

Getting to action on violence against migrant and refugee women

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Background

- Research with migrant and refugee women in Australia is limited
- Research has tended to focus on specific cultural communities in specific places
- Very little research that cuts across the entire migration program (ie. inclusive of all visa classes)
- Very little work looks at the experience of migrant and refugee women who live outside capital cities
- Building capacity of migrant and refugee women and their communities to actively participate in research will support translation of evidence to action



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ASPIRE

Analysing Safety and Place in
Immigrant and Refugee Experience

Sadness behind closed doors
Photo: Reeta Verma



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Aims

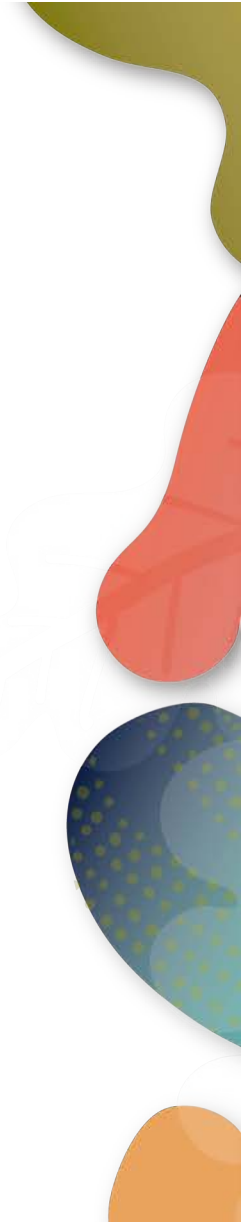
The project's overall aim is to increase understanding of the nature and dynamics of violence against migrant and refugee women in different Australian contexts. Specific research questions include:

1. What are migrant and refugee women's **experiences** of family violence and help-seeking, in selected geographic locations in Australia?
2. What are the **local barriers and facilitators** to migrants and refugees accessing violence prevention and support services in different settings?
3. What **opportunities** exist for supporting **community-led responses** to family violence against migrant and refugee women?



Methods

- Research team included 20 trained bilingual, bicultural health educators along with co-investigators from the three partner organisations
- **46 in-depth interviews** with migrant women who had experienced family violence
- **Key informant interviews with 57 professionals** from the family violence, settlement, multicultural, interpreting, and law and justice sectors
- **26 focus group discussions** with groups of women (18) and men (8) from different cultural communities
- A **photovoice** project with 10 migrant women



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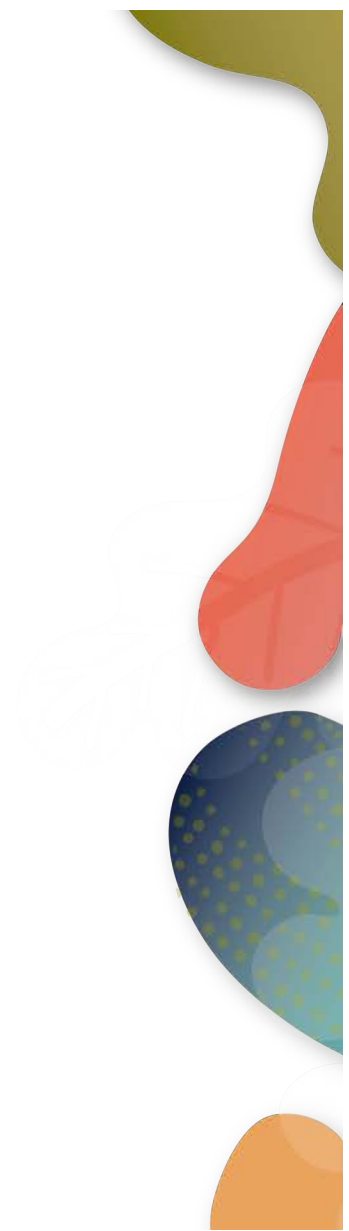
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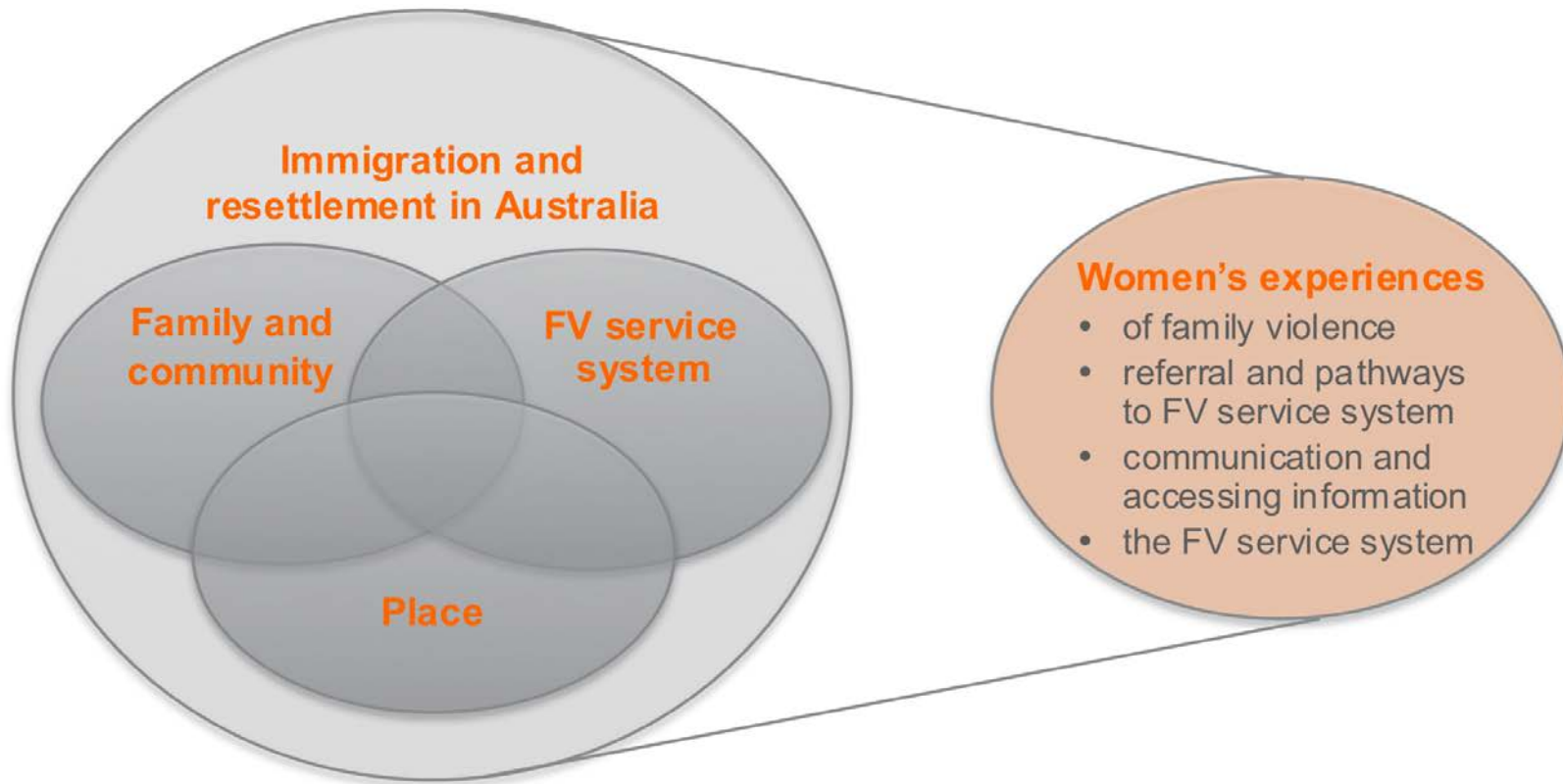
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Findings – women’s experiences in context



Importance of context

Immigration context

- Migration leads to many women becoming socially isolated
- Overwhelming impact of visa class and immigration status, with immigration often establishing or reinforcing a dynamic of women's dependency on men

Family and community context

- Women who leave violent partners or take action against them often face community ostracism
- Some participants described normalisation of family violence



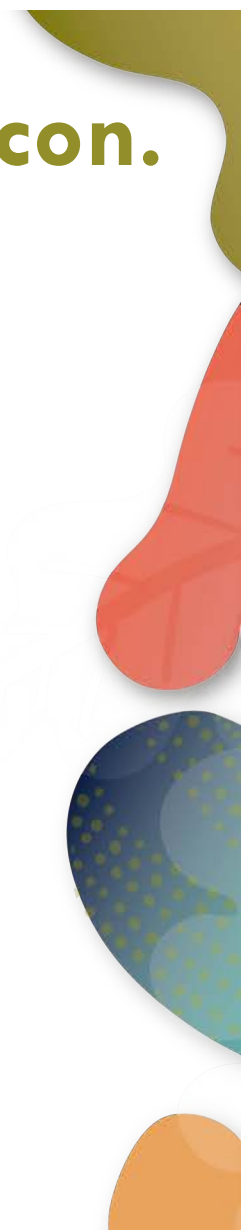
Importance of context con.

Service system context

- Services under immense pressure in both states, undermining ability to respond to migrant women's intensive support needs and high costs
- Communication, policy and practice gaps between the family violence and settlement sectors

Place-based context

- Regional areas (including all of Tasmania) face constraints because of limited availability of key services
- Secondary resettlement to regional centres also a consequence of family violence



Women's experiences

Family violence

- Most women reported partner violence, but also violence perpetrated by fathers, siblings and extended family. Perpetrators had a range of backgrounds
- All forms of violence reported, including immigration-related violence and particular forms of financial abuse

Communicating and accessing information

- Challenges not just about English, but also about unfamiliarity with the law and 'the system'
- A range of challenges associated with interpreters and the interpreting industry, including detrimental impacts on interpreters themselves

Women's experiences con.

Seeking help

- Women inventive, resourceful and opportunistic in seeking help
- Initial contact often through police but also family violence crisis services, employers, health services, teachers, religious and community leaders, family and friends

With the service system

- Accommodation a major challenge with women moved frequently, particularly if on temporary visa
- Inconsistent experiences with police and justice responses in both states



Implications

Action is required to:

- Amend immigration policy to recognise range of perpetrators and remove barriers to Centrelink, Medicare
- Strengthen links between settlement and family violence services
- Ensure definitions and risk assessment tools are relevant to migrant and refugee populations
- Recognise interpreters as an integral part of the family violence system
- Ensure women can access mainstream as well as specialist multicultural family violence services
- Develop a bilingual, bicultural workforce

MuSeS

Multicultural and Settlement services
Supporting women experiencing violence

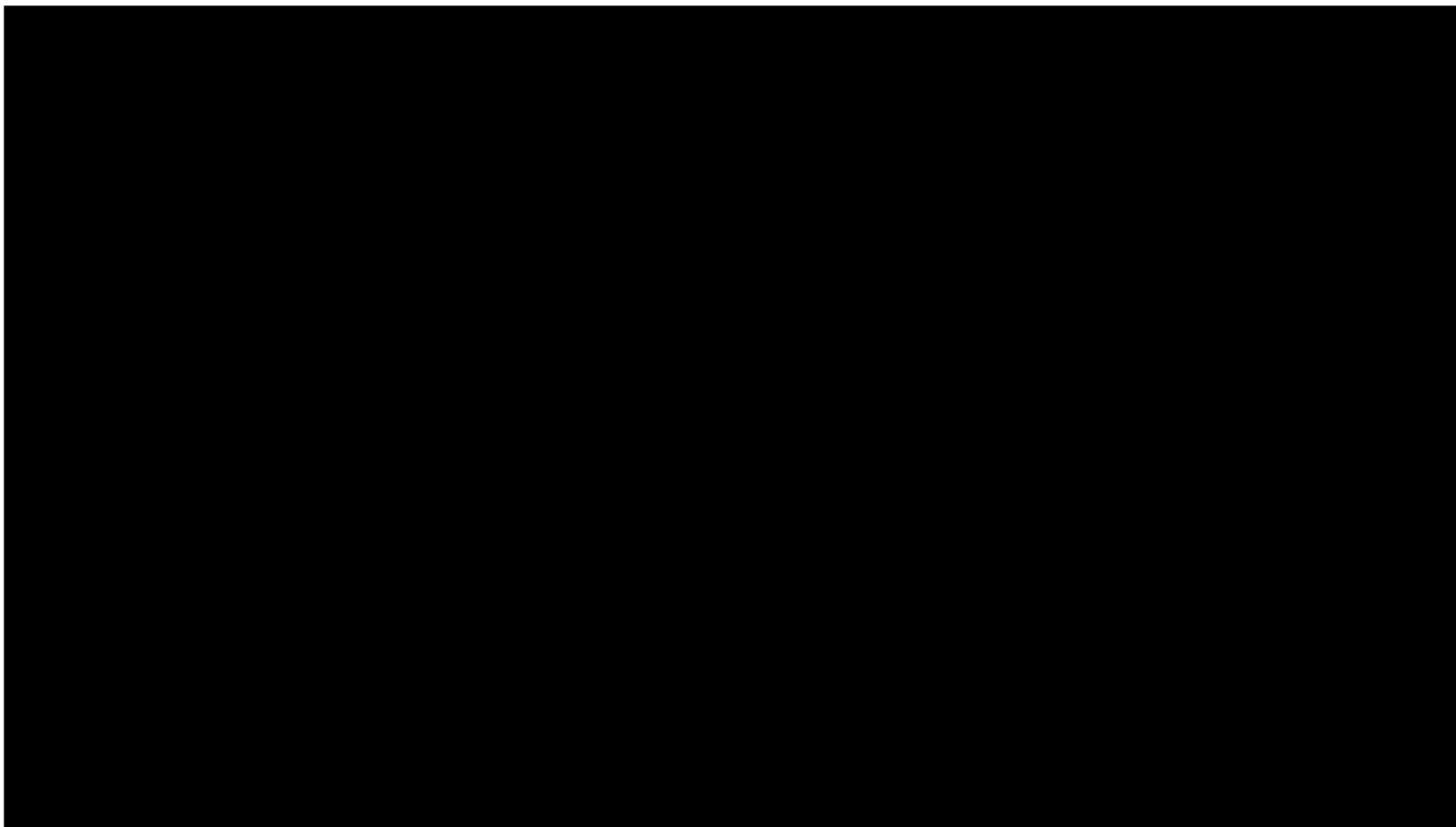
- How do settlement and multicultural services currently support women and children experiencing violence?
- What factors strengthen or undermine the capacity of settlement and multicultural services to provide support and early intervention; understand and respond to interactions between mental health and family violence?
- What opportunities are there for the delivery of effective interventions to support women and children experiencing violence through settlement and multicultural services?

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Acknowledgements

This material was produced with funding from the Australian Government and the Australian state and territory governments. The ASPIRE project gratefully acknowledges the financial and other support it has received from Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) towards this research, and through it, the Australian Government and Australian state and territory governments. The views reported in this presentation are those of the authors and cannot be attributed to ANROWS or to the Australian Government, or any Australian state or territory government.

Acknowledgements

Our state-based ASPIRE Advisory Groups:

- Migrant Resource Centre Southern Tasmania; Migrant Resource Centre Northern Tasmania; Australian Red Cross Tasmania; Northern Tasmania Refugee Health Clinic; Hobart Women's Shelter; Sexual Assault Support Service Tasmania; the University of Tasmania (Public Health and Global Health and the Institute for the Study of Social Change); Tasmania Police; Tasmanian Department of Justice (Safe at Home); Family Violence Counselling and Support Service; and the Royal Hobart Hospital.
- In Touch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence; Domestic Violence Victoria; Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights; CoHealth; Foundation House; Gippsland Women's Health; Loddon Mallee Women's Health; Women's Health in the North; Women's Health in the South East; Integrated Family Violence Partnership Southern Melbourne; Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Advisory Committee; Gippsland Family Violence Integrated Regional Steering Committee; City of Greater Dandenong; and the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Department of Premier and Cabinet.