



## **PARTNERING WITH CALD MEN TOOLBOX - TOOLS TO BUILD AFRICAN-AUSTRALIAN MEN AS LEADERS IN THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **EXTRACT**

#### **Key issues in working with men from immigrant and refugee communities in preventing violence against women (2016: 27-27)**

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A more complex understanding of ‘culture’ translates into the development of effective violence prevention strategies in a number of ways:

**1. Use a mix of strategies, making sure to not only target immigrant and refugee men as members of ethnic communities who are circumscribed by ‘cultural’ factors.**

While it is important to engage men within their ethnic communities, it is equally important to know that this is not sufficient. Immigrant and refugee men are also members of workplaces, educational institutions, neighbourhoods and sports clubs. Mainstream approaches that target men in a range of settings should thus be inclusive of immigrant and refugee men, not only extending the reach of their existing programs but ensuring that the programs are appropriate to the diversity of Australian men.

**2. Strategies should be framed by an understanding that ‘culture’ is not necessarily pitted against ‘feminism’.**

Immigrant and refugee men should be encouraged to promote gender equity as an option that exists within their communities and cultures, rather than as a concept that only belongs to a more progressive mainstream.

**3. ‘Culture’ should not be used to justify and promote violence against women under any circumstance or context. Engagement with immigrant and refugee men should build on community values and norms, while ensuring that cultural justifications for violence and/or cultural values that reinforce violence against women are identified and addressed.**

The work of the Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) not only provides a guide for an understanding of violence against Muslim women in the context of contested interpretations of Islam, but also of the impacts of migration and socio-economic disadvantage (Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights 2011). In this frame, culture is contextualised and thus understood in a more complex way.

**4. Include a global human rights and social justice perspective in the engagement of immigrant and refugee men. Framing prevention messages around global human rights will allow immigrant and refugee men to see the link between violence prevention and gender inequality, specifically as it relates to structural and institutional inequities, and in a range of countries around the world.**

Using the language of rights and social justice allows men to take an ethical and political stance for which they can feel proud. In addition, a global human rights and social justice approach facilitates the building of coalitions between women's and men's groups that are working toward a common aim.

**5. Convey positive and meaningful messages, using concrete examples rather than abstract concepts.**

For example, rather than focusing on abstract concepts of 'men's responsibility', immigrant and refugee men's involvement should be linked to their existing social, cultural and family responsibilities. Placing emphasis on the positive community, family and social relationships that flow from gender equity will allow men to adopt a more active role and act as agents and facilitators of change within their own and other spheres of influence, including other migrant communities and the wider Australian community.

**6. Further, the benefits of prevention work should be couched in terms of achieving long-term gains and solutions. Many of the issues relating to the gender inequities experienced by immigrant and refugee communities, such as racism and discrimination, require ongoing work and advocacy. Prevention works needs consistency of action, especially when aimed at institutional and structural change.**

**7. Interrogate and negotiate masculinities**

Migrant men's relationship to patriarchy is patterned differently to that of Australian-born men and attention should therefore be paid to the ways in which male domination in immigrant and refugee communities manifests itself differently within cultures, including diaspora, newly arrived, refugee and established migrant communities. Migrant men's multiple oppressions and privilege can shape their willingness and capacity to engage in prevention efforts.

Migrant men's experience of racism, discrimination and violence can be underpinned by the following:

- Pre-migration experiences, including violence and trauma resulting from war and conflict in their country of birth, can impact on men's sense of identity.
- Precarious visa/legal status can place restrictions on migrant men's access to services and affect their sense of autonomy and control. Men on temporary visas, for example, may find it difficult to see themselves as agents of change if they do not have voting rights.
- Ethnicity and race or being 'visibly' other can make it difficult for men to attain the privileges of traditional white masculinity.
- Social exclusion/isolation can affect all migrants in all spheres of daily lives but can be more acutely felt by those who are refugees and men from new and emerging communities with few support networks.
- Domestic relationships can impact on the ways migrant men may negotiate their 'breadwinner' masculinity.

Due to a lack of research in this area, our understandings of the specific masculinities of the diversity of immigrant and refugee men, and how these relate both to hegemonic masculinity and to diverse femininities, are extremely limited. In this context, it can be difficult to sort stereotyped representations of immigrant and refugee men from the reality of these men's lived experiences. It is important to recognise these limitations as we go about our work of developing, implementing and evaluating engagement strategies.