training toward a TAFE or similar award has previously been investigated and in the absence of designated funding to develop and accredit the training curriculum, the impost on ASeTTS would be substantial and hence, not doable given the agency is not a registered training organisation.

It is recognised, however, that community leaders and educators made a significant commitment of their time and emotionally to the projects and some form of compensation should be built in to future projects to appropriately reimburse participants for out of pocket expenses as they were for these projects – for example petrol or other transportation and communication costs - but payment for involvement per se should not be provided. The provision of payment alters considerably the positioning of participants vis-à-vis their partnership with ASeTTS and their motivation for involvement. Key to the research that was undertaken in the communities (Fisher, 2009), was an



equal partnership between the communities, ASeTTS, the (then) Family and Domestic Violence Unit and the researcher. That research was developed in the communities and community driven. The findings then were returned to the communities for consideration of how to progress and thus 'equal partnership' should be taken forward to any future project.

Literature suggests that when communities have ownership of an issue and interventions or projects to support it, the chances of sustainability increase (Kelleher, Murphy & MacDougall, 2007). The manner in which community leaders and community educators continued their involvement in the project despite a number of challenges and a heavy time commitment, suggests that the issue is one that they continue to 'own' and so, augurs well for ASeTTS continuing to support the communities around domestic violence. The issue of payment for involvement suggests that, despite having a sense of ownership around the issue of domestic violence, the same sense of ownership did not translate to the HRAF projects. The issues highlighted previously around the importance of ongoing partnership development to ensure that collaborations are well developed and ready to be mobilised are considered important here.

It is well recognised in the literature that refugee background communities often have a level of distrust in mainstream and multicultural services. In relation to family related issues such as domestic violence, this distrust often extends to DCPFS, the police and accommodation services including refuges (Ono, 2013). Therefore, developing trust between community leaders and agencies and services that are potential referral pathways for women experiencing domestic violence was an





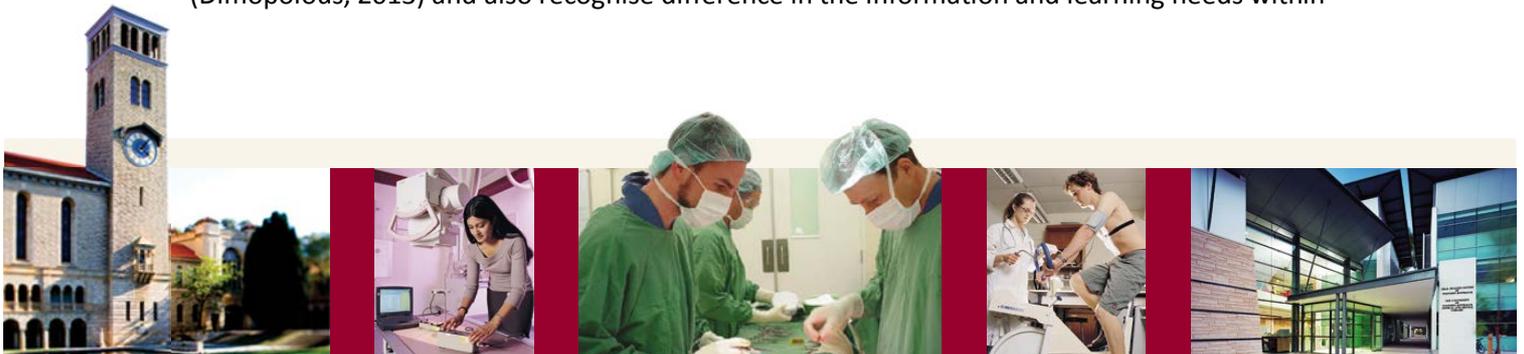
important outcome of the project, but one of its challenges. It is reported in the literature that service provider involvement in the design and delivery of information is an important factor in the success of education programs (Dimopolous, 2013), hence, the involvement of DCPFS, WA Police, MWAS and other agencies in the HRAF training was in line with available evidence. The involvement of DCPFS in particular seems to have had a positive effect on the manner in which the agency is seen in the community, at least among community leaders and educators. Due to past experiences (or the perceived role of DCPFS) in responding to 'family issues', community members appear to have been reluctant to engage positively with them prior to the training. There appears, however, to have been a shift in the perceptions of DCPFS among many community leaders resulting primarily from the opportunities for the generation of trust and improved mutual understanding presented during the training. The hoped-for outcomes from participation in the projects appear to have been achieved for DCPFS.

MWAS had hoped to develop a networking relationship with ASeTTS from participation in the projects. The overall impact of participating in the projects was not as positive for MWAS as it was for DCPFS – they were able to make changes to the manner in which the projects were implemented – deemed necessary to enhance safety. They were also able to make connections with community leaders, but the flow on of increased clients did not eventuate. This may also have been impacted on by resource implications within the agency itself. The importance of the ongoing development and fostering of the partnership in maintaining the links with MWAS will be important to facilitate their involvement in future projects.



The HRAF projects had both positive and negative impacts on community leaders and educators. Predominantly, the negative impact resulted from the time commitment required of the projects and a perceived insufficient feedback from project officers, leaving them feeling less than optimally supported during recruitment. That being said, overwhelmingly community leaders and educators spoke about the positive impact that participation in the project has resulted in, both on their personal lives and professionally. All reflected on an increase in confidence and knowledge both about domestic violence and the services that respond to it. Additionally, the relationship with these agencies was enhanced. Importantly, community leaders and educators felt confident in discussing the issue in their communities, either after being approached for support, or proactively raising the issue. For some, this was restricted to their families, for others it extended across their community and even across communities. A newly found respect for the experience and knowledge of (predominantly) community leaders, was evident through their reflections of being sought out by agency staff, including WA Police, for advice and input on responding to domestic violence (and other issues) in their communities. The approach taken in the HRAF projects - community development and participatory education in tandem – is argued to promote leadership development and empowerment (Freire, 1997). The increased visibility of communities leaders and educators in their community and the responsibility they were assuming for provision of information about domestic violence potentially provides evidence for both.

To facilitate improved levels of knowledge, it was important to involve both women and men (Dimopolous, 2013) and also recognise difference in the information and learning needs within





communities. Utilising trained community leaders and educators to disseminate information and provide support in their communities as occurred in the HRAF projects to facilitate this is well grounded in the literature. This literature suggests that it is important to create an environment in which people from a refugee background can address the issue of domestic violence themselves within their own families and communities (Uehling, Bouroncle, Roeber, Tashima & Crain 2011) with community receptivity to provided information potentially enhanced when this occurs, as it minimises any perception that the information presented is based on Western-centric ideologies (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Research also suggests that information that is presented in a positive manner and reinforces community values (for example, healthy relationships) may be more effective than that which is perceived as confronting and aggressive, and especially that which ostracises men (Bonar & Roberts 2006).

The involvement of trusted community members to convey key messages, particularly when they involve messages of 'cultural' change is considered important (Dimopoulos, 2013) and was part of the HRAF projects through the involvement of community leaders and educators. An emerging body of literature also supports the unique role that community educators can play in the strengthening of existing community networks and the provision of social support for community members.

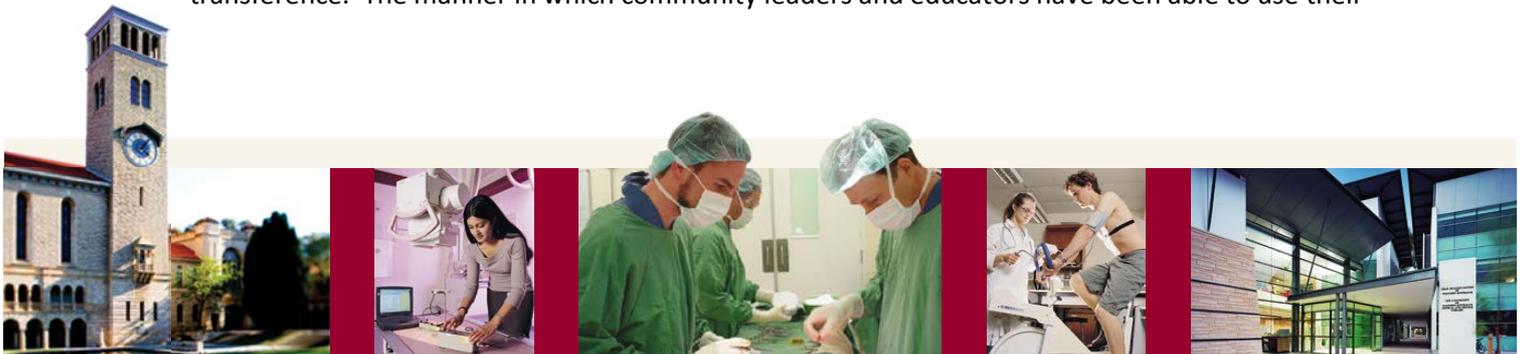
This same literature also provides support for the role that community educators play in improving awareness of mainstream services and facilitating access to them for community members. Similarly, community educators can provide education and information to service providers about



community information needs and the cultural security (or otherwise) of existing services– all roles that community leaders and educators undertook in the HRAF projects. This approach is also argued to be very cost effective (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, 2008) and despite an economic evaluation not part of the current evaluation, it may be an important aspect to highlight as a general feature of such approaches in any future funding application.

As noted, community leaders and educators reported an increased confidence following participation in the projects and utilisation of their knowledge in their communities. This sense of confidence is also apparent in findings of other projects addressing domestic violence in communities (see for example the Casa de Esperanza initiative –Minnesota) (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2014). The results of RWJF study suggest the positive power of community engagement as a core strategy to address (and prevent?) domestic violence. Building community capacity is thought to also contribute to the *prevention* of domestic violence through mechanisms such as dissemination of information about healthy and unhealthy relationships and about healthy behavioural norms (Uehling, Bouroncle, Roeber, Tashima & Crain, 2011), all of which are present in the HRAF projects.

Whilst the provision of knowledge is always a necessary part of attempts to prevent domestic violence, the information must be balanced and relevant to the communities' social, political and economic realities. Furthermore, it should be delivered in such a manner as to maximise transference. The manner in which community leaders and educators have been able to use their





knowledge in (and between) their respective communities suggests that the training provided in the HRAF projects has been effective. Certainly there was a large amount of learning by community leaders and educators that took place, particularly around understanding domestic violence in an Australian context, with the training being universally considered the most important aspect of the projects for community members.

5.3 The Future and Sustainability

Looking to the future, issues of sustainability and ASeTTS future involvement in the area of domestic violence are important as considerations of long term sustainability are critical to successful community engagement models (Kelleher, Murphy & MacDougall, 2007) and the sustainability of the projects was a top of mind issue, particularly for the community leaders and educators who, as previously noted, saw enormous benefit from the projects for themselves and for their communities.

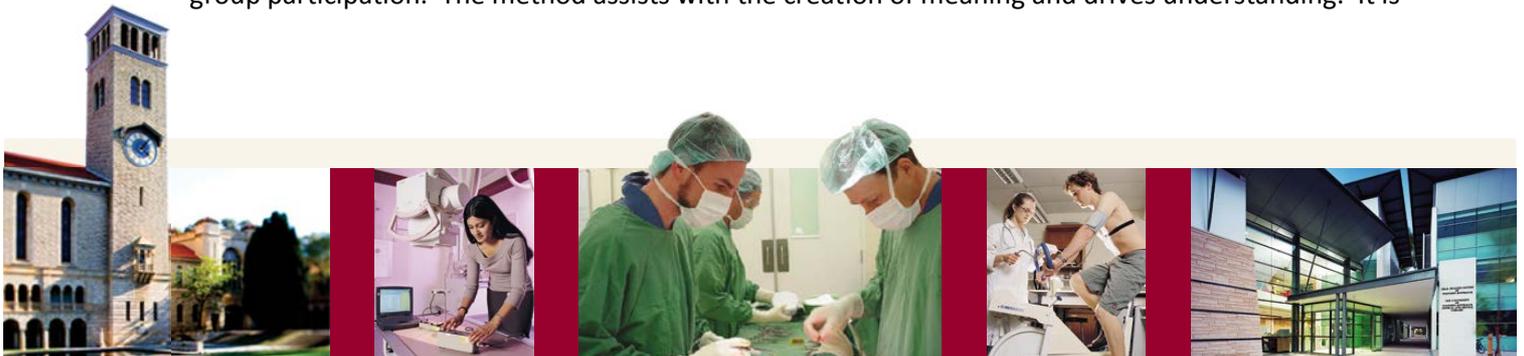
A key community resource utilised for the HRAF projects– the trained community leaders and educators - potentially remains under-utilised and under-recognised as a vehicle for sustainability as they remain among the best agents for grassroots change around domestic violence (Willock, Mayberry, Yan & Daniels, 2015). Training them to become educators provides a level of sustainability that augurs well for developing a cadre of community members to address domestic violence education and prevention in community.



Three suggestions for facilitating sustainability beyond that already developed in community leaders and educators were discussed. The first and one that could quite easily occur is to embed discussions of domestic violence in activities that are already occurring in the communities. It would be important to ensure, however, that men continued to be centrally involved, (Bonar & Roberts, 2006) as the activities discussed in the findings of this evaluation and in the literature are typically attended by women, for example cooking, craft etc. That being said, there is precedent for the successful embedding of domestic violence education and information in other services or activities including English language classes, sessions about the law in general and financial literacy workshops (Uehling, Bouroncle, Roeber, Tashima & Crain, 2011) where men are equally likely to attend.

Exploring alternate models of support seems warranted given the limited access of refugee background communities to mainstream services (Fisher, 2009) and/or the struggle for mainstream services in working effectively with the communities. Adoption of the African learning circles model was seen as a way of continuing discussions around domestic violence without having to have a specific overall focus on the issue. This is important because it has been apparent since at least the mid 2000s that the interrelated issues of parenting and raising children in a western context was a 'top-of-mind' issue (Fisher, 2009) and this issue was still deemed as very important in the findings of this evaluation.

The learning circle approach is a highly interactive approach to learning achieved through interactive group participation. The method assists with the creation of meaning and drives understanding. It is





the learners who actively create the learning content for group participants (Riel & Polin, 2004). The learning circle approach has been utilised successfully in the western suburbs of Sydney, where the Department of Community Services (DoCS) has been working with African community leaders to support refugee background communities to learn about family services and child welfare laws in New South Wales. In Sydney, the learning circle typically comprises around 5 – 15 and participants discuss issues of importance to them and to their community. Learning is at the pace of the participants and their own understandings and experiences are drawn on to support learning (DoCS, 2006).

The idea of creating a safe space, as the learning circle does is not new. It appears to be an important element of many interventions. The Youth Empowerment Project (USA) and Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (USA) provided a safe and culturally tailored space for Asian and Asian American youth to learn about domestic violence in their communities while promoting positive cultural norms around healthy relationships. The evaluation findings of those projects suggest that youth empowerment can increase youth capacity to be active bystanders against domestic violence (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2014).and there is no reason to expect that community leaders and educators in the HRAF projects would not do the same.

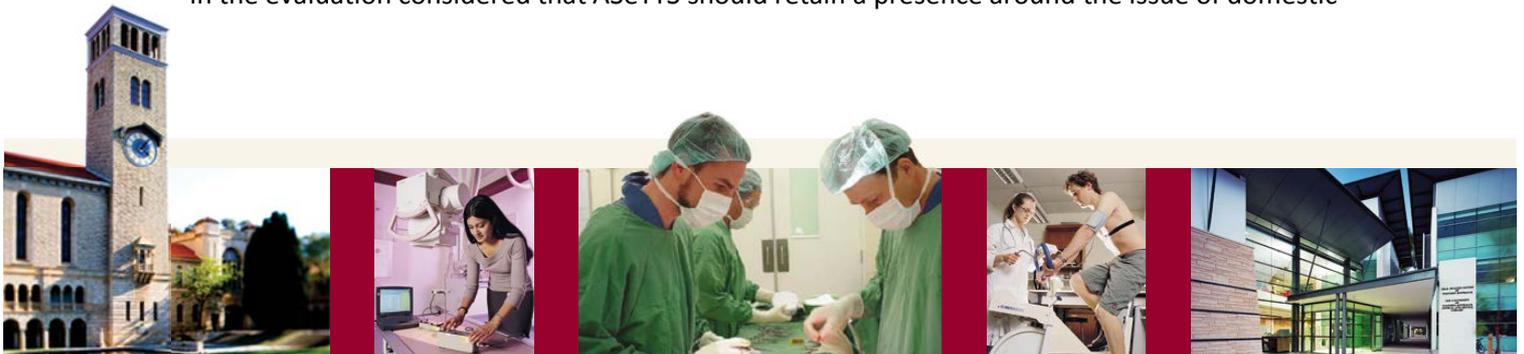
As noted in section 4.4.1.2, typically a specific agency does not have responsibility for a learning circle. That being said, the success of the African learning circles in Sydney is seen to stem from the high level commitment from DoCS and their provision of staff to facilitate their running. If the model



were to be adopted in Perth, a similar commitment would be needed, at least until the learning circle developed momentum and the commitment required to function independently. A similar level of buy-in and commitment from policy makers and those in decision making positions would also need to be involved. Exploring alternate models of support seems warranted given the limited access of refugee background communities to mainstream services and/or the struggle mainstream services have in working effectively with the communities.

A further alternative model suggested was that of ongoing support for community educators through a designated person with expertise in domestic violence. This model would provide ongoing support and debrief for community leaders and educators (the lack of ongoing support was seen as a negative of the HRAF model by community leaders and educators) whilst at the same time providing a 'one-stop' place where they could seek advice and ensure the information they were providing was appropriate. It would also act as a safety mechanism for ASeTTS should there be concerns around consistency of the message being disseminated and/or that limits of support by community leaders and educators were not being respected. It is important, however, to ensure that the 'professional' in this support role was seen as appropriate for the communities and was proactive in maintaining contact and support for the leaders and educators.

Garnering the perspectives of evaluation participants on how what they would envisage the role of ASeTTS in the area of domestic violence moving forward was important for the agency. Participants in the evaluation considered that ASeTTS should retain a presence around the issue of domestic





violence. ASeTTS was seen to have two vantages that other agencies did not – expertise in the area of torture and trauma and well established and trusted relationships with refugee background communities and should use these to advantage.

There remains a dearth of knowledge around the impact of torture and trauma on domestic violence, and how they intersect. The literature continues to conflate ‘refugee background’ and ‘immigrant background’ and, despite their being some similarities in experience and vulnerability, experiences of torture and trauma add an extra layer of complexity that is not sufficiently understood. This warrants that further work to understand the impact of torture and trauma and responses that incorporates such understanding be undertaken. ASeTTS is well placed to take a leading role here and well placed to make a significant contribution to evidence and practice.

ASeTTS has strong community relationships and, as noted, community members have expressed a strong desire for further support for domestic violence. Not continuing in this space, would therefore, appear illogical. Recognising that others have stronger domestic violence expertise, ASeTTS should continue to maintain and foster relationships with agencies across a number of sectors – domestic violence, health, justice, legal, police and social services (both multicultural and mainstream) to understand what other agencies are involved in and partner projects where there are benefits both for the agency and for the communities and where they can make a valuable contribution.



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All this needs to be undertaken in a partnership with the communities.





6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The HRAF were challenging projects for all involved, but were very well received by community leaders and community educators who saw real and tangible benefits from involvement. Their knowledge of domestic violence in a western context grew substantially, as did their knowledge of agencies that respond. This is similar to the findings of the pilot Healthy Relationships for African Families evaluation (Fisher, 2011). Given that there is now evidence from two evaluations of similar projects (three projects in total) of significant increases in both knowledge of the issue of domestic violence and available services and responses, this augurs well for knowledge outcomes should similar projects run in future. Importantly for community leaders and community educators, respect from agencies, including WA Police was gained and, as such, the impact of HRAF could potentially reach beyond the issue of domestic violence.

It is clear that partnerships were central to the HRAF projects. Successful implementation depends on having motivated agencies and individuals involved from project development and transparency and shared knowledge of respective commitment and involvement. Maintaining and fostering relationships with partners in the HRAF projects is vitally important to facilitate involvement in future projects.



The rationale for the model chosen for the HRAF projects was based on sound logic. With some amendments, the model could be replicated in future projects. Scarce funding, however indicates that it is prudent to explore alternatives and as such, embedding discussion of domestic violence, as a first and intermediary step into other community activities and events, would ensure that the issue is continued to be addressed. The knowledge that community leaders and community educators have gained during the projects and the work that they will continue to undertake following closure of the projects ensures some sustainability for the issue. That being said, in the context of scarce funding it is prudent to explore the potential of alternate models that could be utilised in the future.

Community leaders and educators appear to retain a commitment and sense of ownership of the issue of domestic violence. Momentum around the issue, however, needs to be maintained, but currently, there does not appear to be sufficient capacity in some communities to achieve this without support. Momentum could be partially achieved by community involvement in the development of future projects to address it. ASeTTS appears to be in an ideal place to drive this forward and expand knowledge and practice around domestic violence in African (and other) refugee background communities.





6.2 Recommendations

In light of the foregoing the following are recommended:

Maintain and foster partnerships with the communities in the area of domestic violence

Ongoing networking with the communities will ensure the already strong relationship with them is further enhanced which will ensure specific consultation around projects as funding opportunities arise will be productive. It will also enable involvement of the communities in development of the project design and position them as 'owners' of any project as well as the issue of domestic violence itself. It will also ensure that community members are aware of the limits of compensation for project involvement

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Further foster partnerships with a range of agencies and agency staff members

Consolidating networks and partnerships with agencies across a range of sectors (health, legal, justice, social services, advocacy) – both multicultural and mainstream - will facilitate an understanding of the activity of other agencies in domestic violence and the gaps that exist in responding to it that ASeTTS may be able to address or fill. It will also ensure that any partnership is 'mature' when funding opportunities are advertised.

Explore opportunities for funding where the HRAF model, with modifications, can be utilised.



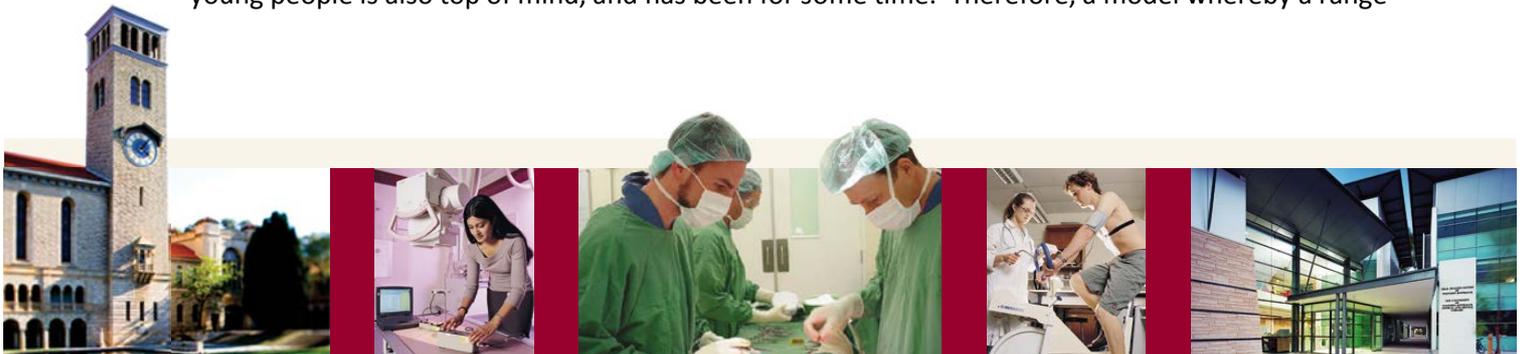
Although the HRAF model did not transfer as seamlessly as intended from the UN model, the design was highly valued by community leaders and community educators. The learnings from this evaluation should be used to inform amendments to the model rather than it being disregarded for future funding applications. This is particularly so given community educators are an important avenue to sustainability of discussions and information around domestic violence in the communities.

Maintain a presence with the issue of domestic violence in refugee background communities.

Continuing a presence with the issue of domestic violence is warranted and logical given ASeTTS' past involvement and the desire within the communities for the issue to be further addressed. This will further cement the relationship between ASeTTS and the communities and enable greater community capacity around the issue to be built. ASeTTS should build on their expertise in torture and trauma and bring this to bear on projects they lead, and on projects of other agencies where ASeTTS is a partner. Ways of embedding domestic violence discussions into community activities and events should be investigated as another approach to maintaining a presence around domestic violence. This would also add to the sustainability of information provision regarding domestic violence

Explore alternate project models.

Despite domestic violence being an important issue for communities, related issues of parenting and young people is also top of mind, and has been for some time. Therefore, a model whereby a range





of topics, including domestic violence, can be addressed is useful to pursue. This is particularly so if funding is available for less specific issues and may open up a wider range of funding opportunities. Exploring models such as the African Learning Circle provides an ideal avenue for this to occur and its saliency should be explored.



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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Participant Information Sheet – Community Leaders and Educators



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Evaluation of 'Healthy Relationships For African Families' Projects

Evaluator: Prof Colleen Fisher

Telephone: 6488 2193 or 0417 177 301

Email: colleen.fisher@uwa.edu.au

Who is conducting the evaluation?





The evaluation is being conducted by the University of Western Australia. The evaluator is Prof Colleen Fisher, a researcher from the School of Population Health who has over ten years' experience in domestic violence and evaluation research.

What is the aim of the evaluation?

The aim of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' project. We would like to know if you have been able to use what you have learned from participating in the project in your community; which parts of the project were most useful for you, what could be done differently in the future; and any issues you have met when you were discussing issues in the community. We would also like your input on how you think similar projects could be sustainable in the future.

Why have I been asked to participate in the evaluation?

You have been asked to participate in the evaluation because of your participation in the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' project.

If I agree to participate, what will I be asked to do?

If you agree to be involved in the evaluation you will be requested to participate in a focus group along with other members from your community who participated with you in the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' project. The focus group will be audio recorded, with consent.

It is expected that the focus group will run for 1 ½ - 2 hours at a suitable time and venue.

What if I choose to leave the evaluation?

You are free to decide whether you will participate in the evaluation or not. If at any time you wish not to answer any question, or wish to withdraw from the evaluation, you are free to do so without consequence. Should you decide to withdraw from the evaluation the information you had provided will not be used.

Are there any risks involved and what are the benefits of my participation?

Whilst there are no risks involved in participating in the evaluation, the nature of the questions may arouse emotional feelings associated with the support you have provided in the past. The evaluator, however, has over ten years' experience in interviewing domestic violence and evaluation research.

The information you provide in the evaluation process will help to improve any future project and has the potential to benefit both others who subsequently participate in them and your community.



Will the Information I provide be held in confidence?

Your responses will be confidential and no identifying information will be released to any sources except where required by law. The information gathered from you during the evaluation will be analysed along with information from other participants and the findings reported as a whole. Your real name will not be used – you will only be identified as a participant from your community. This will occur from the time of transcription of the focus group should consent be given to its audio recording.

All collected information will be secured either in a locked filing cabinet, or on password protected computer files available only to the evaluator and will be destroyed in a secure manner after the designated time for data retention has lapsed. The evaluation will be carried out in a manner conforming to the principles set out by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

What will happen to the information I provide?

All information collected from this evaluation will be analysed and compiled into an evaluation report. Further, the information may also be disseminated to a wider audience through journal articles, conference presentations and related activities. You will not be identified in any publication.

What if I need more information?

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Evaluator:

Prof Colleen Fisher
School of Population Health, University of Western Australia
Telephone: 08 6488 2193 or 0417 177 301
Email: colleen.fisher@uwa.edu.au

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to hreo-research@uwa.edu.au





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All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.

Thank you for considering participating in this important evaluation.

Prof Colleen Fisher
Evaluator



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8.2 Appendix 2 - Participant Information Sheet – Agency Staff



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CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G

Evaluation of 'Healthy Relationships For African Families' Projects

Evaluator: Prof Colleen Fisher
Telephone: 6488 2193 or 0417 177 301
Email: colleen.fisher@uwa.edu.au

Who is conducting the evaluation?

The evaluation is being conducted by the University of Western Australia. The evaluator is Prof Colleen Fisher, a researcher from the School of Population Health who has over ten years' experience in domestic violence and evaluation research.

What is the aim of the evaluation?

The aim of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' project. We would like to garner your perspective on the appropriateness of the design of the project; its impact on participants being able to use knowledge gained in their community; and the impact of participating in the project on your agency. Additionally, we would like your perspective on future directions for such projects and their sustainability.

Why have I been asked to participate in the evaluation?

You have been asked to participate in the evaluation because of your agency was involved in the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' project as were you in your professional role.

If I agree to participate, what will I be asked to do?

If you agree to be involved in the evaluation you will be requested to participate in a one-off face-to-face or telephone interview. The interview will be audio recorded, with consent.





It is expected that the interview will run for approximately 1 ½ hours at a suitable time and venue.

What if I choose to leave the evaluation?

You are free to decide whether you will participate in the evaluation or not. If at any time you wish not to answer any question, or wish to withdraw from the evaluation, you are free to do so without consequence. Should you withdraw from the evaluation, the information you had provided will not be included.

Are there any risks involved and what are the benefits of my participation?

We do not foresee any risks from being involved in the evaluation. The questions relate specifically to the project rather than family and domestic violence per se. The evaluator, however, has over ten years' experience in interviewing domestic violence and evaluation research.

The information you provide in the evaluation process will help to improve any future project and has the potential to benefit both others who subsequently participate in them and members of their communities.

Will the Information I provide be held in confidence?

Your responses will be confidential and no identifying information will be released to any sources except where required by law. The information gathered from you during the evaluation will be analysed along with information from other participants and the findings reported as a whole. Your real name will not be used and not recorded in any transcription should consent be given for audio recording of the interview.

All collected information will be secured either in a locked filing cabinet, or on password protected computer files available only to the evaluator and will be destroyed in a secure manner after the designated time for data retention has lapsed. The evaluation will be carried out in a manner conforming to the principles set out by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

What will happen to the information I provide?

All information collected from this evaluation will be analysed and compiled into an evaluation report. Further, the information may also be disseminated to a wider audience through journal articles, conference presentations and related activities. You will not be identified in any publication.



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What if I need more information?

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Evaluator:

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All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.

Thank you for considering participating in this important evaluation.

Prof Colleen Fisher
Evaluator





8.3 Appendix 3 - Consent Form – Community Leaders & Community Educators



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Evaluation of 'Healthy Relationships For African Families' Projects

Chief Investigator:
Prof Colleen Fisher,
Phone: 6488 2193 or 0417 177 301
Email: colleen.fisher@uwa.edu.au

I _____ have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I am confident I understand the information provided. I understand the possible advantages and risks involved in taking part in the study. I agree to participate in this evaluation, realizing that I do not need to answer any question I do not feel confident discussing and that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice and such withdrawal will in no way affect my receipt of any current or future required agency support.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the evaluator. The only exception to this principle of confidentiality is if documents are required by



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law. I have been advised as to what data are being collected, what the purpose of the evaluation is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the evaluation.

I agree that evaluation data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to hreo-research@uwa.edu.au





8.4 Appendix 4 - Consent Form – Agency Staff



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Evaluation of 'Healthy Relationships For African Families' Projects

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I _____ have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I am confident I understand the information provided. I understand the possible advantages and risks involved in taking part in the study. I agree to participate in this evaluation, realizing that I do not need to answer any question I do not feel confident discussing and that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the evaluator. The only exception to this principle of confidentiality is if documents are required by law. I have been advised as to what data are being collected, what the purpose of the evaluation is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the evaluation.

I agree that evaluation data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.



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Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time.

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8.5 Appendix 5 - Focus Group Guide

'Healthy Relationships for African Families' Evaluation
Focus Group Guide – Community Leaders and Educators

Issue area 1: Impact of Project on Participants

- a. You have all been involved in the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families'. I would like you to think about your involvement in the project. What for you has been the impact, on you, of your involvement?

Prompts: Positive impact (eg, seen more positively in community, increased knowledge on the issue, feel can make greater contribution)
Negative Impact (eg, called on too often, stressful situations)

- b. I would like you to reflect on your community involvement since participating in the project? How have you used your knowledge in the community?
- c. Which parts of the project do you consider were most useful for you? Why?
- d. What could have been improved? Why?
- e. What could have been done differently? Why?
- f. Thinking about your community engagement, what do you consider are the barriers for you engaging with the issue of family and domestic violence in your community?
- g. What are the facilitators for successful community engagement?



Issue area 2: Future Directions for the Project

Having been involved in the project, you are in an ideal position to provide input on the future directions for the project, or similar projects.

- h. How do you think we can proceed most effectively to ensure sustainability of such projects?
- i. What direction (ie, which issue/s) do you consider subsequent projects/community-based work should address?

Prompt: is family and domestic violence the most important issue?
If not, what is? Why? How can we sustain the presence of family and domestic violence discussions in non FDV issues?

- j. I'd like you to think about your connectedness to this project and issue. Do you feel like you have a sense of 'ownership' of efforts to discuss family and domestic violence in your community?

Prompt: levels of ownership are low: How can ownership be enhanced?

Prompt: If levels of ownership are reasonably high: how can this sense of 'ownership; be maintained?

- k. As you're all no doubt aware, the funds that are flowing to non-government agencies such as ASeTTS is decreasing. With this in mind, what engagement would you like to see from ASeTTS around issues of family and domestic violence?

Prompt: how can they best support you to continue your efforts?

How can they work with your community to provide information to members?

How can they work with your community to provide support to community members





Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to add?



8.6 Appendix 6 - Interview Guide

'Healthy Relationships for African Families' Evaluation Interview Guide – Agency staff

Issue area 1: Design of the Project

Your agency has been involved in the 'Healthy Relationships for African Families' and as part of your role at your agency, you have made a valuable contribution. First up, I would like you to think specifically about the design of the project.

- A. Do you think the design of the project was appropriate? Why or why not?
- B. What learnings from the design of this project can be taken forward to new projects?

Prompts: What can be done differently?
 What would be done the same?

- C. What, for **you** and **your agency**, were the challenges (if any) in project implementation? What were the enablers?

Issue area 2: Impact of Project on Participants (Project Officers only)

- D. I would like you to think about the community educators involved in the project. From your perspective and from what you know about the community educators and their role, what do you consider has been the impact, on them resulting from their involvement?

Prompts: Positive impact (eg, seen more positively in community, increased knowledge on the issue, feel can make greater contribution)





Negative Impact (eg, called on too often, stressful situations)

- E. Do you think that the community educators have been able to use their knowledge in their communities? ? If so, how? If not, why not?
- F. Which parts of the project do you consider were most useful for participants? Why?
- G. What could have been improved? Why?
- H. What could have been done differently? Why?
- I. Thinking about the community engagement undertaken by community educators, what do you consider are the barriers for them engaging with the issue of family and domestic violence in their community?
 - a. What are the facilitators for successful community engagement?

Issue area 3: Impact of Project on Partner Agencies.

- I. how did the perceived role of the respective partner agencies compare with actuality?
- J. What was the impact of the project on your agency?
Prompts: Positive and Negative?
- K. Could negatives be overcome? How?
- L. What would you do differently (if anything) in future collaborative endeavours?



Issue area 4: Future Directions for the Project

Having been involved in the project, you are in an ideal position to provide input on the future directions for the project, or similar projects.

M. How do you think we can proceed most effectively to ensure sustainability of such projects?

N. What direction (ie, which issue/s) do you consider subsequent projects/community-based work should address?

Prompt: is family and domestic violence the most important issue?

If not, what is? Why? How can we sustain the presence of family and domestic violence discussions in non FDV issues?

O. I'd like you to think about the connectedness of community members in the project communities to this project and issue. Do you feel like you have a sense of 'ownership' of efforts to discuss family and domestic violence in their community?

P. If levels of ownership are low: How can ownership be enhanced?

Q. If levels of ownership are reasonably high: how can this sense of 'ownership; be maintained?

R. As you're all no doubt aware, the funds that are flowing to non-government agencies are decreasing. With this in mind, what engagement would you like to see from ASeTTS around issues of family and domestic violence?

Prompt: how can they best support you to continue your efforts? Efforts of community member?

How can they work with community members to provide information?





How can they work with community members to provide support ?

Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to add?



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