



**MIGRANT WOMEN’S RIGHTS PROJECT**  
**DISCUSSION PAPER #1**

***An iterative learning journey  
to deconstruct “trafficking”***

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## Table of Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
II.	STARTING POINTS.....	3
III.	HISTORY.....	6
IV.	REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY.....	10
V.	LEARNINGS FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE.....	12
VI.	ITERATION #1: GENDERED ECONOMIC COERCION.....	17
VII.	CONTINUING TENSIONS.....	18
	APPENDIX A: Migrant Women’s Rights Project Terms of Reference .....	20
	APPENDIX B: Migrant Women’s Rights Project Logic Model.....	28

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Migrant Women's Rights Project is a five-year project (2016-2021) supported by the Canadian Women's Foundation under its Anti-Trafficking program. The Project is lead by the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and is being carried out in partnership with the FCJ Refugee Centre, The Neighbourhood Office<sup>1</sup>, Migrant Mothers Project, Women's College Hospital and the YWCA Toronto.<sup>2</sup>

The Project members are a consortium of concerned service providers, agencies and researchers who separately work with women with precarious immigration status. These migrant women face intersecting dynamics of oppression in relation to economic, legal, social and health security, including difficulties with labour migration and gender-based violence. As a result, they are subject to, or at risk for, gendered forms of economic and sexual coercion.

The Project is operating and growing simultaneously from two different points of engagement.

1. Through outreach to, collaboration with, and direction from migrant women, the Project is redesigning and developing coordinated and collaborative support and service delivery systems that are responsive to the specific needs of migrant women experiencing or at risk of economic and sexual coercion. This stream of the Project seeks to increase the extent to which community supports/services are accessible to and accessed by migrant women experiencing coercion.
2. Through participatory action research, the Project aims to enrich the research knowledge, data and public policy analysis on "trafficking". The Project uses an explicitly intersectional and anti-oppression analysis. It aims to deconstruct the dominant understanding of "trafficking" in order to develop an analysis that addresses the systemic root causes of migrant women's economic, legal and social marginalization.

Throughout, the Project prioritizes migrant women's agency, self-determination and safety.

This Discussion Paper emerges from the Project's research and policy stream. The Project research unpacks and examines the assumptions that underlie the

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office

<sup>2</sup> The Terms of Reference for the Project are attached at Appendix A. The Logic Model for the Project is attached at Appendix B.

dominant understanding and legal regulation of “trafficking”. The objective is to develop a framework that reflects and is responsive to women’s lived experience.

Our analysis remains a work in progress. This Discussion Paper tracks the iterative evolution in our thinking in five sections:

- **Starting Points:** the initial tension that spurred this research;
- **History:** a brief review of the legal history of “trafficking”
- **Learnings:** our initial learnings from consultations with women who have lived experience and interviews with key service providers;
- **Iteration 1:** Gendered Economic Coercion; and
- **Continued Tensions:** Policy Concepts and Legal Practice.

This analysis is by no means theoretical. It aims to generate practical actions and policies that provide real support and security for migrant women and that inform strategies for collective mobilization. Recognizing the ongoing iterative nature of this work, this paper does not represent a final analysis. Instead it aims to facilitate discussion about the meaning of “trafficking” and to encourage a collective exchange of ideas.

The Migrant Women’s Rights Project is part of a cohort of eight projects across Canada that are funded by the Canadian Women’s Foundation, each of which is supporting different communities of women and girls who have experienced “trafficking” and other forms of gendered economic and sexual coercion.<sup>3</sup> The ideas in this paper have been workshopped with this broader cohort. This paper is written from the perspective of the Migrant Women’s Rights Project and the community of women it serves. But it is hoped that the paper will be of broader assistance to other communities of Indigenous and local women, girl children and youth, in identifying common concerns and root causes and in building critical intersectional feminist conversations, strategies, collaborations, supports and allyship to address women’s gendered economic and sexual coercion.

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<sup>3</sup> The seven other cohort grantee projects are YWCA Halifax: Nova Scotia Trafficking Elimination Partnership (NSTEP); PLEA Community Services of BC: OnyxWorks; Mouvement contre le viol et l’inceste: Mettre fin à la traite sexuelle; Fort Frances Tribal Health Area Services: Rebuilding Lives; Elizabeth Fry Society Edmonton: Tracy’s Project; Canadian Council for Refugees: Towards Justice for Trafficked Non-Citizen Women; and Ndinwemaaganang Endaawaag Inc.: Transitions Program.

## II. STARTING POINTS

In their separate areas of work, the Migrant Women's Rights Project partners observed patterns that revealed contradictions or tensions between women's lived experiences of coercion and the dominant social, legal and policy approaches to trafficking. These include:

1. Migrant women in economically and/or sexually coercive relationships generally do not self-identify as being "trafficked". The mismatch between the term and women's self-identification is a clear indication that deeper analysis is required.
2. The dominant image of "trafficking" presents women exclusively as victims and denies their agency. The dominant image is of a young white woman who has been abducted or defrauded by organized crime networks and coerced into the sex trade. While not denying the reality and seriousness of this form of coercion, and observing that it affects women of all races, it does not represent the complexity and diversity of ways by which economically and sexually coercive relationships arise. This creates problems at two levels:
  - a. First, it treats the coercive behaviour as isolated – as conduct that is a criminal aberration that indisputably falls far outside social norms. In doing so, it ignores the root causes of the coercion. It ignores how coercion is rooted in and even facilitated by existing economic and legal structures. At a societal level, then, anti-trafficking is a "safe" cause that draws support across the political spectrum because it does not challenge existing systems, structures and power.<sup>4</sup> Even if the rhetorical support for anti-trafficking measures does not translate into practical supports, it reinforces dominant social norms without examining or threatening the underlying systems of privilege and oppression that facilitate economic and sexual coercion.
  - b. Second, it creates a normative image of the "deserving victim". When women's real experiences and exercise of agency within exploitative relationships do not match this iconic image of the "trafficking victim", women are stigmatized, criminalized and denied

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, *Contemporary Slavery: Popular Rhetoric and Political Practice*, edited by Annie Bunting and Joel Quirk (UNB Press, 2017).

legal and social protection that is responsive to their real experiences.

3. Analysis of “trafficking” has been embedded in a deeply polarized discourse about commercial sexual activity. As a result, it is unable to bridge the fundamentally irreconcilable perspectives of sex workers and their allies on one side and abolitionists on the other.
4. Because migrant women who are in economically and/or sexually coercive relationships do not self-identify as “trafficking victims” and also because of social stigma with respect to sex work, many women do not access services that are labelled as “anti-trafficking” services. There are at least two dynamics at play.
  - a. Because some anti-trafficking initiatives are rooted in a frame of “rescue”, accessing them is in some cases contingent on women exiting the sex trade. The stigma and shaming (both real and anticipated) is a solid barrier to access. It may also put women at greater risk by (i) eliminating their sole source of income; (ii) removing them from their language community and informal networks of support/safety; and (iii) exacerbate their physical and social isolation.
  - b. In other circumstances, admitting to sexual coercion or participation in the sex trade may lead women to be ostracized, particularly within immigrant/migrant communities in which commercial sexual activity conflicts with the religious and/or social views of the community. As a result, coming forward for help can put migrant women at risk of losing their community-based social networks and support, thus heightening their isolation.
5. Public policy and law enforcement in relation to trafficking overwhelmingly emphasize sex trafficking. The existence of labour trafficking and how it interacts with sex trafficking is rarely addressed. The fact that these are not easily identifiable or mutually exclusive categories is also not adequately acknowledged or addressed in public policy and law.
6. Because the dominant image of trafficking is one of sex trafficking of victims by organized crime, criminal law is the primary legal response to trafficking.<sup>5</sup> This criminal law lens is unable to recognize or address the

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<sup>5</sup> Section 118 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, S.C. 2001, c. 27 also sets out a legal offence of human smuggling and trafficking which follows a similar conception of the offence. Section 118 provides:

systemic and structural roots that enable gendered economic and sexual coercion. The criminal law does not acknowledge or address the ways in which Canada's laws on immigration and labour migration create and sustain structures that facilitate the economic and sexual coercion and exploitation of migrant women.<sup>6</sup> Instead a criminal law frame offers comfort of believing that coercion that constitutes trafficking is aberrant behaviour rather than common and embedded in the legal labour market. It offers the privileged innocence of believing that if the "bad guys" are caught, the problem is solved.

7. Moreover, using criminal law as the dominant response to trafficking puts migrant women at heightened risk of being criminalized, detained and deported which means that seeking help – even when they have experienced criminal assaults – can put them and other women in their circle at greater risk. Migrant women's circles of support are also often entwined with webs of exploitation<sup>7</sup> and the precarity this creates is not easily addressed by the criminal law frame.
8. These tensions are currently being exacerbated as the "trafficking" frame becomes increasingly entrenched at both the international and domestic levels:
  - a. Internationally, following the UN's adoption in 2000 of the *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and the associated *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*,<sup>8</sup> trafficking has gained significant prominence in policy circles. This language is increasingly being adopted as a key frame for understanding women's experience of migration.<sup>9</sup>

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118 (1) No person shall knowingly organize the coming into Canada of one or more persons by means of abduction, fraud, deception or use or threat of force or coercion.

(2) For the purpose of subsection (1), organize, with respect to persons, includes their recruitment or transportation and, after their entry into Canada, the receipt or harbouring of those persons.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these legal structures, see Fay Faraday, [Profiting from the Precarious: How recruitment practices exploit migrant workers](#) (Metcalf Foundation, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> For example, their circles of support are often women in similar circumstances; or they may not have contacts and supports who speak their language outside the exploitative relationships they are in.

<sup>8</sup> UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, UN General Assembly Resolution 55/25, adopted 15 November 2000, ratified by Canada May 2002; Annex II, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ("Palermo Protocol")

<sup>9</sup> See for example the report produced by the ILO in collaboration with the Walk Free Foundation: *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage* (ILO, September 2017).

- b. Domestically in Canada, both the federal and provincial governments have embarked upon and committed significant funding towards anti-trafficking initiatives. In 2016, Ontario committed \$72 million to fund anti-trafficking initiatives in the province. But these initiatives, while investing in community responses, remain embedded in and reinforce the criminalization frame set out above.

In view of these tensions, the Project research hopes to generate an analytical framework that is better able to comprehend and address the complexity of women's experiences of coercion and the structural constraints within which women act. The fundamental question then is "can the notion of 'trafficking' be rehabilitated or do we need new language and a new framework in order to move forward?"

### III. HISTORY

As the Project began examining these tensions, we looked back at how the language of "trafficking" originated. As observed by one participant in a training session, the odd language of "trafficking" is used in very rare circumstances, typically to refer to the transfer and sale of illegal *commodities*. That it is used to describe the systemic economic and sexual exploitation of women and children sits uncomfortably in that frame. The more we examined the roots of this language, the more problematic its legacy became.

The contemporary discourse about trafficking cannot be separated from its historical roots in the Victorian era.<sup>10</sup> The language emerged in Western European and North American societies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It emerged at a time of rising urbanization, industrialization and immigration during which middle class women's mobility and economic agency were rising correspondingly. In the context of this destabilization of the "social order" and gendered social roles, "respectable" women's increased mobility and independence drove socially conservative fears about women's sexual autonomy and the spread of venereal diseases. This social anxiety was exacerbated by fears rooted in racial ideology. These fears intersected to drive concern about the "White Slave Trade" – fears that white women's sexual virtue was at risk from predatory male sexuality, particularly that of racialized male immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Political

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<sup>10</sup> There is significant academic writing about the origins of the White Slave Trade. For reference to how this debate played out in Canada, see Fay Faraday, *The Debate About Prostitution: A History of the Formation and Failure of Canadian Laws Against the Sex Trade, 1867-1917* (University of Toronto, MA Thesis, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Fears about the transnational nature of the "White Slave Trade" were heightened in 1880 and following with the report that English women under the age of 21 were working in legally recognized and regulated sex work in

mobilization, particularly by evangelical social gospel movements, gave rise to “vigilance societies” that sought to suppress the White Slave Trade. As a result, turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century law reforms transformed commercial sexual activity from a minor regulatory matter (i.e. low level nuisance and vagrancy offences) to a criminal offence. The rhetoric of the White Slave Trade also reinforced middle and upper class norms of respectability and gendered roles with respect to family and sexuality.

Through multilateral European diplomatic conferences beginning in 1899, the narrative of the White Slave Trade was reinforced as these states adopted a series of international instruments and conventions to suppress the White Slave Trade, including the following:

*1904 International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*

*1910 International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*

*1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children (League of Nations)*

*1933 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age (League of Nations)*

*1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (UN)*

The earliest of these instruments were declared by the European signatory states to apply to various colonies, dominions and protectorates, including Canada.

The framing of the social ill as the *White Slave Trade* was deliberate. Contemporary debate and reports show some disagreement with this but the dominant position expressed that the intent of suppressing the White Slave Trade was not to protect *all* women equally, but to protect *white European* women. The Legislative Commission report from the 1902 international conference identified the harm that the subsequent 1904 Agreement aimed to suppress as follows: “The victim procured in a northern country, conveyed across a central country, has been delivered up in a southern country.”<sup>12</sup>

These early agreements and conventions enshrined key elements of “trafficking” that continue to shape its contemporary characterization:

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France. See Jean Allain, “White Slave Traffic in International Law” (2017), 1:1 *Journal of Trafficking and Human Exploitation* 1 at p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> See Allain, above at p. 6, original 1902 documents cited at footnote 22. For a contemporary analysis of how this racialization plays out in practice, see Carol Nelson Butler, “The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking” (2015), 62 *UCLA Law Review* 1465

- they identify the sex trade as *per se* immoral;
- they define trafficking exclusively as sex trafficking;<sup>13</sup>
- they define trafficking as involving the transportation of women outside their local community, and particularly outside their home country;<sup>14</sup>
- they minimize women’s agency by emphasizing elements of enticement, fraud, violence, threats, and abuses of authority;<sup>15</sup> and
- they situate the response to trafficking as one of individual “rescue” and rehabilitation.<sup>16</sup>

This perspective continued in the first of the UN Convention on the issue. The preamble to the 1949 UN Convention states as follows:

“Whereas prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community”.<sup>17</sup>

This legacy continues to echo in the contemporary trafficking narrative. Its international condemnation is located in a convention expressly about transnational

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<sup>13</sup> 1902 International Agreement, Article 1 describes trafficking as “the procuring of women or girls *for immoral purposes*” [emphasis added]; 1910 *International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*, Articles 1 and 2 describe trafficking of women as being conducted “in order to gratify the passions of another person” and “for immoral purposes”.

<sup>14</sup> 1902 International Agreement, Article 1: describes trafficking “the procuring of women and girls for immoral purposes *abroad*” [emphasis added]; 1910 *International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*, Articles 1 and 2 describe trafficking of women as being constituting an offence “notwithstanding that the various acts constituting the offence may have been committed in different countries”.

<sup>15</sup> 1910 *International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic*, Articles 1 and 2 describe trafficking as a situation in which someone “in order to gratify the passions of another person, has procured, enticed, or led away, even with her consent, a women or girl under age, for immoral purposes” and a situation in which someone “in order to gratify the passions of another person, has by fraud, or by means of violence, threats, abuse of authority or any other method of compulsion, procured, enticed or led away a woman or girl over age, for immoral purposes”.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the 1902 International Agreement, Article 4 addresses the “repatriation” of the woman or girl who was trafficked. This “repatriation”, including involuntary repatriation of migrant women is echoed in contemporary Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) practices. Where CBSA officers have deemed that female migrant workers may be at risk of exploitation, they have refused the women entry at their port of arrival in Canada even though the women have arrived through legal channels and have been issued validly authorized work permits. While the refusal of entry may be motivated by notions of “rescue” from possible exploitation, the women’s repatriation – particularly when they have paid extortionate “recruitment fees” to obtain their jobs in Canada – can put them at significantly heightened personal and economic risk.

<sup>17</sup> *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*, Approved by General Assembly resolution 317 (IV) of 2 December 1949; Entry into force: 25 July 1951, Preamble. Emphasis added.

organized crime: the 2000 UN *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. The provisions specifically addressing trafficking are found in Annex II to the Convention which is called the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (“Palermo Protocol”). While the Palermo Protocol recognizes that trafficking extends beyond sexual exploitation to matters such as forced labour, slavery and the removal of organs, it retains the focus on abduction, fraud, deception and abuse of authority and continues to minimize women’s agency. The internationally accepted definition of trafficking, set out in Article 3 of the Protocol is as follows:

For the purposes of this Protocol, Article 3(b) and (b) provide:

- (a) ‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;<sup>18</sup>

The modern Protocol also remains anchored in a vision of trafficking that involves members of organized crime transporting women and children across national borders. Article 4 defines the scope of the Protocol’s application as follows:

This Protocol shall apply, except as otherwise stated herein, to the prevention, investigation and prosecution of the offences established in accordance with article 5 of this Protocol, where those offences are

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<sup>18</sup> *Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, Adopted by the UN General Assembly: 15 November 2000, by resolution 55/25; Entry into force: 29 September 2003; *Annex II: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (“Palermo Protocol”), Article 3. Emphasis added.

transnational in nature and involve an organized criminal group, as well as to the protection of victims of such offences.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY

Our examination of the history of “trafficking” exacerbated our discomfort with the term. The history reveals how deeply entrenched the concept is in ideologies that racialize crime and/or criminalize race; and how inextricable the concept of trafficking is from an abolitionist perspective.

And yet, the concept has traction. So how do we proceed?

To probe our assumptions, in several training/knowledge exchange sessions within the Clinic, with academic researchers and with other CWF grantees in the Anti-Trafficking program, we challenged participants to answer two questions as honestly and as precisely as possible:

1. “What is ‘trafficking’?” and
2. “Why do we care?” (More specifically: “What is the social harm at issue?”)

Individuals answered the questions silently to themselves. And while participants had immediate answers that jumped to mind, the challenge was not to stop with that first, immediate answer. Instead, each individual was asked to follow up with at least three further rounds of individual reflection challenging their response by asking “why do I think that?”; and with the next response asking again “and why do I think that?”, and asking again at least one more time before sharing responses collectively.

The reflection process uncovered many assumptions and contradictions in our individual and collective thinking.

Responses to the question “what is trafficking?” varied significantly including:

- sex trafficking;
- modern slavery;
- forced migration (transnational);
- exploitation;
- coercion;
- gender-based violence;
- exploitative work of any kind (not just sexual exploitation);
- coercion into any situation against one’s will;

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<sup>19</sup> *Palermo Protocol*, above, Article 4. Emphasis added.

- illegal drug trade; and
- targeting of marginalized groups.

What policy makers, front line workers and researchers think trafficking *is* will shape what they see and how they respond to it. The divergence in the answers, and the fact that in all knowledge exchange sessions participants had difficulty articulating a precise answer to the question is meaningful. It indicates that the word “trafficking” is nebulous enough that individuals fill it with their own assumptions or the images they are conditioned to see.

Responses to the question “why do we care” have been equally diverse, including:

- it is a human rights issue;
- it is violence against women;
- it targets and isolates marginalized people;
- it is a patriarchal system of control;
- we are all human;
- it could happen to anyone;
- it is a growing problem;
- it is painful and abusive;
- it is evil; and
- everyone deserves safe and dignified work.

What the responses overwhelmingly shared is their abstraction, their focus on immediate individual harms, and, frequently, a dislocation from an articulated systemic analysis. Participants in all knowledge exchange sessions talked about struggling to articulate how they understand what the precise social harm is. They commented that everyone knows that trafficking is bad but stopping to explain *why* it is bad was challenging.

But this is critical *practical* not *theoretical* work. The answer to the question “why” shapes what one thinks the resolution to the social problem would look like at both an individual and systemic level. The answer to the question “why” in practice channels the social and legal response to “trafficking” and resources devoted to achieving the desired response or outcome.

The reflection process itself has practical impacts. It imposes rigour on individual and collective analysis. It reveals assumptions that have been internalized and areas where analysis is lacking. The process also uncovers points of disagreement which then create starting points to bridge conversations between constituencies with differing views.

This unpacking and reflection is a process of deconditioning that strengthens the capacity to listen deeply to women’s own narratives of their experiences and to craft an appropriate trauma-informed *response*. It helps build self-awareness to pre-empt the dangers of unexamined *reaction*.

## V. LEARNINGS FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE

What emerged from consultations with the Migrant Women’s Rights Project partners and migrant women with lived experience is that “trafficking” is a product of immigration and labour market systems that systemically discriminate against women. Women’s precarity begins in their home community.

Around the globe (including in Canada) labour markets remain deeply sex segregated; women have more restricted access to education, training and economic security; women’s socially accepted roles are narrower; women are responsible for the majority of unpaid care work; and women may face restrictions on their mobility.

At the same time, colonialism in Canada and around the globe has displaced Indigenous people and nations from their lands; suppressed and attacked their cultures and communities; wreaked environmental devastation on their territories; and disrupted Indigenous economies while simultaneously excluding Indigenous people from economic activities that would ensure their security. Policies, political discourse and programs that make a sharp distinction between global and local exploitation overlook the colonial nature of gender-based violence and the systemic economic and labour structures that condition and maintain gendered economic and sexual coercion. Particular focus and analysis, which is beyond the scope of the Migrant Women’s Rights Project, must be brought to the violent and deadly gendered impacts of colonialism on Indigenous women on Turtle Island. However, it is valuable to flag that many migrant women are Indigenous in the places from which they have migrated. To the extent that colonial displacement is an experience shared by both Indigenous and migrant women who are in relationships of gendered economic coercion it may provide a basis for common understanding, collaboration and allyship.

Women’s migration – both transnationally and within the domestic context – is overwhelmingly driven by poverty and lack of economic opportunity in their home community. Their risk can be significantly exacerbated by the narrower gendered and racialized migration opportunities for women, which channel them into particularly precarious forms of migration.

For women migrating transnationally, this inequality is exacerbated because access to the most secure forms of permanent immigration is structured around criteria

that favour male life experiences (for example, formal credentialed education rather than informal learning; formal paid labour rather than informal or unpaid labour; wealth rather than wages). As a result, women pursuing permanent immigration are often legally designated, and constructed, as “dependents” of the principal applicant. Their access to language training and work may correspondingly be subordinated to those of the principal applicant (frequently a male spouse). This reinforces migrant women’s isolation.

Within temporary migration, women’s opportunities are also more constrained than men’s both by social expectations in women’s countries of origin and by the way that Canada’s employer-driven temporary migration systems reinforce gendered and racialized notions of who is “suitable” for what kind of work (see, for example, the overwhelming presence of Filipina women in migrant care work). Women migrating to do working class jobs can only enter Canada on work permits that tie them to a single employer. Working for any other employer who is not named on their permit is an immigration violation that can be grounds for deportation. However, when migrant women try to leave abusive work situations, they are unable to work legally until they receive another government-authorized work permit with an employer who is authorized by the government to hire a migrant worker. This process generally takes more than 6 months and the migrant worker is not permitted to work while waiting for a new permit. As a migrant worker in this situation must work or starve, workers often move back and forth between documented and undocumented status.

Despite the fact that sex work is legal in Canada, it is not possible for a migrant woman to legally work in the sex trade very broadly defined. Under Ministerial Instructions issued in July 2012, Canada ceased to issue work permits “to work for an employer that is in a sector where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a risk of sexual exploitation”. These directions were later formalized in regulations effective 31 December 2013 which prohibit work permits from being issued “to work for an employer who, on a regular basis, offers striptease, erotic dance, escort services or erotic massages”.<sup>20</sup> As a result, any migrant woman with temporary status in Canada is at risk of deportation if she is working in the sex trade.

The combination of the tied work permits and the prohibition on sex work is exacerbated by the fact that laws and policies against predatory recruitment of migrant workers are not rigorously enforced. As a result, migrant workers are routinely charged thousands of dollars for minimum wage jobs in Canada and are forced to pay back “recruitment loans” at extortionate interest rates, even if their planned job falls through. The inability to earn enough in jobs where non-compliance with minimum employment

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<sup>20</sup> *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*, s. 200(3)(g.1).

standards is common can put some women under increased pressure to work outside their documented work to meet their recruitment payments.

Finally, as borders around the world harden to restrict immigration and migration, women facing real economic and social precarity in their home country are forced into increasingly risky forms of migration, including paying people to help them cross borders in search of safety and employment.

This is the context from which women and Project partners reported a broad range of experiences that could be classified as “trafficking”. To ensure the safety and confidentiality of women with lived experiences, the range of experiences identified have been anonymized and listed together without distinguishing whether the pattern was reported by a service provider or an individual woman.

What emerged is that there are an infinite variety of ways in which women in migration face specifically gendered forms of economic and sexual coercion. The iconic representation of trafficking does exist – women and girls coerced by criminal networks into the sex trade. But women’s experiences cannot be neatly captured by any single image of what “trafficking” is. They also include:

- forced marriage in which a woman is sexually and economically abused by a “spouse” and/or his family.
  - This can be exacerbated by immigration criteria, such as during the Syrian refugee crisis, which, as part of a broader anti-terrorism and national security agenda discouraged single males from migrating. In these contexts women have been subjected to forced marriages as a means to save collectivist communities from lethal conditions at home. Forced marriages also routinely take place in conflict zones as a way to sanction rape and to provide sexual access for male combatants on all sides of a conflict. Peacekeeping forces have also been implicated in trafficking in conflict zones.
- sexual and economic exploitation by family members.
  - This may include women whose families in their home countries, through grooming and various levels of coercion, have required them to work in the sex trade to support the family. It may include both young women and older women who are sent to live with an extended family member and who on arriving in Canada are forced to work in sexually and economically exploitative conditions for the family or others connected with the family.

- migrant workers who through a variety of circumstances become subject to trafficking including but not limited to migrant workers:
  - who are employed on legally authorized work permits who face sexual and economic exploitation in that work (the variations on this are infinite, including withholding of travel documents; wage theft, including complete non-payment of wages; control over movement; isolation; being forced by their legal employer to do work that is not authorized by their work permit including work for family, friends and other employers; women who are forced to have sex with their employers in order to keep their jobs and/or housing)
  - who arrive in Canada to find the job they were promised doesn't exist who are then coerced into the sex trade or economically exploitative work;
  - who have needed to pay predatory recruitment fees (which are illegal under Canada's temporary migration programs) in order to get jobs in Canada and who are, as a result, in debt bondage;
  - who are forced to do undocumented work after they have left abusive documented employment and while waiting for a new work permit; or
  - who are forced to do undocumented work beyond their legally documented work in order to pay back "recruitment fees";
  
- international students who have experienced various forms of trafficking, including students
  - who, like migrant workers, have been forced to pay illegal fees to secure study permits in Canada and face similar coercion as outlined above;
  - who have arrived on study permits but have actually been brought to Canada by employers to work in exploitative labour in conditions of forced labour;
  
- women who have paid intermediaries to bring them to Canada either with the intention of working in the sex trade or with the intention of finding other work with which to support themselves;
  
- unaccompanied youth who find themselves in sexually or economically exploitative labour as they try to support themselves; and
  
- women who enter Canada identified as family members but are in fact enslaved.

Five key learnings emerge from this:

1. The patterns of economic and sexual coercion are infinite and opportunistic. Those who seek to profit from women's economic and/or sexual exploitation will change their practices as different enforcement or regulatory processes are adopted. For example, where there is increased regulation of processes for temporary labour migration, in some cases profiteers have shifted to bringing exploited workers in as international students. Accordingly, undue focus on the formal channels by which women enter Canada can lead us to miss or mischaracterize the reality of what is transpiring.
2. Paying for transit does not equal trafficking. The fact that a woman has paid someone to bring them across borders does not mean she is being trafficked. For some women, this may be the only way that they can leave a place where their life is precarious and arrive in Canada.
3. Sex work does not equal trafficking. Targeted regulatory scrutiny (such as by-law ticketing) and policing of women engaged in sex work results in racial profiling and harassment of women who may be voluntarily engaged in sex work. Asian sex workers are particularly subject to racial profiling and excessive surveillance and enforcement in this respect.
4. Legal migration can in fact be considered state-facilitated trafficking. Concentration on regulating sex trafficking ignores all the ways in which Canada's formal temporary labour migration policies facilitate and normalize experiences that meet the legal definition of trafficking. Exploitation in this context continues both due to government decisions to maintain existing provisions such as tied work permits in the face of decades of evidence of how they facilitate abuse; and through government failure to adequately protect against known exploitation such as occurs through transnational recruitment.
5. Sex work and forced/exploitative labour are not separate. Thinking about sex trafficking and labour trafficking as separate experiences overlooks the fact that the same woman may be experiencing both simultaneously or at different points during her work day or work week. Thinking about sex trafficking and labour trafficking as separate overlooks the reality that exploitative gendered work and working conditions lay the groundwork for further exploitation through sexual coercion. Sexual coercion can often be just one manifestation of the underlying economic exploitation of migrant women that takes a gendered form.

## VI. ITERATION #1: GENDERED ECONOMIC COERCION

The breadth of experiences of sexual and economic exploitation that women face lead us to struggle with how to speak about these experiences in a way that is more precise than the term “trafficking”. We have tried to name the dynamics that drive the social harm rather than the symptoms of that harm.

We have observed that:

- Poverty – economic need – is the common foundation of exploitation.
- The forms of work that women are able to access both in their countries of origin and in Canada are deeply gendered and racialized.
- The forms of exploitation that women face are gendered. For example, men in situations of forced labour or labour trafficking are typically exploited for hard physical labour like construction work. Women in situations of forced labour or trafficking are often subject to sexual coercion as a means of extracting other forms of labour for profit or are exploited for commercial sexual activity. In this sense forced sexual activity can be both a mechanism of economic coercion and a commercial transaction into which women are coerced. The forms of labour through which women and men are exploited are a gendered reflection of market value for women’s and men’s labour and reflection of what poor women and men have to sell when they have no other assets.

In exploring the frame of gendered economic coercion, we have tried to direct attention towards the root causes of migrant women’s sexual and economic exploitation. We have attempted to reveal the structural constraints that restrict women’s economic choices. And we have also tried to develop a frame that reflects women’s agency and their narratives of their experiences.

The concept of gendered economic coercion demands a *systemic* approach to policy and law reform. Viewing women’s experiences through the lens of gendered economic coercion redirects attention to *who* and *what* is the source of the coercion. By focusing on the anti-social behaviour that is condemned (coercion), it does not pass judgment on migrant women’s exercise of agency in response to that behaviour. It does not shame or blame. It does not create an artificial standard of the “deserving victim” who reflects privileged norms and decision-making. And it allows for a more complex and intersectional analysis of how racism and colonialism shape migrant women’s lives.

While this frame has been developed in response to the experiences and needs of adult migrant women, further analysis is needed to assess its implications for the gendered coercion of girl children and youth. While common roots causes may be found to underlie the gendered coercion of women, girl children and youth, additional root causes may also be implicated and the vulnerability and relative lack of agency may well demand different responses. In ongoing collaboration with our grantee cohort we hope to continue exploring these dimensions of gendered relationships of coercion to develop a more broadly applicable analysis.

## **VII. CONTINUING TENSIONS**

Much of the preceding analysis has focused on the shortcomings of the dominant trafficking frame. In the Project's knowledge exchange sessions participants have been asked if they use the language of trafficking in their work, if so with whom, and if they find the frame helpful or not. There is uneven usage of the term with roughly equal numbers using it and not. For participants who use the term, they are more likely to use it in policy and legal contexts and with funding agencies rather than with women directly.

Some service providers did not find that the term helped them in their daily work. They found that it did not add to the analysis (although training on the underlying systems of constraint was helpful). They found the term too amorphous – as a catch all for many very different experiences it submerged individual women's personal experience to a larger generalized narrative. It oversimplified a complex issue. Some found the term to be alternately confusing, restrictive or problematically loaded by its historical origins. Some found the term inextricably tied to abolitionist perspectives, notions of "rescue" and the criminalization of marginalized women. Finally, some found that the term focused on issues of individual "consent" while absolving discriminatory systems and structures of power.

At the same time, some service providers, including those with critiques of the term recognized that the "trafficking" frame can be helpful. It provides a frame for education and information about structures of exploitation. It is a concise term that can be used without requiring a woman to endlessly repeat her traumatic experiences. It highlights the element of involuntary migration (whether forced or necessitated by poverty or other forms of danger/insecurity). Some found that by enabling women to see their experiences as part of a larger pattern, it helped to destigmatize their experiences and validate the criminality of the coercion they had experienced.

While exploration of the frame of gendered economic coercion holds promise, tensions remain because in the immediate term laws and policies are framed around

the narrower concept of “trafficking”. Trafficking is the language of the law and of policy makers. This legal backdrop is reinforced by the economic reality that when significant funding dollars are available to cash-strapped community agencies, there is an economic need for agencies to operate within that dominant frame in order to secure and sustain funding.

Ultimately using the language of trafficking is necessary in practice. Existing legal remedies are only available if it is proven that a migrant woman has been trafficked. In the criminal law context, this requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt. As in sexual assault trials, this offers little opportunity for a woman’s experience to deviate from the normative image of a trafficking victim. It leaves little opportunity for embedding her experience within the complex social and economic systems that facilitate trafficking. To the extent her individual exercise of agency differs from the idealized image, her “choices” will be measured against privileged actors’ (police, lawyers, judges) assessments of how a reasonable person would have/should have acted in the circumstances.

Similarly, in the immigration context, access to a temporary resident permit and/or permanent resident status based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds requires hewing to the dominant script of what it means to be a victim of trafficking.

Women seeking emergency housing on a priority basis likewise need to show that they were trafficked.

“Trafficking” then operates as a gatekeeper to legal remedies and necessary support services.

In this legal context, the need for immediate remedies favours advocating for as expansive a definition of “trafficking” as possible to ensure that migrant women who experience gendered economic coercion in its multitude of forms can access legal rights and legal remedies. But if “trafficking” is expanded to encompass everything, does it come to mean nothing?<sup>21</sup> If we don’t have a frame that focuses on root causes how can addressing root causes be prioritized? It is in this continuing tension that our iterative learning journey continues and in which we encourage further discussion.

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<sup>21</sup> Joel Quirk, “When Human Trafficking Means Everything and Nothing”, in *Contemporary Slavery* above at chapter 3.

**APPENDIX A:**

**MIGRANT WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROJECT  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

# Migrant Women's Rights Project

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*An Anti-Human Trafficking Project of the Barbra Schlifer Clinic, funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation*

## Steering Committee and Community Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

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### **I. Preamble**

We are a consortium of concerned service providers, agencies and researchers who separately work with women with precarious immigration status who are vulnerable to trafficking. These women may have intersecting difficulties with labour migration, experience gender-based violence, and become vulnerable to trafficking. In part because of their precarious status, and fears of deportation or reprisals by former (domestic) employers, they experience extreme isolation from access to supports, and, specifically, from supports to prevent trafficking through proper legal information or human rights protections.

The research partners are engaged in this project because their respected research and policy analysis informs policy makers and thereby contributes to forming and informing policy directions and public discourse. Through this project, their research will be augmented by the incoming information from potential clients and the output of community-tested responses that will make their work more relevant. The project partners are committed to ensuring substantive involvement of women with lived experience throughout the project.

It is hoped that our achievement with this project will be two-fold:

1. We will document, interrupt and prevent pathways to trafficking for domestic workers in Canada which has been observed by all our front line service providers as an emerging social issue.
2. We will affect the quality of public policy data available to go further upstream in future prevention efforts through quality research that has been run through a formal ethics review.

We will achieve our aims through a co-ordinated project table that collaborates to build the project work in respect of these objectives, including specifically, the direct service response which will combine elements including skills training (including training for service providers), first contact outreach, safe housing, legal information and where warranted, legal representation, counselling, language interpretation, and transitional support to practical alternatives.

## II. Project Principles

All our work presupposes a gender analysis. Our work applies a human rights approach and a feminist analysis that focusses on systemic and societal structures that contribute to gender inequality and oppression. Gendered inequality is systemic and reflects overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination, including but not limited to that based on sex, gender identity, gender expression, race, class, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, colour, political belief, cultural affiliation, legal status, ability, ethnicity and family status.

Our work recognizes the systemic and structural impacts of globalization as root causes that drive transnational labour migration; recognizes the precariousness that is constructed and deepened through an experience of migration; and recognizes the ways in which experiences of migration are gendered.

While trafficking affects all groups of people, this project will focus on people who identify as women or girls. The umbrella term “women” recognizes that gender is self-identification that is not necessarily correspondent with assigned sex at birth. It represents all those who self-identify as women, including but not limited to cisgender women, transgender women, intersex women and two-spirit women.

We have as a founding principle the perspective that men and women have vastly different experiences of violence, and that the majority of violence women experience is committed by men they have come to trust. In the case of trafficking, the intersections of vulnerability extend this perspective to include systems of discrimination and inequality that are congealed in such things as:

- i. Gender socialization from a young age, including female socialization to be accommodating;
- ii. Gendered imbalances of power and material security that are created through patriarchal systems that over-value men and boys;
- iii. Girls’ and women’s worth being defined by their proximity to male power;
- iv. Immigration laws that fail to consider these differentials and are premised on male patterns of migration; and
- v. The international pandemic of violence against women, recognized by the UN.

We are committed to ensuring substantive involvement of women with lived experience throughout the project.

## III. Project Goals

- To assess the safety and support needs of women with precarious immigration status and at risk of forced trafficking;
- To respond to these needs in a coordinated manner in the context of existing and peer support networks;
- To contribute to research knowledge of the struggles and needs of women migrants who are vulnerable to trafficking;
- To redesign service response and access across a continuum of services, including primary healthcare, shelter, legal support and information, counselling and practical support;

- To address training with service providers and front line contacts with respect to forced labour and trafficking and to build awareness of the depths of the cycles of exploitation;
- To broaden the understanding of experiences of trafficking and to recognize labour trafficking; and
- To mobilize community supports and services to contribute to systemic change efforts aimed at advancing migrant women's rights.

#### IV. Project Outcomes and Deliverables

- Pathways to trafficking for domestic workers in Canada will be documented, and where possible, interrupted and/or prevented;
- Public policy data will be of a more accurate quality and assist in the prevention of vulnerability to human trafficking for migrant women;
- Service coordination from first contact to transitional support and practical alternatives will be enhanced; and
- Women vulnerable to trafficking will be better informed about their rights and possible supports and services.

#### We will provide:

- accurate information about women's legal options to work or to maintain their valid immigration status before, during, and after recruitment, by being where and when they are being recruited by traffickers (at the identified strip at Wilson and Bathurst);
- outreach and transitional counselling that will link women with community support and resources to address social and health concerns. Outreach will take place in the geographic region where women are already gathering for mutual support. Partner organizations will also offer space for outreach, at the Barbra Schlifer Clinic office, TNO or FCJ;
- access to a designated shelter bed or rotating vacant apartment in an all-woman building, provided through YWCA Toronto for this population of women;
- access to primary healthcare through both Women's College Hospital and Access Alliance Multicultural Health Centre (depending on the eligibility between the two services and the women's needs);
- we will build a pilot coordinated response in Canada's biggest urban centre;
- we will additionally address Pipeline factors that make women vulnerable by having our researchers probe the conditions beyond what we already know, that groom women for these traffickers who prey on them from within their communities; and
- we will make policy recommendations through our partners that address the findings of this project and go upstream to prevent trafficking.

#### V. Design and Implementation of Project:

The Migrant Women's Rights Project ("MWR Project" or "the Project") will be overseen by The Barbra Schlifer Clinic, working in collaboration with a **Steering Committee** comprised of the partners to the Project and by a **Community Advisory Committee** to the Project comprised of additional consulting

agencies in the Women's, VAW and Immigration/Refugee and settlement communities, Healthcare, Migrant Rights, and research communities.

### **A. Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic:**

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic ("BSCC") has entered into a Contract with the Canadian Women's Foundation to design and implement the MWR Project. As such, BSCC will be the **Lead Agency** on the Project, responsible for

- the successful implementation and completion of the Project deliverables;
- the proper administration of all funding associated with the Project;
- the recruitment, employment and supervision of the Project Coordinator and any additional staff; and
- overseeing the execution and delivery of all reports to the funder, with the support of the project partners and collaborators.

### **B. Steering Committee:**

The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives of the partnering agencies: the Barbra Schlifer Clinic, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, FCJ Refugee Centre, the Migrant Mothers Project and the Project Co-ordinator, Fay Faraday.

The Steering Committee will

- provide overall leadership, guidance and support to the Project;
- assist the BSCC in the development of the Project design and implementation strategy (process), to further the achievement of the Project outcomes and deliverables;
- oversee the overall direction of the Project;
- provide assistance with respect to any decisions regarding alternative steps in the process;
- address ways to ensure that women with lived experience are involved in a substantive way throughout the project;
- ensure that consultants are representative of interested stakeholders in the Immigration/Refugee, Migrant Workers' rights and VAW sectors and ensure their effective input into the Project; and
- will review and provide input into funding reports.

### **C. Community Advisory Committee**

The Community Advisory Committee ("CAC") will include leaders in the VAW, Migrant Workers' rights and Immigration/Refugee community who share the principles which underpin this project (as outlined in this document) and who are members of equality-seeking groups working on behalf of women experiencing gender-based violence and/or human trafficking.

## **1. Membership: The CAC will include:**

- all partners and participating collaborators in the MWR Project;
- legal advocates who work directly with migrant women and who have considerable expertise in the field of immigration and refugee protection law;
- advocates working directly with migrant women who have experienced gender-based violence;
- representatives of agencies and healthcare providers that work with a diversity of women, particularly socially isolated and highly marginalized women;
- peer support workers who bring lived experience and knowledge of networks of safety and support to the project; and
- researchers and academics who have knowledge of, and are able to integrate project learnings into academic responses to migrant women's precarity and rights.

It is anticipated that membership in the CAC may change over time, as new members join or depart according to the Project cycle and the current expertise required at each stage of the Project.

### **Current members of the CAC:**

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services  
 Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
 Fay Faraday  
 FCJ Refugee Centre  
 Migrant Mothers' Project  
 Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office  
 Women's College Hospital  
 YWCA Toronto

### **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic:**

Amanda Dale - Executive Director  
 Nora Angeles - Director of Interpreter Services  
 Deepa Mattoo – Legal Director  
 Lawyer-Immigration/Refugee law  
 Counsellors  
 Transitional Housing and Support Workers

## **2. Responsibilities of the CAC:**

To the extent possible, the CAC will ensure that the needs and perspectives of migrant women vulnerable to human trafficking in Toronto are represented, particularly women who may be isolated and marginalized or who face additional barriers to access to justice and to services. The CAC will work within the framework of the Project principles, goals and purposes as outlined in this document.

The CAC will

- meet at strategic touchdown points in the Project to review any work or questions referred to it by the Steering Committee of the Project and will provide input through whatever means is most convenient to its members;
- provide input and guidance to the Project Coordinator as may be requested from time to time;
- provide input into final written materials, program plans, or research produced under the Project;
- provide input and feedback to the Steering Committee on any implementation issues as they may arise from time to time during the course of the Project.

It is anticipated that the CAC will play a key role in advising on such things as

- membership of the CAC;
- outreach/consultation strategies;
- design of service protocols and/or service prototypes; and
- design of any materials for public distribution, as may be devised during the course of the Project.

### **3. CAC Meetings**

CAC meetings will be chaired by the Lead Agency. The CAC will meet at least four, but no more than five, times a year during the duration of the project, from May 2016 to March 2021.

CAC members will have costs related to their participation covered and/or reimbursed by Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, as needed.

## **B. General Project Implementation Provisions**

### **1. Communication**

The Project Coordinator will ensure minutes are taken of all Steering Committee meetings and Community Advisory Committee meetings and will be responsible for providing regular updates (at least every two months) to members.

Meeting agendas will be sent to committee members in advance of meetings.

Minutes of meetings will be distributed to committee members within 10 days of the meeting identifying issues discussed and action items.

Any requests for dissemination of information beyond the CAC, CWF and project staff and consultants, will be vetted by the Steering Committee, the Barbra Schlifer Clinic and its funder (CWF).

## **2. Decision Making**

Project members act collectively as an advisor to the Barbra Schlifer Clinic with respect to the mandate of their advisory body but they are not final decision-makers. When an issue arises, the Steering Committee or the CAC, as applicable, may attempt to reach a consensus on how the particular Committee should resolve the issue. If a consensus cannot be attained, the Barbra Schlifer Clinic will have the ultimate responsibility and accountability in making the final decision.

## **3. Conflict Resolution**

1. Project Members are encouraged to attempt to resolve conflicts with one another directly through discussion to reach a reciprocally satisfactory resolution.
2. If the conflict is not solved, it will be included on the next meeting agenda for the relevant body (Steering Committee or CAC) to gain group support in resolution.
3. If at conflict involving the CAC cannot be resolved within the CAC, the group will agree to seek out support from the MWR Project Steering Committee. The goal of this process is to seek mutual resolution in a reasonable timeframe. Conflict resolution decisions made at this level will be final.
4. Resolution discussions will be kept confidential.

## **4. Confidentiality**

All Project Members are expected to be open and candid in discussing issues. For this reason, it is important to maintain confidentiality by respecting the personal opinions or views expressed by individuals during meetings, and by agreeing not to disclose this information to others.

## **5. Conflict of Interest**

All Project Members are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. They may not use their position on an advisory body for their private gain or for the gain of any other person, company, or organization.

## **6. Participation**

In order to sustain Project continuity, participation on the Steering Committee or the CAC is not transferable without the consent of the Steering Committee. In the event that a member's attendance is not possible for a meeting, the member will advise the Chair or Project Coordinator in advance of the non-attendance.

**APPENDIX B:**

**MIGRANT WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROJECT  
LOGIC MODEL**

## **Migrant Women's Rights Project**

### **Logic Model (March 2017)**

#### **Statement of the Problem/Goals**

**Overall problem:** Women with precarious migrant status are, as a result of that precarity, enmeshed in relationships of economic and sexual coercion ("trafficking") without access to the community supports, services and security that would enable them to establish safe and sustainable lives in Canada.

**Overall goal:** To increase the extent to which community supports/services are accessible to and accessed by migrant women who are subject to economic and sexual coercion. This will increase the resilience and capacity of communities of women to interrupt the cycle of trafficking.

**Rationale:** Building connections between migrant women who are in coercive relationships of trafficking and community supports/services will enable migrant women to exit relationships of economic and sexual coercion and improve their safety and security.

#### **Assumptions:**

1. There are migrant women in Toronto who are experiencing economic and sexual coercion (trafficking).
2. There are supports and services that exist in the community that could assist migrant women in experiences of trafficking in order to reduce or eliminate the coercion they experience.
3. The project partners represent a range of community connections and services that could support meaningful learning, collaboration and service delivery improvement.
4. Criminal surveillance of migrant women who are caught in relationships of trafficking increases their precarity and marginalization. As a result, peer outreach, support, community connectedness and practical alternatives will best increase migrant women's safety and ability to establish sustainable lives in Canada.
5. Supporting migrant women's agency and self-determination is critical.

#### **Nested problems:**

There are a range of problems which are nested within the overall problem that this project aims to address.

1. There are **barriers to connection** in both directions between migrant women who experience economic and sexual coercion and community supports and services that are needed: difficulty for women connecting with needed supports/services and barriers to outreach by supports/services that want to help.

**Nested goals:**

- a. Project partners develop tools and strategies to improve outreach to women whose experiences of economic and sexual coercion are encompassed within the term “trafficking”.
  - b. Project partners develop and strengthen connections with front-line points of contact/informal networks in the community that will facilitate outreach/connection with migrant women who are in coercive relationships of trafficking.
  - c. Project partners are seen as trusted supports by migrant women who experience trafficking.
  - d. Project partners are visible in the communities where populations of migrant women who experience trafficking are located.
2. It is critically important to **ensure the safety and protection** of women who are experiencing economic and sexual coercion. Women need to be able to exercise their agency in a way that does not jeopardize their existing formal and informal networks of support.

**Nested goals:**

- a. Project partners will develop strategies that keep women’s safety and agency at the forefront and that respect and safeguard women’s informal networks of support.
3. There is a **lack of coordination** between community supports/services that could assist migrant women who are in coercive relationships of trafficking and a lack of accessibility physically/psychologically for the women.

**Nested goals:**

- a. Project partners strengthen connections between each other.
  - b. Project partners identify the range of supports/services that migrant women who are in relationships of economic and sexual coercion need.
  - c. Project partners develop a strategy for coordinated service delivery.
4. The **language and policy/legal framing of “trafficking”** does not reflect or respond to the actual complexity of the dynamics of economic and sexual coercion that are experienced by migrant women who are caught in relationships of trafficking.

**Nested goals:**

- a. Project partners develop a framework that maps the experience of “trafficking” that is responsive to migrant women’s lived experience.
- b. Project partners develop terminology that reflects and is responsive to migrant women’s lived experience.
- c. Project partners develop assessment tools that can enable front line service agencies to identify when migrant women are experiencing economic and sexual coercion.

- d. The project's framework for understanding trafficking becomes part of the public discourse and policy development on the issue.
5. There is a high degree of **stigma and polarization** around the issue of trafficking that (i) creates significant barriers to solidarity among/between organizations working with women who are in relationships of trafficking; (ii) creates barriers for women identifying their experience and accessing community supports/services; and (iii) creates barriers to effective policy response.

**Nested goals:**

- a. To shift the paradigm for discussing trafficking away from a sensationalist/moralist/ideological frame to address the fundamental power dynamics that constrain women's choices.
- b. To support narratives that highlight women's agency.
- c. To support training/education of community groups and front-line points of access to reduce stigma and polarization.

**Currently available resources:**

1. Project partners include front-line organizations that have connections with and/or provide support to migrant women in relationships of economic and sexual coercion.
2. Project partners include organizations that are able to provide a range of supports and services to migrant women facing economic and sexual coercion, including legal, counselling, health, settlement, emergency housing and other services.
3. Capacity for research, critical systems thinking and design, and policy analysis.

**Activities**

While the longer term goals of this project are detailed in the sections above, this logic model only addresses short-term activities, outputs and outcomes over Years 1 and 2 of the five year project. The core of this work involves building trust, building new networks and building new integrated support systems without endangering migrant women by disrupting their existing survival networks and strategies. As a result, the work will necessarily be iterative. Initial stages may move slowly but to rush them will undermine the capacity to build trust. Each stage of the project will evolve in a way that is responsive to the work done at the previous stage.