Effective Change

Evaluation of the Mutual Relational Respect Training Project

MRR
MUTUAL RELATIONAL RESPECT

Report commissioned by the **Australasian Centre for Human Rights & Health**

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December 2019

EVALUATION   RESEARCH   CONSULTATION & FACILITATION

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT   PLANNING   ORGANISATIONAL & SERVICE REVIEW

Contents

Violence against women and their children is not an inevitable or intractable social problem. Rather, it is the product of complex yet modifiable social and environmental factors.

Change the Story, Our Watch

Introduction

This report is an evaluation of the Mutual Relational Respect (MRR) training project which aims to address the primary prevention of violence against women.

Project background

The migration experience involves a complex combination of losses and opportunities. The migrants leave their homeland, family and friends, traditions and culture.

Migrants arriving in Australia can be isolated, disengaged, making them vulnerable to domestic violence. Yet there are few opportunities for migrants to learn about the new cultural system they are entering, or more particularly explore deeper understanding of social norms and notions of gender equality.

The Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health (ACHRH) has identified and been working to address this gap for more than a decade. In 2015, ACHRH implemented the Mutual Cultural Respect training project, delivering training to more than 200 culturally diverse participants from 33 different countries of origin.

In 2017, ACHRH was awarded funding to extend this training through the MRR project, funded under the Department of Social Services' *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Leading Prevention* grants. The MRR project explores how women and men use their local cultural references to make sense of domestic violence they have experienced or witnessed.

The MRR project delivered eleven workshops to a range of South Asian community groups across metropolitan Melbourne in 2018-2019. The workshops addressed primary prevention of violence against women through providing opportunities to discuss health relationships and lifestyles, shared decision-making, enhanced harmony and equality, and championing the fight against family violence.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 ('the National Plan') is a long-term partnership between the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments, working with the non-government sector, business and communities, to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children in Australia.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Leading Prevention community grants

'Prevention and early intervention' is a National Priority Area under the National Plan. It includes actions to support local communities to take effective action to reduce violence against women, with specific interest in supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women, young people and communities to lead efforts to reduce violence against women in their communities.

The *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Leading Prevention* community grants, through the Department of Social Services (DSS), supported projects to develop and implement locally-led solutions to drive long

term, sustainable changes in community awareness, attitudes and behaviours - with the aim of reducing violence against women and their children in CALD communities.

Aims and objectives of the Mutual Relational Respect project

The overarching aim of the Mutual Relational Respect project was to add to the primary prevention landscape of knowledge about violence against women in CALD communities, using a strength-based approach to create a tool and culturally responsive Theory of Change.

Specific objectives of the project were to:

- successfully engage with key stakeholders and the local CALD community to drive sustainable changes in community awareness, attitudes and behaviours that lead to or contribute to violence against women and their children
- utilise a culturally relevant approach to ensure that activities are appropriate and targeted
- promote existing support available within local CALD communities
- collect, refine and revise each stage of the project using action research in consultation with ANROWS

The evaluation

Effective Change Pty Ltd was engaged by ACHRH to undertake the evaluation of the Mutual Relational Respect project. The evaluation built on the learnings of the previous evaluation of the Mutual Cultural Respect project.

The evaluation used pre and post-training evaluation questionnaires, based on the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).

National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey

Initially developed on behalf of the Australian Government in 1995, NCAS is the world's longest-running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women. The NCAS is comprised of 79 questions and a range of scenarios to investigate:

- knowledge of violence against women
- attitudes towards gender equality
- attitudes towards violence against women
- circumstances in which people justify non-consensual sex
- bystander intentions if witnessing violence or disrespect towards women.

MRR surveys

The NCAS was selected as the basis for the MRR survey because it is designed to elicit attitudinal responses and it allowed MRR results to be compared to national results. The MRR survey was designed by selecting 17 questions from most sections of the NCAS, some of which required slight tailoring to suit the community context and training audience. It was important to reduce the overall number of questions from the NCAS survey given the cultural diversity of the training participants and also the nature of the intervention, which is a short training workshop.

The MRR survey questions are attitude statements and respondents are required to indicate the level to which they agree with the statement using the Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / can't say' or frequency scales.

In addition to the NCAS-based questions, additional questions were included in relation to the practice of dowry.

Pre and post-training surveys using the same questions were administered to identify changes in knowledge or attitudes before and after the training.

The surveys were collated and analysed, including comparisons to ANROWS data. The evaluation also included:

- a desktop review of the project material
- a scan of relevant literature
- consultations with the Project Manager.

This evaluation report has been prepared from the analysis of this information.

Project and program design

This section of the report outlines the project and program design steps.

Project development

The first stage of the project focused on successfully engaging with CALD communities. A Steering Committee, comprising 15 key community partners from the Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Afghani and Australian community and representatives of international students from Monash and Swinburne Universities, was established to guide and oversee the project. A smaller Participant Sub-committee was formed to oversee the participant engagement process.

Program development

The MRR program was designed in a workshop format, building on the Mutual Cultural Respect project and previous ACHRH initiatives.

A group of seven experienced community facilitators were recruited. The facilitators each had strong connections to their communities and community groups. The project's two trainers – Dr Keith Thomas from Victoria University and Dr Manjula O'Connor from ACHRH – trained this group in their facilitation roles within the program format. The facilitators worked together over several months to develop and refine the program.

Program structure

The program consists of two to three-hour sessions structured around case examples. The participants begin on an equal footing, considering a realistic life example. When many participants may not know each other well, or at all, discussion is aided by talking about a hypothetical situation. The program has a 'bank' of tested case examples and accompanying discussion questions. The approach of using discussing case examples in small groups means that the sessions work equally well with small or large groups.

The sessions begin with a brief introduction to the universality of family violence, its causes and reasons for hope.

This is followed by small-group discussions of the case examples, with guided discussion questions. The facilitators assist groups to focus on the discussion questions and in reporting a summary of the discussion to the whole group.

This is followed by a plenary session facilitated by Dr O'Connor, the Principal Facilitator, bringing the discussion feedback into a coherent narrative and exploring possible positive future actions.

To conclude the session, participants are provided information and pamphlets about:

- positive parenting
- consent and sexual assault

- where to seek help in case of family violence.

The case studies

Three short case studies were prepared identifying manifestations of gender-based inequality at different stages of the life cycle, child-rearing practices and benefits of positive parenting. The case studies were strongly guided by Our Watch's *Change the Story* looking at expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict higher rates of violence against women:

- condoning of violence against women by society and the media
- men's control of decision-making
- rigid gender roles

- strong peer pressures.

The draft case studies were sharpened in the development phase with input from the facilitators. The three case studies explored:

- how gender norms are shaped in childhood and reinforced by family
- gender etiquette in social situations, cultural norms and the potential for miscommunication
- overstepping the boundaries between supportive and controlling behaviour and the implications for personal relationships and parenting.

Background and context

The MRR project builds on research from Our Watch that prevention of domestic violence is possible and change in attitudes can be learnt. Understanding the drivers of violence against women and the principles of primary prevention work, including primary prevention work within CALD communities, are fundamental to the context of the MRR project.

International and national prevalence of violence against women

Domestic violence is a universal phenomenon that persists in all countries and societies of the world (WHO, 2005), affecting all communities irrespective of race, gender, class, religion, cultural background or ethnicity (Our Watch, 2016)

In Australia, since the age of 15:

- one in five women has experienced sexual violence
- one in three women has experienced physical violence
- one in four women has experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner. (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, 2015)

Cross-national and cultural variations

A review of 134 studies in different countries and ethnic communities showed that the prevalence of lifetime domestic violence varied from 1.9% to 70% (Alhabib, Nur, & Jones, 2010).

A higher risk of violence against women is found in societies with traditional gender norms and roles, unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, a normative use of violence to resolve conflicts, and cultural approval of (or weak sanctions against) violence against women (VicHealth 2011, WHO 2011, Our Watch 2016)

Primary prevention of violence against women

Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Individual behaviour change may be the intended result of prevention activity, but such change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, a broader change in the underlying drivers of such violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole. A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children. (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, 2015)

Developed collaboratively by Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story* outlines a shared framework for the prevention of primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. This framework offers a population level model for change that goes beyond addressing individual behaviours alone and considers the broader social, political and economic factors at play. It outlines five areas of social change – essential actions – that are required to prevent violence against women before it occurs:

1. Challenge condoning of violence against women
2. Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

3. Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
4. Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
5. Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life. (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, 2015)

Primary prevention and CALD communities

Although evidence indicates that both immigrant and refugee background women and non-immigrant women experience similar forms of violence, there are a range of determinants of violence that can exacerbate the experience of immigrant and refugee background women in unique ways. For example, social and cultural isolation, precarious immigration and/or visa status, existing traumas experienced in country of origin, and migration associated stresses experienced by women and their families, may not be factors normally explored in traditional violence prevention approaches. (Joyce, 2016)

Understanding the needs of the communities

ACHRH devised the MRR project based on their extensive work with, and understanding of, the needs of the local Indian community and the broader South Asian communities of Victoria.

Between 2012 to 2019, a series of domestic violence related murders and suicides in the Victorian Indian community and subsequent media coverage of the events, led ACHRH to initiate a community action research/participatory theatre project.

Academic papers and reports in conjunction with the University of Melbourne arising from these projects provide a gendered analysis to help understand the specific factors affecting this community. (O'Connor et al 2016) Women observed that those experiencing violence are often isolated, emotionally and economically dependent on those who victimise them, making it difficult to disclose their experiences, let alone to seek support (VicHealth, 2011).

Culture is not fixed; it changes in response to changing social circumstances. Cultural norms

and practices in the countries Australian migrants come from are influenced by many factors (Aboim 2010; Steel & Kabashima 2008; Waltermaurer 2012). These may include those associated with colonisation by European powers; globalisation; and extended periods of war and civil conflict (Alliston 2004; Simister & Mehta 2010). The attitudes of people settling in Australia – as is the case for the Australian-born – are best understood as a product of historical and contemporary influences, rather than being an inherent part of a particular group's 'culture'. This helps not only to understand how particular attitudes are formed, but also suggests that there are strong possibilities for change. (VicHealth, 2015)

Training delivery

Eleven MRR training workshops were delivered between July 2018 and October 2019.

The MRR training workshop was delivered to:

- seven South Asian community groups including Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Afghani groups
- two mixed groups of CALD community leaders, brought together by Kingston City Council.

The Kingston Council groups attended two consecutive training sessions.

The workshops were delivered to groups across wider metropolitan Melbourne from the western, northern and south-eastern suburbs.

Table 1: Date and place of training

Date	Community Group and location	Number of participants
29 July 2018	Indian Telegu Group Manor Lakes Community Centre	20
1 September 2018	Bangladeshi Community and Indian mixed group Beaconsfield Community Centre	14
9 September 2018	Sri Lankan Senior Citizens Group Gladstone Park Community Centre	35
15 September 2018	Miss/Mr/Mrs South Asian Youth Pageant from India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, The Savoy Hotel, Melbourne	20
6 October 2018	Indian Senior Citizens Group Dandenong	48
4 November 2018	Sri Lankan Cultural group Bentleigh Community Centre	44
13 April 2019	Indian Concerned Citizens Group Point Cook Community Centre	18
13 May 2019 & 1 July 2019	Kingston City Council CALD Community Leadership Group Clayton	14
23 September 2019 & 14 October 2019	Kingston City Council CALD Community Leadership Group Westall Community Hub	12
	Total	225

The participants

More than two hundred and twenty people participated in the Mutual Relational Respect training from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Participant demographics

Gender

The gender distribution of participants was reasonably balanced, with slightly more women (55%) than men (45%). As not all participants completed surveys, the count is less than the total number of participants.

Table 2: Gender of participants

Gender	%	Count
Female	54.7%	88
Male	45.3%	73
	Total	161

Age

The ages of participants ranged from 18-24 years to over 75 years of age. All age groups were represented in the participants. Roughly equal number of participants were aged between 18-44 years of age and over 55 years. Fewer participants (11%) were in the 45-54 years age bracket.

Figure 1: Age of participants
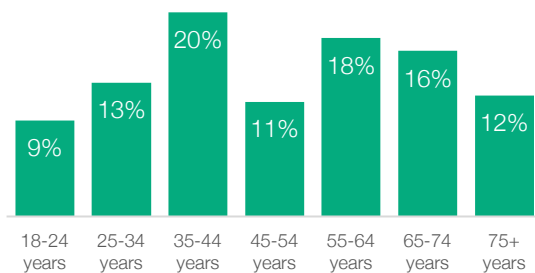
Country of birth

Most participants were born in Sri Lanka or India. The balance of participants were born in another South Asian country (Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan). A minority of participants were born in Australia, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Country of birth of participants

Country	%	Count
India	39.1%	59
Sri Lanka	38.4%	58
South Asia (Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh)	9.3%	14
Other East or Southeast Asia	6.6%	10
Australia	5.3%	8
Other	1.3%	2
	Total	151

Language spoken at home

The languages most commonly spoken at home for the participant groups were English and Sinhalese, followed by Hindi and Telegu. The figure below shows the languages spoken by participants at home.

Figure 2: Language spoken by participants at home
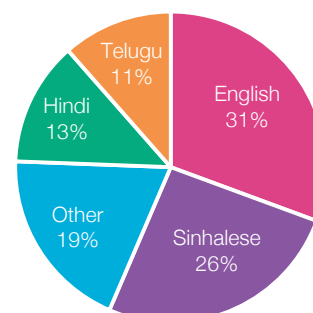
Employment status

The majority of participants were employed (59%). Eighteen per cent (18%) of participants were retired and nine per cent (9%) were engaged in studies. The balance of participants were either engaged in home duties, unemployed or unable to work as shown in the following table.

Table 4: Employment status of participants

Employment status	%	Count
Employed	59.1%	94
Retired	18.2%	29
Student	9.4%	15
Unemployed	6.9%	11
Home duties	4.4%	7
Unable to work	1.9%	3
	Total	159

Training results

This section of the report presents the results of the pre and post-training questionnaires, devised around the topics of knowledge of violence against women, attitudes to gender inequality, circumstances in which people justify non-consensual sex and practice of dowry.

Knowledge of violence against women

The NCAS asks questions about knowledge of violence against women because this is among the factors influencing attitude and is an important resource for both affected individuals and those around them to identify and respond constructively to the problem. (ANROWS, 2017) Research has also shown that knowledge influences the formation of attitudes. Wide understanding that violence is against the law can help to set non-violent social norms, which in turn can help to prevent violent behavior. (VicHealth, 2015)

The MRR survey included four questions from the NCAS exploring participants':

- understanding that non-physical forms of violence are a form of domestic violence
- knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women
- knowledge of resources.

Non-physical forms of violence

Participants were asked 'If one partner in a domestic relationship repeatedly criticises the other one to make them feel bad or useless, is this a form of domestic violence?' The results in Figure 3 below show that slightly over one-third (36%) felt this was 'always' a form of domestic violence prior to the workshop, but closer to half (48%) thought so after the workshop, a 12% increase. There is little change in the combined results of those responding 'always' and 'usually' (68% pre-workshop and 69% post-workshop), suggesting that those who selected 'usually' in the pre-workshop survey moved to the 'always'

response in the post-workshop survey. There was a slight decrease (2%) in those responding 'don't know' after the workshop, and a slight increase (2%) in those responding that this is not a form of domestic violence.

Figure 3: If one partner in a domestic relationship repeatedly criticises the other one to make them feel bad or useless, is this a form of domestic violence?

	Yes, always	Yes, usually	Yes, sometimes	No	Don't know
PRE	36%	32%	19%	6%	7%
POST	48%	21%	18%	8%	5%
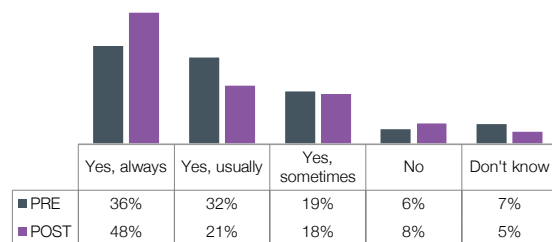
More than half of the participants (56%) regarded harassment via repeated emails or text messages as 'always' being a form of violence against women prior to the workshop. After the workshop, this increased by 7% to 63% of participants. Overall, post-workshop results show that 77% of participants indicated that this was 'always' or 'usually' a form of violence against women. Fewer felt that this was 'sometimes' a form of violence against women. The proportion of those who did not believe this to be a form of violence against women rose slightly after the workshop by 2%, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Do you regard harassment via repeated emails, text messages and the like to be a form of violence against women?

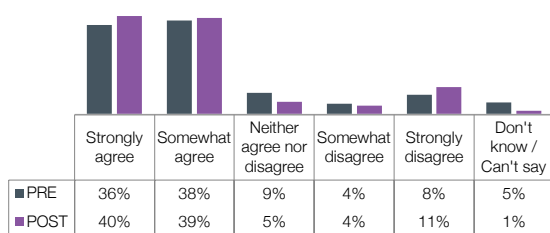|	Yes, always	Yes, usually	Yes, sometimes	No	Don't know
■PRE	56%	19%	11%	10%	4%
■POST	63%	14%	8%	12%	4%
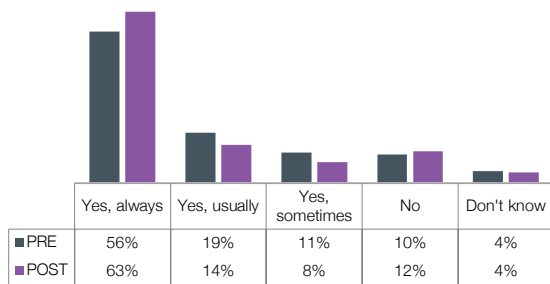
Knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women

Around three-quarters (74%) of participants 'strongly agreed' or 'somewhat agreed' that 'Violence against women is common in our community' before the workshop. This increased by 5% after the workshop, with 40% strongly agreeing and 39% somewhat agreeing. Neutral responses and 'don't know' responses each decreased by 4% after the workshop, however the 'strongly disagree' responses increased by 3% after the workshop as shown in Figure 5.
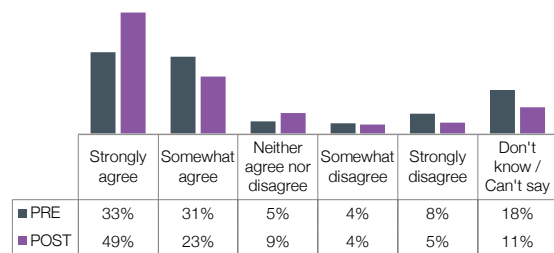
Figure 5: Violence against women is common in our community

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
■PRE	36%	38%	9%	4%	8%	5%
■POST	40%	39%	5%	4%	11%	1%

Knowledge of resources

Knowledge of where to go to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue increased significantly through the workshop. Those strongly agreeing with this statement increased by 16% (from 33% to 49%) after the workshop – the greatest change of any of the results. However, neutral responses increased by 4% and 11% of participants reported that they 'don't know' after the workshop, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: If I needed to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue, I would know where to go

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
■PRE	33%	31%	5%	4%	8%	18%
■POST	49%	23%	9%	4%	5%	11%

Participant's comments indicated they valued increasing their knowledge about violence against women:

That was really helpful to promote knowledge regarding domestic violence.

More information on reading early signs of violence and prevention. Sources of help/where to seek help.

Several participants indicated wanting to share knowledge with other women in the community:

One area we would love to see is how we can identify the first signs and report and help the victim before it becomes abuse.

This session was very helpful to understand domestic violence well. And I will educate other women to stand up for themselves if they are the victim of domestic violence.

Other participants identified sensitivities highlighted in the research, such as the particular needs of new arrivals and the need for cultural sensitivity in imparting the information:

Newly arrived migrants - especially for the women - so she knows her rights and knows where to go for support if needed

While it is an important topic, domestic violence needs to be explored carefully and sensitively. In the process of helping the victim it is important not to increase the damage to the victim. This is where cultural sensitivity comes into picture.
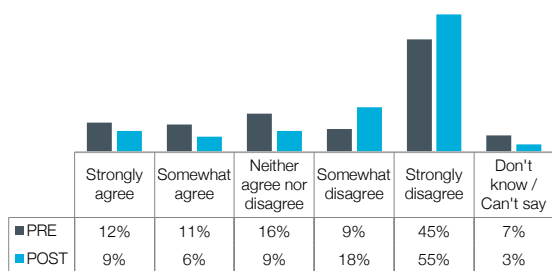
Attitudes to gender inequality

Promoting gender equality is pivotal to reducing violence against women. Gender inequality and attitudes supporting gender inequality provide the social conditions in which violence against women is more likely to occur. (ANROWS, 2017) This position underpins both the National Plan and *Change the Story*.

Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions

Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'A woman has to have children to be fulfilled'. There was a significant change between the pre and post-workshop results, with just over half (54%) somewhat or strongly disagreeing with this statement before the workshop. After the workshop, almost three-quarters (73%) of participants disagreed with the statement, a change of 19 percentage points. Those agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement or holding a neutral view or didn't know consistently decreased by 3% to 7%, as shown in Figure 7.
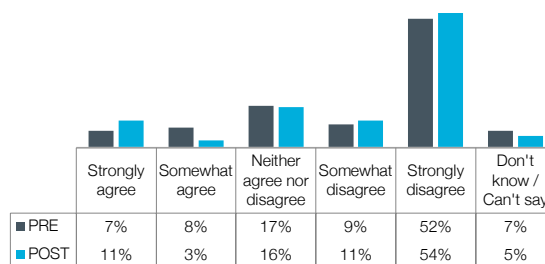
Figure 7: A woman has to have children to be fulfilled

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	12%	11%	16%	9%	45%	7%
POST	9%	6%	9%	18%	55%	3%

Undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life

Very little change was evident in participants views on whether 'men make better political leaders than women'. There was a two per cent increase in those who 'somewhat disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed', and a four per cent increase in those who 'strongly agreed', as shown in the following Figure 8.
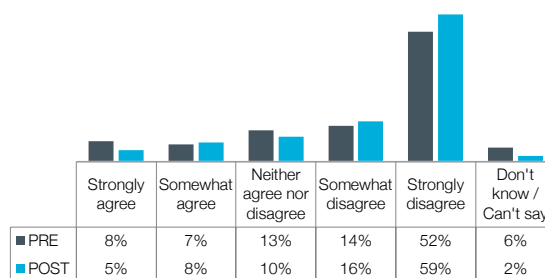
Figure 8: On the whole, men make better political leaders than women

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	7%	8%	17%	9%	52%	7%
POST	11%	3%	16%	11%	54%	5%

Undermining women's independence and decision-making in private life:

In contrast to views about decision-making in public life, there was a greater change in relation to views in private life. Before the workshop, two-thirds of participants disagreed 'somewhat' or 'strongly' that 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household'. Those disagreeing with this statement increased to 75%, an increase of nine percentage points, after the workshops. Those strongly agreeing with the statement decreased by three percentage points, from eight per cent to five per cent, as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	8%	7%	13%	14%	52%	6%
POST	5%	8%	10%	16%	59%	2%

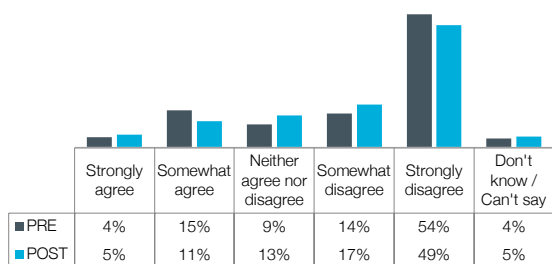### Condoning male peer relations involving aggression and disrespect towards women

There was a less consistent pattern in the responses to the statement 'I think it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends'. Those who strongly disagreed with this statement decreased after the workshop, but those who somewhat disagreed, were neutral or didn't know increased as Figure 10 shows.

Figure 10: I think it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	4%	15%	9%	14%	54%	4%
POST	5%	11%	13%	17%	49%	5%

Participants were asked if 'pressure from other men to be tough is a factor in domestic violence'. Around one third of participants did not think this was the case before and after the workshops. However, there was an increase of 8% in participants who thought this applied 'a lot of the time' and a decrease of 8% in those who thought this applied 'some of the time', as shown in Figure 11.
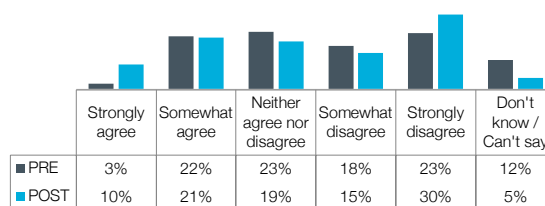
Figure 11: Is pressure from other men to be tough a factor in domestic violence? (note not from NCAS)

	A lot of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Not at all
PRE	10%	41%	16%	32%
POST	18%	33%	14%	35%
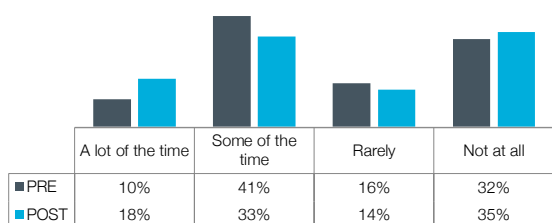
Denying gender inequality is a problem

Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia.' as shown in Figure 12. After the workshop there was an increase of seven per cent in both those who 'strongly agreed' and those who 'strongly disagreed' with the statement. Whilst the total participants who 'disagreed' with this statement increased after the workshop (from 41% to 45%), the participants who 'agreed' with the statement also increased (from 25% to 31%). The participants who didn't know or were neutral decreased after the workshop and chose a position on either end of this scale.

Figure 12: Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	3%	22%	23%	18%	23%	12%
POST	10%	21%	19%	15%	30%	5%

Positive comments were received around exploring gender inequality:

A very good initiative to create awareness and remove injustice against women.

Very open forum for communication and voice our thoughts and concerns. Appreciate all the volunteers and the bigger picture of sending this strong message to the society.

However, comments from other participants indicated that gender inequality was a challenging topic for some:

Limited focus on violence against men. Word 'Women' in the presentation to be replaced by 'person'

I think the discussions were more on "men bashing" and "SE culture bashing" which made it partial at times.

Attitudes to violence against women

Attitudes may contribute to violence against women indirectly because they influence social norms or expectations of what is acceptable behaviour. Community attitudes can influence how professionals respond to violence against women, as well as the responses of neighbours, friends, family members and work colleagues. Holding violence-supportive attitudes can influence whether women experiencing violence seek help. Such attitudes may be adopted by men who use violence to excuse their behaviour. (ANROWS, 2017)

Attitudes concerning the family and intimate partner violence

Figure 13 shows there was a significant change in participants' responses to the statement 'Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family'. Before the workshop, 40% of participants strongly disagreed with this statement. After the workshop, 53% of participants 'strongly disagreed' with the statement – a significant increase of 13% and the greatest change seen in all responses other than the question regarding knowledge about where to get help or advice for domestic violence.

Figure 13: Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
■PRE	9%	12%	15%	21%	40%	3%
■POST	7%	13%	9%	16%	53%	2%
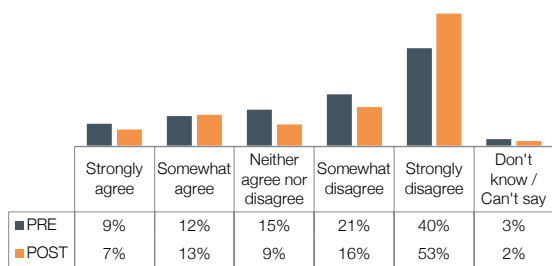
Whilst there was a significant increase in those who disagreed that domestic violence 'is a private matter to be handled in the family', responses to the statement that 'It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together' are notable for virtually no change in responses. However, it should be noted that 70% of participants 'strongly disagreed' with this statement from the outset, one of the highest responses to any of the statements. Agreement or disagreement with this statement only changed by one or two percentage points after the workshops, although those who 'didn't know' increased by four percentage points as shown in the following Figure 14.

Figure 14: It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together

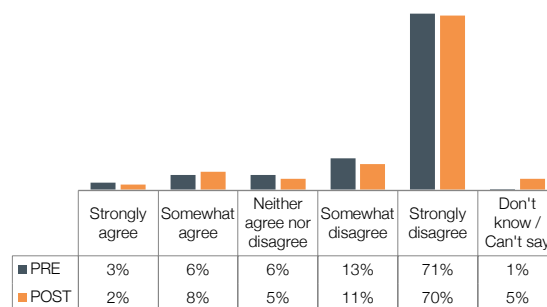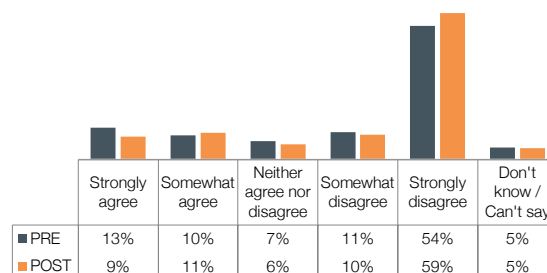|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
■PRE	3%	6%	6%	13%	71%	1%
■POST	2%	8%	5%	11%	70%	5%

Figure 15 shows that in response to the statement 'In my opinion, if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family', those who 'strongly disagreed' increased by five percentage points and those who 'strongly agreed' decreased by four percentage points but there was little change across the other responses.

Figure 15: In my opinion, if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
■PRE	13%	10%	7%	11%	54%	5%
■POST	9%	11%	6%	10%	59%	5%

While around one in five (20%) participants felt that domestic violence is a private matter, other participants noted the importance of considering the impacts on families and on educating families:

Brilliant workshop. However, I would love to have another discussion how family violence and domestic violence impact the kids' upbringing emotionally.

By taking steps one by one towards changing the mindset of parents on how they should bring up their children teaching equality and respect.

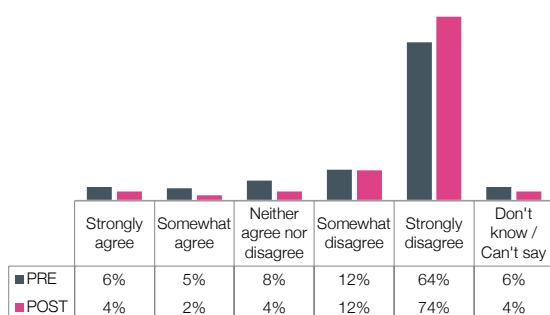## Circumstances in which people justify non-consensual sex

In the 2017 NCAS, scenarios were introduced to investigate whether or not Australians would justify non-consensual sex in different circumstances. Non-consensual sex can range from rape or coerced sex, to non-consensual acts within an initially consensual sexual encounter. Gendered power dynamics, expectations and stereotypes related to sexuality influence how consent is understood and negotiated. (ANROWS, 2017)

The following scenario was included in the MRR surveys:

Imagine a married couple have just been at a party. When they go home the man kisses the wife and tries to have sex with her. She pushes him away, but he has sex with her anyway.

Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with whether the man was justified in his behaviour. Figure 16 shows that before the workshop almost two-thirds of participants strongly disagreed that the behaviour was justified. However, this increased significantly by 10% after the workshop, with almost three quarters (74%) of participants strongly disagreeing that the behaviour was justified – the highest response to any question in the survey.

Figure 16: Married couple scenario results

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Can't say
PRE	6%	5%	8%	12%	64%	6%
POST	4%	2%	4%	12%	74%	4%

Dowry

In view of the expansion of the meaning of family violence in the 2018 amendment of Victoria's Family Violence Protection Legislation to include 'using coercion, threats, physical abuse or emotional or psychological abuse to demand or receive dowry, either before or after a marriage', participants were asked about their views on dowry on the pre-workshop survey. Two statements were provided:

- 'Dowry gifts have to be given'
- 'Dowry is a socially evil practice'

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with these statements. The results in Table 5 below show that around two-thirds of participants were opposed to the practice of dowry, 20% of participants felt that 'dowry gifts have to be given' and 30% of participants disagreed that 'dowry is a socially evil practice'.

Table 5: Responses to questions about dowry

Dowry gifts have to be given	%
Strongly agree	14%
Somewhat agree	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	58%
Don't know / can't say	6%
Total	100%
Dowry is a socially evil practice	%
Strongly agree	52%
Somewhat agree	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	3%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	27%
Don't know / can't say	2%
Total	100%

Comparison to NCAS results

This section of the report compares the MRR results to those of the general population reported in the 2017 NCAS.

There are substantial differences between the NCAS 2017 survey – with 79 questions completed by 17,504 respondents and the MRR survey, completed by 162 workshop participants. However, given that both surveys draw on the same rigorously developed questions, it provides the capacity to identify the areas where results from the two populations are similar and where they are different.

The MRR results can also be compared to an analysis of the 2013 NCAS results for people born into non-main English speaking countries (N-MESCs). (VicHealth, 2015) This only applies to certain questions, as some questions changed with the 2017 NCAS survey.

Knowledge of violence against women

Table 6 shows the level of agreement to statements identifying knowledge or understanding of violence against women. This comparison shows that the MRR participant group were:

- *more likely* than the general population to know that violence against women is common in the community and where to get outside advice about a domestic violence issue

- *less likely* than the general population to understand that criticism or harassment by repeated emails or texts constitutes a non-physical form of violence.

The MRR results are more positive than the 2013 NCAS results for people born into N-MESCs in terms of understanding of non-physical forms of violence, and knowledge about the prevalence of violence against women. (VicHealth, 2015)

Table 6: Knowledge of violence against women	MRR results	NCAS 2017
Knowledge of violence against women (% agree)		
Understanding of non-physical forms of violence		
Repeated criticism to make a partner feel bad or useless	87%	92%
Harassment by repeated emails, text messages	85%	90%
Knowledge of prevalence of violence against women		
Violence against women is common in the community	79%	72%
Knowledge of resources		
Where to get outside advice or support about a domestic violence issue	72%	60%

Attitudes to gender inequality

Table 7 shows the level of agreement with a range of statements exploring gender inequality, comparing the results from the MRR participants to the results from the NCAS 2017.

The results show that MRR participants were:

- *more likely* than the general population to hold the view that 'a women has to have children to be fulfilled', suggesting a propensity towards rigid gender roles
- *less likely* than the general population to hold beliefs that men should take control in relationships and be head of the household or condone male peer relationships involving disrespect towards women or deny gender inequality is a problem
- *equally likely* as the general population to believe that men make better political leaders than women.

It is notable that while 2 in 5 Australians believe many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia, fewer of the MRR participants held this belief. Further, while one in three respondents from the general population believe that it is natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends, only one in six of the MRR participants held this belief.

Table 7: Attitudes to gender inequality	MRR results	NCAS 2017
Attitudes to gender inequality (% agree)		
Promoting rigid gender roles, stereotypes and expressions		
A woman has to have children to be fulfilled	15%	8%
Undermining women's independence and decision-making in public life		
On the whole, men make better political leaders than women	14%	14%
Undermining women's independence and decision-making in private life		
Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household	13%	16%
Condoning male peer relationships involving aggression and disrespect towards women		
I think it's natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his male friends	16%	34%
Denying gender inequality is a problem		
Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia	31%	40%

Attitudes to violence against women

Table 8 compares the MRR and NCAS results in relation to statements exploring attitudes to violence against women.

These results show that in contrast to the more promising results above in relation to gender inequality, in the private sphere, the MRR participants were:

- *more likely* than the general population to believe that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family
- *more likely* than the general population to believe that it's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together
- *more likely* than the general population to believe that it is shameful for her family if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders.

The 2013 NCAS results found similar significant differences between the views of the general population and the N-MESC population, with the

N-MESC population more than three times likely to believe that women should stay in a violent relationship in order to keep the family together and almost 2.5 times more likely to believe that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family. (VicHealth, 2015)

Table 8: Attitudes to violence against women	MRR results	NCAS 2017
Attitudes to violence against women (% agree)		
Attitudes concerning the family and intimate partner violence		
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	20%	12%
It's a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together	10%	4%
Minimising violence against women by placing it beyond the law		
In my opinion, if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders it is shameful for her family	20%	13%

Discussion

This section of the report discusses the findings and implications to emerge from the evaluation of the MRR project.

Strengths of the model

Community engagement model

'*Efforts to prevent violence against women among CALD communities are most likely to be successful when communities themselves lead and are engaged in them.*' (AMES, n.d.)

The Mutual Relational Respect project employed a community-engagement model to reach out to the community. Critical to this was the engagement and training of community facilitators. The training workshops were implemented through the extensive networks of the ACHRH and the community networks of the facilitators. This was an important and successful strategy for reaching communities. Rather than an external organisation with no relationship to the communities, known relationships enabled the workshops to be delivered to community groups. Through the facilitators, these sessions were organised with community groups, on an outreach basis. The workshops were delivered as part of regular meetings or get-togethers and help not only to serve the information-sharing purpose of the community groups, it ensured that the workshops are delivered in a friendly and comfortable setting to a cohesive and familiar group.

With these community connections, there is a capacity to informally monitor the impacts of the training and to identify further interest in exploring the issues. For example, the Telegu Community of South Asia reported that '*Despite only 20 people attending the workshop, the message spread across the community with the Facebook information reaching 1,000 people and requests made for three further workshops.*'

Further, as noted in research '*All groups have factors that both protect against and increase the risk of violence against women. Preventing violence against women involves identifying and strengthening existing protective factors as well as addressing new or heightened risks associated with exposure to Anglo-Australian and globalised cultures*'. (AMES, n.d.) Working from within communities, with strong links to communities, enables the work to be undertaken with an informed view of both protective factors and risks.

Primary prevention

Primary prevention is a long-term collaborative effort and real population-level change will only occur over a sustained period of time. Achieving such change will be challenging and will require the concerted effort of all funders, policy makers, and organisations working at the national and/or state/ territory level. (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, 2015)

The MRR workshops are one component of the myriad of primary prevention investments occurring across the community. The workshops have increased awareness in the community about the drivers of family violence, and the results show some change in attitudes have occurred. The MRR workshop development, delivery and content have focused on the essential actions to reduce the gendered drivers of violence against women:

1. Challenging the condoning of violence against women
2. Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

3. Fostering positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
4. Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
5. Promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life.

To make change 'stick', the *Change the story* framework notes that a multi-setting approach helps strengthen the impact of different prevention initiatives, providing a mutually-reinforcing effect. The majority of MRR participants are employed or studying. They are members of the general community. Through their day to day life, their work and their studies, they are also exposed to prevention of violence against women messages and campaigns.

Challenges

Attitudinal change is a long-term process

'Changing attitudes and improving knowledge takes time.' (ANROWS, 2018)

The NCAS 2017 results show that Australians' knowledge of, and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality are gradually improving. (ANROWS, 2018) However, this in the context of considerable information and other campaigns for the general community, and in spite of progress made, ANROWS notes that there remain areas of concern.

The 'Change the Story' framework allows a timeframe of ten years and more for change to be evident.

The results from the MRR workshops provide indicative data of changing knowledge and attitudes among the participant groups. However, primary prevention research strongly recommends the need for on-going, mutually reinforcing interventions, as well as longer-term monitoring and evaluation to identify longer-term effects.

Primary prevention in CALD communities

'There is a need to ensure that universal interventions reach and are relevant to CALD communities, as well as to implement mutually reinforcing activity specifically targeted to those

CALD communities unlikely to be reached by universal interventions.' (AMES, n.d.)

While most MRR workshop participants were employed or studying, participants also included those who are engaged in home duties, retired and unemployed. Further, 69% of participants spoke a language other than English at home. While many MRR participants are likely to be 'reached' by universal campaigns, the MRR project is an example of an intervention, developed, designed and delivered in a way that 'specifically targets the communities unlikely to be reached by universal interventions.' (AMES, n.d.)

Implications for the future

Continue to build on the strengths of the MRR project

The MRR project is an extension of other projects undertaken by the ACHRH and employs the successful methods developed through that work including:

- using a community-engaged and community-driven approach
- engaging community groups and community members across the life-cycle from young people through to seniors
- developing the capacity of women and men in the community as community facilitators and advocates for the prevention of violence against women
- developing culturally-informed and relevant hypothetical case examples to prompt discussion and reflection
- using non-judgmental and encouraging approaches to engage the whole community in the conversations
- using successful and flexible methods for the workshop, including the discussions around case histories which can be tailored to explore key topics to illustrate and explore the prevention of violence against women

These features are consistent with research about successful approaches to preventing violence against women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities:

'Engaging local knowledge and collaborating closely with the priority community in the

development of programs to prevent violence against women has also been found to increase community empowerment, capacity building, and, importantly, sustainability…This approach ensures that family violence prevention strategies are contextually relevant to their priority population, thereby optimising their impact.' (Joyce et al, 2016)

Build on positive trends and address areas of concern

The results from the NCAS show change in knowledge and attitudes across the general population is slow and incremental. The 2017 NCAS showed that 'knowledge and attitudes are tracking in the direction of positive change' but that there is no room for complacency and there are some areas that raise cause for concern.

The MRR results showed that the workshops enhanced knowledge and shifted some attitudes towards a more positive trend than the NCAS general population data, others that remained the same and some areas that indicated greater priority. As the MRR survey provide post-workshop reactions only, the data is indicative only. The data suggests that the workshops:

- increase participants' knowledge of violence against women, including non-physical forms of violence, prevalence of violence against women and resources
- challenge attitudes to gender inequality and to violence against women.

The areas where results showed little change or cause for concern were in relation to:

- challenging male peer relations
- attitudes concerning the family and intimate partner violence, particularly the view that 'it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship'.

Coercive demands for dowry before, during or after marriage was included in the Victoria FVPA in March 2019. Participants who were largely comprised of South Asian heritage were asked to indicate their attitudes to the practice of dowry. Around two-thirds of participants were opposed and 70% of participants agreed that 'dowry is a socially evil practice'. Twenty per cent of participants felt that dowry gifts have to be given,

indicating the pressures of societal compulsion as a key factor in the practice.

These results should inform future priorities of primary prevention work in the South Asian communities targeted through the MRR project.

Continue the work

The National Plan recognises that taking a primary prevention to violence against women approach is a 'long-term and intergenerational endeavour' requiring multiple, cross-sectoral, mutually reinforcing strategies.

While there is no 'one size fits all' approach to prevention programming, to be effective, such programs must be:

- inclusive
- long-term
- multi-sectoral, multi-setting, and multi-component
- addressing drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women
- tailored to audience. (Our Watch, 2017)

Ensure the cultural relevance and competence of the primary prevention activities with CALD communities

At the same time, research notes that:

- there has been limited activity to PVAW in CALD communities to date and existing efforts tend to have been one-off, stand-alone projects, rather than part of a coordinated program of mutually reinforcing strategies. (AMES, 2016)
- the prevention of violence against women and children in culturally and linguistically diverse settings is a highly complex and nuanced issue which requires flexible and culturally adaptive frameworks. Understanding the unique needs of culturally diverse groups is integral to developing culturally competent, meaningful, effective approaches to working with communities on this important issue. (Joyce et al, 2016)

Research and practice underscore the importance of working in partnership and in culturally competent ways with CALD communities.

Conclusion

The MRR project involved the successful delivery of 11 MRR workshops.

Over 220 people participated in the MRR workshops. ACHRH worked with seven South Asian community groups and one local council to deliver the workshop to local leaders from culturally diverse backgrounds. Seven community members were trained as facilitators and assisted in the delivery of the workshops.

The MRR project has built on the community engagement methods and knowledge in relation to primary prevention work with South Asian communities developed over the past ten years.

The project was overseen by a Steering Committee comprising 15 key community partners, and a smaller Participant Engagement Sub-Committee.

The aims of the project to successfully engage with key stakeholders and the local community and to use culturally relevant approaches were clearly met through the process followed to establish the project.

The MRR workshop content was developed using a primary prevention of violence against women framework, focussing on actions to reduce the gendered drivers of violence against women:

- Challenging the condoning of violence against women
- Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- Fostering positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
- Promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life.

The content of the workshops and the results from the MRR survey show that the project was also able to address specific domestic and family violence issues within the communities. The workshops informed and challenged participants on issues around gender inequality. Changes in knowledge and attitude were evident from the results, however, the results also indicate that some attitudes did not change. This in itself is not surprising, given that attitudinal change to the issues around violence against women is known to require long-term work, and a short-term and one-off intervention is unlikely to achieve this. The results indicate the need to address areas of concern, in particular attitudes indicating beliefs that domestic violence is a private matter, that it is a woman's duty to stay in a violent relationship to keep the family together and that it is shameful for her family if a woman reports abuse by her partner to outsiders.

In other words, while the MRR project successfully reached the communities, in order to increase and sustain the outcomes, on-going primary prevention work is required. The MRR evaluation is consistent with research in this field which notes that community development strategies are time intensive; strongly dependent on establishing relationships and building capacity within communities and require longer funding periods to achieve this and enhance the prospect of sustainability. (Joyce, 2016)

For that reason, the key recommendation from the evaluation is that on-going, community engaged and culturally relevant work is funded with longer timeframes and a focus on evaluation, to ensure that the outcomes and priorities of primary prevention work in culturally diverse communities is documented.

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