



**KEY LESSONS FROM FAITH COMMUNITIES
SUPPORTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:
A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT
WITH THE MULTIFAITH ADVISORY GROUP**

October 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years, and acknowledge and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Thank you to contributors

The Gender and Women's Health Unit at the University of Melbourne would like to thank everyone who participated in this evaluation, including the faith leaders, community members, and project personnel across the Anglican, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Uniting, and multifaith projects, and partners from the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. Your generosity provided rich insights into the important role of faith communities in addressing violence against women and family violence. Thank you for your dedication to this work.

We would like to especially acknowledge the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Multifaith Advisory Group for funding and supporting the Faith Communities Project.

EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation team is from the Gender and Women's Health Unit (Centre for Health Equity) in the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at the University of Melbourne:

- Associate Professor Cathy Vaughan
- Ms Erin Davis
- Dr Lila Moosad
- Ms Claire Sullivan

The Gender and Women's Health Unit aims to advance the health of women in Australia and internationally, to reduce inequity and create positive change. Through research, teaching and public engagement, our work contributes to a robust knowledge base about the health effects of gender inequity and its intersection with social, economic, and cultural factors.

Citation: Davis, E., Vaughan, C., Moosad, L. & Sullivan, C. (2021). *Key Lessons from Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Relationships: A Participatory Action Research Project with the Multifaith Advisory Group*. Melbourne, VIC: University of Melbourne.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
KEY TERMS	7
BACKGROUND	9
The Faith Communities Project	10
EVALUATION DESIGN	12
Purpose and objectives.....	12
Audience and use	12
Evaluation approach	12
Methodology.....	12
Data collection	14
Data analysis and verification	15
Ethics approval	15
Limitations	15
FINDINGS	16
The Role of Faith Leaders.....	16
Development and Implementation	19
Principle 1: Prioritise safety	19
Principle 2: Strengthen relationships with the specialist sector.....	20
Principle 3: Co-design and co-deliver initiatives.....	22
Principle 4: Promote gender equality	25
Principle 5: Anticipate and address resistance	27
Principle 6: Recognise intersectionality	30
Principle 7: Multi-faceted approaches to capacity building	32
Principle 8: Engage senior leadership	35
Principle 9: Build the evidence base	37
CONCLUSION	38
RECOMMENDATIONS	39
REFERENCES	41
APPENDICES	43
Appendix A: Pilot Project Activities	43
Appendix B: Implementation Enablers and Barriers	46

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FAITH COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Relationships: A Participatory Action Research Project with the Multifaith Advisory Group (the Faith Communities Project) was a participatory action research project implemented from July 2018 until March 2021.

The Faith Communities Project responded to recommendations 163 and 165 of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (State of Victoria, 2016) aiming to build the knowledge and capacity of faith leaders to prevent and respond to family violence and violence against women. Faith-based organisations and project partners were procured by the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet under the guidance of the Multifaith Advisory Group to establish pilot projects in the Anglican, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Uniting Church communities as well as a distinct multifaith project.

The pilot projects were delivered in two phases. Phase 1 (July 2018 to December 2019) involved a literature review about the role of faith leaders (and faith communities) in violence prevention and response. This review resulted in a Technical Paper (Vaughan & Sullivan, 2019) and an Evidence Guide (Vaughan et al., 2020) providing principles and recommendations to support Phase II (January 2019 to March 2021) as the pilot projects commenced design and implementation.¹

The faith-based organisations tasked with developing the pilot projects worked collaboratively to engage faith leaders and community members in co-design processes that produced a range of capacity-building initiatives. Training programs for faith leaders about violence prevention and response were established in all faith community projects. Other initiatives varied across projects and included activities such as coaching and mentoring for faith leaders, peer learning opportunities, special forums and events, and resources such as posters, brochures, newsletters, websites, social media, videos, and training manuals. See Appendix A for details.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to generate evidence about key lessons emerging from the development and implementation of the Faith Communities Project. The evaluation objectives were to:

- Understand the role of faith leaders for preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence.
- Take stock of enablers and barriers to project implementation.
- Document any emerging signs of change across faith community projects.
- Provide recommendations for further development, implementation, and sustainment of project work.

The overarching evaluation approach was participatory and developmental, meaning that evaluators, project personnel and partners collaborated throughout project phases to review the current evidence base, consider project designs, problem-solve, and collect and analyse data iteratively over time. The methodology drew on three main elements including: 1) participatory action research; 2) implementation science; and 3) evidence-based principles for faith-based prevention projects.

Data collection included interviews and focus groups with faith leaders (ordained and lay) and active faith community members across the pilot projects. Follow up interviews were conducted with key project personnel who offered rich insights and reflections on the development and implementation experience. Document review was undertaken to ascertain key activities and implementation issues across the pilot projects. The evaluation was also informed by the findings of separate stand-alone evaluations for the Anglican and Sikh projects.

¹The Faith Communities Project formally ended in March 2021, however, some project work was extended to mid-2021 to finalise key deliverables.

Findings were determined using inductive thematic analysis underpinned by the evaluation objectives, implementation science domains (CFIR Research Team, 2019), and the principles outlined in the Phase 1 Evidence Guide (Vaughan et al., 2020). Participatory verification processes were undertaken with project personnel to confirm and add depth to findings.

The limitations of the evaluation primarily pertain to data collection constraints arising out of pilot project implementation delays, challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and time and funding limitations restricting capacity to conduct outcomes or impact evaluation.

KEY LESSONS IN BRIEF

The following provides a brief summary of critical key lessons emerging from the evaluation findings:

- The community development work required to collaboratively initiate, design, and implement projects addressing challenging issues such as violence against women and family violence, takes a significant amount of time and resourcing.
- The role of faith leaders in violence prevention and response includes authorising project work, capacity-building, prioritising safety, and leading faith communities through change, however, these responsibilities may need to be differentiated for ordained/religious leaders and lay community leaders depending on the context.
- There are many ways that faith leaders and faith communities can prioritise victim-survivor safety, through policy setting, handling disclosures and referrals, and implementing dedicated safety-focused roles in faith settings, however, more work is required to develop these responses, remove barriers to accessing specialist services, ensure appropriate responses for children, and address perpetrator accountability.
- Faith community projects must be part of wider violence prevention and response networks and not siloed as separate or 'one-off' initiatives divorced from broader sector goals for social change.
- Resistance to prevention projects in faith communities may be driven by reticence, fear of stigmatisation, and/or opposition to change and this can be further complicated by the theological, ideological, and cultural 'intra-faith' tensions within the faith community, however, there are strategies to manage resistance including tailoring project language and using a 'faith-focused' approach that draws on the anti-violence teachings and values of the faith to build common ground.
- Faith community projects require an intersectional approach to enable in-depth engagement with faith leaders and community members across diverse backgrounds and understanding of the intersecting constraints that create barriers to participation (e.g., precarious migration status, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers, etc.).
- Training is a critical entry point to build faith leaders' capacity, however, sustaining change likely requires complementary initiatives such as coaching and peer learning to support faith leaders to put their learning into practice.
- Multifaith initiatives may be more useful for enabling communities of practice amongst faith-based organisations conducting prevention work as multifaith resources do not necessarily meet the needs of specific faith contexts.
- Early signs of change observed in faith leaders indicate the need to further investigate the transformative impacts of projects addressing violence against women and family violence in faith settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for funders and policy makers

1. Ensure that faith-based organisations are adequately resourced and funded with dedicated roles and multi-year timelines to progress ongoing, collaborative prevention work with stakeholders in faith communities.
2. Conduct longitudinal evaluation using participatory processes to capture evidence about implementation lessons, continuous improvement, and the longer-term impact of faith community prevention projects.
3. Support faith-based organisations to establish multi-faceted approaches to capacity-building, including but not limited to training, peer support, coaching and educative resources.

4. Apply an intersectional lens to ensure that project funding, co-design, and community engagement processes help to remove barriers to participation for diverse cohorts across faith communities and integrate their needs into project work.
 5. Coordinate partnerships between faith community projects and prevention and response agencies to enable knowledge exchange and collaboration.
 6. Work with specialist family violence services to remove referral barriers for victim-survivors and perpetrators of faith, and increase service capacity, including through the recruitment of multi/bi-lingual specialist practitioners with cultural and faith-based backgrounds.
 7. Establish multifaith communities of practice (rather than multifaith projects) where people leading faith community projects can collaborate, share resources, and support each other.
 8. Consider funding dedicated roles within local faith settings (i.e., gurdwaras, temples, churches) to support the implementation of capacity-building initiatives and handle disclosures and referral pathways for community members seeking support.
 9. Consider funding dedicated project work to support faith leaders to safely respond to perpetrators in faith communities, alongside responses to victim-survivors and children.
 10. Consider dedicated funding to implement recommendation 163 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence to integrate violence prevention and response training in faith leaders' pre-service education.
 - potential resistance to change amongst faith leaders and community members to design strategies to overcome such resistance.
2. Establish clear and transparent governance and advisory processes to engender community trust in the project, combine expertise in faith and violence prevention, and ensure the voices of women and people who experience intersecting oppressions are centralised in project design and implementation.
 3. Take a 'faith-focused' approach that engages faith leaders' theological expertise and intrinsic motivations to address violence against women and family violence through the teachings and values of their faith.
 4. Consider the multi-faceted and complementary roles that both ordained faith leaders and community lay leaders can play to authorise and design projects, build capacity, promote safety, and lead change in faith communities.
 5. Promote gender equality in the project design through establishing new leadership roles for women in faith settings, establishing women's advisory groups, and opportunities for men and women to share responsibilities and model respectful relationships in the faith setting.
 6. Locate or develop tailored evidence-based prevention and response resources, including in community languages, that maximises engagement of faith leaders and community members across diverse backgrounds.
 7. Establish suitable methods for community engagement (online, in-person, after hours, weekends) that provide opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in co-design and ensure that projects meet their specific needs.
 8. Create opportunities for faith leaders and community members to meet professionals from specialist family violence services and prevention agencies to demystify each other's roles, establish referral pathways and build solidarity in prevention efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

1. Assess readiness for change during project scoping and initiation by considering:
 - strengths and assets within the faith community, such as prior experiences addressing violence against women, family violence or related issues, and the expertise and skills of people within faith communities who can lead, contribute to, and champion the project; and

KEY TERMS

GENDER INEQUALITY

Unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity, and value afforded to men and women in a society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures (Our Watch et al., 2015).

GENDERED DRIVERS (OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN)

Specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women, including: 1) condoning of violence against women; 2) men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence; 3) stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity; and 4) disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression. These drivers must always be considered with other forms of intersectional discrimination and disadvantage (Our Watch et al., 2015).

GRANTHIS

Members of the Sikh religion who recite the teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh sacred text) in gurdwaras.

GURDUARA

The gurdwara, translated as the house of the guru (Bains, 2020), provides a sacred space for Sikhs to gather in worship and communion. For the participants in this evaluation, the gurdwara was also an important site for social and cultural interaction.

FAITH COMMUNITY

For this evaluation, a faith community is understood as a "a single group of regular congregants focused around a meeting place, a religious denomination, or a collective term for people who profess widely varying beliefs and practices but are linked by a common identification as believers" (Karam et al., 2015, p.1)

FAITH LEADER

For this evaluation, faith leaders are recognised as people who are either in formal ordained or religious leadership roles or community members who play a lay leadership role in their faith communities (Vaughan et al., 2020). Hence, when the term 'faith leader' is used in this report, it is inclusive of both ordained and lay leaders, unless specifically stated otherwise.

FAITH-BASED ORGANISATION

Organisations with one or more of the following: "affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation and/or decision-making processes based on religious values" (Ferris, 2005, p.312).

FAITH SETTING

Inclusive of places of worship, faith communities and faith-based organisations (including, but not limited to facilities owned and operated by religious communities such as schools).

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Defined by the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) as any behaviour that occurs in family, domestic or intimate relationships that is physically or sexually abusive, emotionally, or psychologically abusive, economically abusive, threatening, or coercive, or is in any other way controlling that causes a person to live in fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of another person. Family violence is also defined as behaviour by any person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the above behaviours.

INTERSECTIONALITY

A theory explaining how multiple, overlapping social oppressions, such as racism, ableism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, and xenophobia, contribute to intensifying experiences of discrimination and disadvantage (Chen, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991).

PERPETRATOR

The person who uses violence. This term situates responsibility with the person(s) who chooses to use violent, abusive, and controlling behaviours to intimidate, harm and cause fear in another person. It is important to acknowledge that this term may not be preferred by some people and communities. Other expressions such as 'person using (or choosing to use) family violence' might be preferred instead, depending on context. Additionally, some victim-survivors may not relate to this term or find it alienating, and it is not a term that should be used in cases where an adolescent or young person is using violence against parents/carers or other family members (Domestic Violence Victoria, 2020).

PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The terms 'prevention' and 'response' are frequently used together throughout this report as both components were addressed in the pilot projects. These terms are shorthand for expressing the Continuum of Prevention, which includes primary prevention (preventing violence before it occurs), secondary prevention (or 'early intervention' to prevent recurring violence), and tertiary prevention (or 'response' to prevent long-term harm from violence) (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2017).

SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE

Funded professional services and programs that work directly with victim-survivors of family violence, providing dedicated resources and advocacy to promote their rights and respond to their safety and support needs (Domestic Violence Victoria, 2020).

VICTIM-SURVIVOR

The person, including adults, infants, children, and young people, who has experienced violence. This term acknowledges that the person is both a victim of a crime and a human rights violation, and they are also a survivor with respect to their autonomy, strength, and resilience. The term 'victim-survivor' does not wholly define a person and some people do not prefer this term or any particular label at all (Domestic Violence Victoria, 2020).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993).

BACKGROUND

According to the Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS), the 2016 census found that 58.6 per cent of Victorians indicated an affiliation with a religion (Table 1), with 47.9 per cent reporting an affiliation with Christianity and 10.6 per cent reporting affiliation with religions including, but not limited to, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Baha'i (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Victoria also has the highest proportion of residents born overseas of any Australian state, and the ABS notes that people born overseas are more likely to report adhering to a religion than the Australian-born population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Table 1: Religion in Victoria

Rank	Religion	% in Victoria
1	(Western/Roman) Catholic	23.0
2	Anglican	9.0
3	Uniting Church	3.4
4	Islam	3.3
5	Buddhism	3.1
6	Greek Orthodox	2.7
7	Christian, nfd	2.5
8	Hinduism	2.3
9	Presbyterian	1.9
10	Baptist	1.3
11	Sikhism	0.9
12	Pentecostal, nfd	0.8
13	Judaism	0.7
14	Lutheran	0.5
15	Macedonian Orthodox	0.3
16	Jehovah's Witnesses	0.2
17	Serbian Orthodox	0.2
18	Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints	0.2
19	Seventh Day Adventist	0.2
20	Salvation Army	0.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017). Nfd = 'not further defined' according to ABS classifications.

People with religious affiliations often form faith communities and gather together in faith settings (e.g., places of worship, schools, faith-based organisations), typically under the guidance of faith leaders, both ordained and lay, who provide support to community members on a range of spiritual, moral, social, ethical, and personal issues, including those pertaining to violence against women and family violence (see Key Terms).

Faith leaders and the social systems around faith communities may provide invaluable support to women experiencing violence (Allen & Wozniak, 2010). Indeed, research has found that faith leaders are one of the most common sources of support sought by women who have experienced intimate partner violence (Cox, 2015). However, research has also demonstrated that faith leaders and faith communities may present barriers to women seeking help and condone the use of violence against women and family violence (Ghafournia, 2017; Westenberg, 2017).

For these reasons, it is important that faith leaders and community members are supported to safely respond to violence (after it occurs) and contribute to prevention efforts. This includes providing educative information to support their understanding of the evidence-based gendered drivers of violence against women (see Key Terms), as well as other factors that contribute to violence against women and family violence in faith contexts, including:

- Historic failures of secular institutions to engage with faith leaders and communities about issues surrounding violence against women and family violence.
- Particular interpretations of faith teachings, scripture and language that condone violence against women and restrictively prescribe gender roles and identities.
- Structured gender inequality that is produced by gendered leadership hierarchies and patriarchal norms within faith traditions.
- Faith-based barriers to divorce or separation for women who are experiencing violence.
- A tendency for some faith-based communities to deny and silence discussions of violence.
- The complex interplay of religion, culture, and experiences of migration, including persecution, racism, and other forms of discrimination (Vaughan et al., 2020).

THE FAITH COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence noted that faith leaders are highly influential figures who must be engaged to address violence against women and family violence in faith communities (State of Victoria, 2016). The Royal Commission thus made two relevant recommendations:

- Recommendation 163: The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Multifaith Advisory Group and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, in partnership with expert family violence practitioners, develop training packages on family violence and sexual assault for faith leaders and communities. These packages should build on existing work, reflect leading practice in responding to family violence, and include information about referral pathways for victims and perpetrators. The training should be suitable for inclusion as part of the pre-service learning in various faith training institutes, as well as the ongoing professional development of faith leaders.
- Recommendation 165: Faith leaders and communities establish processes for examining the ways in which they currently respond to family violence in their communities and whether any of their practices operate as deterrents to the prevention or reporting of, or recovery from, family violence or are used by perpetrators to excuse or condone abusive behaviour.

In response to these recommendations, the Victorian Government established the Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Relationships: A Participatory Action Research Project with the Multifaith Advisory Group (the Faith Communities Project). The projects' purpose was to build the knowledge and capacity of faith leaders to prevent and respond to family violence and violence against women.

The project involved partnership work between the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Multifaith Advisory Group (MAG), the University of Melbourne (Gender and Women's Health Unit, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health), the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and the faith-based organisations selected by DPC and MAG to implement pilot projects in identified faith communities (Table 2).

Table 2: Pilot Projects

Organisation(s)	Project name
Anglican Diocese of Melbourne	Preventing Violence Against Women Whole Church Project
Buddhist Council of Victoria	Buddhist Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Family Relationships
Faith Communities Council of Victoria	FaithSAFE: Creating safe communities (multifaith project)
Faith Communities Council of Victoria and Kulturbrille	Creating violence free and safe faith communities: Primary Prevention for Hindu Faith Communities
Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and Uniting Vic.Tas	Uniting Church Family Violence Awareness Training Project
Victorian Sikh Gurduaras Council and Women's Health in the Southeast	Victorian Sikh Community Prevention of Family Violence Project – Happy Family, Happy Society

Implementation of the pilot projects was delivered in two phases. **Phase I** (July 2018 to December 2019) involved collaboration between the University of Melbourne and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health to undertake a literature review assessing the current state of knowledge on the role of faith leaders and faith communities in preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence. This resulted in a Technical Paper (Vaughan & Sullivan, 2019) and a complementary Evidence Guide (Vaughan et al., 2020) providing guiding principles and recommendations to support **Phase II** (January 2019 to March 2021) as the faith-based organisations designed and implemented their own pilot projects.²

During these phases, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health also provided support to the faith-based organisations and their project personnel through establishing a community of practice, supporting project plan development, providing coaching support and training on violence against women and intersectionality issues, and collaborating with the University of Melbourne on participatory action research processes to support evaluation activities.

The capacity-building work of all pilot projects primarily centred on the provision of training to faith leaders from specific faith settings (i.e., churches, gurduaras, temples). Across the projects, the training content generally included education about the role of faith leaders in violence prevention and response; information about the gendered and faith-based drivers of violence against women; healthy and safe family and intimate relationships; and best practice responses for handling disclosures, including establishing referrals and relationships with specialist family violence services.

Other complementary capacity-building initiatives were also developed, depending on feasibility and resources available within individual projects and communities. These initiatives included coaching and mentoring for faith leaders, peer learning opportunities, special forums and events, and various resources such as posters, brochures, newsletters, websites, social media, videos, and training manuals.

See Appendix A for an overview of the activities and resources produced by each of the pilot projects.

²The Faith Communities Project formally ended in March 2021, however, some project work was extended to mid-2021 to finalise key deliverables.

EVALUATION DESIGN

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this evaluation was to generate evidence about key lessons emerging from the development and implementation of the Faith Communities Project.

To fulfill this purpose, the evaluation objectives were to:

- Understand the role of faith leaders for preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence.
- Take stock of enablers and barriers to project implementation.
- Document any emerging signs of change across faith community projects.
- Provide recommendations for further development, implementation, and sustainment of project work.

It is recommended that this evaluation is read as complementary to the Evidence Guide produced during Phase I of the Faith Communities Project (Vaughan et al., 2020).

AUDIENCE AND USE

This report is intended for stakeholders directly involved in the Faith Communities Project to support their continued efforts and decision-making. This includes the Victorian Government, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, and the faith-based organisations leading project implementation.

The evaluation may also be of interest to other faith communities, governments, organisations, and sector networks involved in preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The overarching evaluation approach was participatory and developmental, meaning that evaluators, project personnel and partners collaborated as a team throughout the Faith Communities Project phases to review the current evidence base, consider project designs, problem-solve, and collect and analyse data iteratively over time.

Developmental evaluation is responsive to new initiatives where there is limited knowledge about effective program models and limited readiness for more formal summative impact evaluation (Patton, 2006). This approach considers what can be learned from emergent, contextual innovations to support continued development (Patton, 1994, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology drew on three main elements including: 1) participatory action research; 2) implementation science; and 3) evidence-based principles for faith-based prevention projects.

1 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

2 IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

3 EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR FAITH-BASED PREVENTION PROJECTS

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory approaches are considered best practice for capturing the rich insights and learnings of emergent innovations for preventing and responding to violence against women (Kwok, 2013). The Faith Communities Project was designed to enable project partners to undertake participatory action research through an ongoing process of observation, reflection, and action throughout implementation and evaluation processes. The primary mechanism for this process was a community of practice led by the Multicultural Centre for Women Health for project personnel.

IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

One of the evaluation objectives was to take stock of implementation enablers and barriers as this provides an opportunity learn about what helps and hinders prevention projects in faith communities. As such, data analysis was informed by evidence-based implementation domains established by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) (CFIR Research Team, 2019). These domains are:

1. Outer setting: Characteristics of the context or environment (social, political, cultural) surrounding the initiative.
2. Inner setting: Characteristics of the organisation or system within which the initiative is being implemented.
3. Individual characteristics: Characteristics of the people involved in implementing the initiative.
4. Implementation process: Characteristics of the implementation process for the initiative.
5. Initiative characteristics: Characteristics of the initiative (project, program, policy).

Appendix B provides a table outlining the analysis of implementation barriers and enablers that informs this report.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES

As described in the Background, Phase I of the Faith Communities Project included a literature review assessing the current state of knowledge on the role of faith leaders and faith communities in preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence.

One of the products of the review was an Evidence Guide outlining key principles for faith-based organisations implementing the pilot projects (Vaughan et al., 2020). The principles are:³

1. Prioritise the safety of women and children at all times.
2. Strengthen relationships with the specialist sector.
3. Co-design and co-deliver prevention initiatives with faith leaders, communities, and sector experts.
4. Understand the central role of gender inequality as a driver of violence against women.
5. Anticipate and be prepared to address resistance to change.
6. Recognise intersectionality to inform prevention work with diverse faith communities.
7. Provide multi-faceted approaches to capacity building.
8. Engage senior leadership in faith communities early and sustain engagement.
9. Strengthen the evidence-base to about how to prevent and respond to violence against women in faith settings.

The principles provide a framework against which the evaluation findings were considered, thus further enriching the evidence-base with key lessons emerging from the projects.

³Please note that wording of the principles has been altered slightly from the original evidence guide to increase clarity in the differentiation of constructs.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection involved qualitative interviews and focus groups, document review, and ongoing iterative collaboration with project personnel via participatory action research processes built into the community of practice. All participants in qualitative data collection are referred to in this report as ‘key informants’, unless otherwise stated.

As the pilot projects transitioned from Phase I to Phase II (October 2019 to June 2020), 11 interviews were conducted with ordained and lay faith leaders across the pilot projects. 11 focus groups (with a total of 56 participants) were also conducted with ordained and lay faith leaders and active faith community members from the Anglican, Buddhist, and Sikh projects. Due to COVID-19 disruptions and the additional time required to support community readiness, both the Uniting Church and Hindu project stakeholders were unable to participate in this phase of data collection.

Three members of the evaluation team used a semi-structured question guide in the interviews and focus groups to explore the role of faith leaders in violence prevention and response work. The interviews and focus groups lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were audio recorded. Some were initially held in person and others via video call after COVID-19 restrictions commenced.

In Phase II, interviews were conducted in April 2021 by two members of the evaluation team with ten project personnel across all pilot projects. A semi-structured question guide was used to capture these key informants’ in-depth knowledge about the role of faith leaders in violence prevention and response, project implementation barriers and enablers, emerging signs of change, and their recommendations for further development and sustainability (as per the evaluation objectives). The interviews were approximately 90 minutes and were audio recorded.

Throughout both phases, participatory action research processes within the community of practice also captured the ongoing experiences and emergent lessons from the pilot projects. This was documented in meeting minutes and email exchanges between the evaluation team members and project personnel.

Finally, secondary data collection was also undertaken via review of key documents (i.e., project plans, progress reports, capacity-building resources) and the findings of separate stand-alone evaluations that were procured by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne (Davis et al., 2021) and the Victorian Sikh Gurduaras Council (Moosad et al., 2021), both conducted by the Gender and Women’s Health Unit at the University of Melbourne.

DATA ANALYSIS AND VERIFICATION

The following processes were undertaken for qualitative data analysis and verification:

- Audio recordings from all interviews and focus groups were listened to repeatedly to document data in notes and transcribe illustrative quotes prior to analysis.
- One member of the evaluation team used general inductive thematic analysis (Thomas, 2006) to code and categorise data notes (using MS Excel) into themes and sub-themes pertaining to the evaluation objectives and other emerging findings – this was later reviewed and refined through discussion with other evaluation team members.
- Themes were further analysed against the CFIR implementation domains and Evidence Guide principles to develop an understanding of the key lessons emerging from the projects.
- Primary qualitative data were triangulated with the document review to ascertain the key activities and implementation issues undertaken across the pilot projects.
- Analysis was presented in a data visualisation to project personnel in a ‘sense-making’ workshop to verify interpretations, clarify key issues and add further depth to findings.
- During the drafting phase of the report, iterative internal peer review processes were undertaken amongst the evaluation team members.
- Project personnel who contributed to the evaluation provided feedback on the draft before the report was finalised.

ETHICS APPROVAL

Conduct of the evaluation received approval from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics I.D. 1954548.1). Key informants in all data collection activities were provided with consent forms and plain language statements to inform them of their right to confidentiality and voluntary participation. This report uses de-identified quotes from key informants to illustrate findings. Minor wording adjustments were made to protect anonymity.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the evaluation primarily pertain to data collection constraints arising out of pilot project implementation delays, challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and time and funding limitations restricting capacity to conduct outcomes or impact evaluation.

As mentioned under the data collection section, there were no focus groups for the Uniting Church or Hindu projects during Phase I due to project delays and disruption caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This gap was rectified as much as possible through participatory action research processes with project personnel via their community of practice, personal communications with evaluation team members and follow up interviews during Phase II.

Implementation delays associated with the COVID-19 pandemic meant Phase II data collection took place after project funding ceased. Research capacity was therefore limited to key informant interviews with project personnel and did not include follow up data collection with faith leaders in all pilot projects, with the exception of the aforementioned evaluations conducted for the Anglican and Sikh projects. While the key informants provided in-depth perspectives from their oversight of the pilot projects, the findings do not draw on the views of everyone who were involved with, or exposed to, these initiatives.

It should also be acknowledged that the evaluation was focused on key lessons during implementation and not designed to ascertain the impact of the pilot projects in faith communities. The lack of impact evaluation and evidence about the effectiveness of faith-based prevention programs is a noted gap in the literature (Vaughan & Sullivan, 2019), however, undertaking this type of evaluation requires time and resources that were not afforded to the pilot projects. As such, impact evaluation would be desirable in the future if the projects are further resourced to develop and sustain their work for a longer period of time. Resourcing for impact evaluation would also provide an opportunity to conduct further data collection with faith leaders and community members, including victim-survivors, on their observations of, and experiences with, the Faith Communities Project.

FINDINGS

The findings presented here intend to articulate and discuss key lessons emerging across the pilot projects, while also accounting for some of the nuances and differences between them. Illustrative examples from specific projects, case studies and quotes from interview and focus group key informants.

THE ROLE OF FAITH LEADERS

Previous research has predominantly articulated the roles and responsibilities faith leaders can play as responders to people who have already experienced or used violence with less said about how faith leaders can contribute to prevention efforts (Vaughan et al., 2020). The findings from this evaluation articulate the roles and responsibilities described by key informants, particularly faith leaders themselves, in contributing to both prevention and response. These findings are presented in Table 3 below followed by key lessons.

Table 3: Faith Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in training and other capacity-building initiatives, particularly coaching and/or peer learning opportunities to sustain transformations in attitudes and practices. Understand how gender inequality intersects with other forms of social oppression and disadvantage to enable appropriate responses for victim-survivors from diverse backgrounds and promote the inclusion of diverse voices in prevention initiatives.
Authorise action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorise and enable the development and implementation of violence prevention and response initiatives within faith-based organisations and local faith settings. Communicate the importance of prevention and response initiatives to the faith community and encourage people to participate in training and other activities. Establish complementary roles for ordained and lay faith leaders to work together in leading action on violence prevention and response.
Lead change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information (including in community languages) about violence prevention and response initiatives in their faith settings through talks and resource provision (e.g., posters, brochures, newsletters, etc.). Support other faith leaders and community members to shift away from victim-blaming attitudes, silence, and denial about violence against women and family violence toward a focus on safety and care for victim-survivors, perpetrator accountability, and social transformation on gender equality issues. Demonstrate the importance of gender equality, loving and healthy family relationships, and anti-violence beliefs through interpretations of faith texts and teachings, while also condemning interpretations that enable power, control, abuse and barriers to separation and divorce. Participate in the transformation of gendered hierarchies within faith-based organisations and local faith settings and support increased opportunities for gender equal representation and women's leadership.
Promote safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the signs that someone may be experiencing violence and prioritise their safety and confidentiality when seeking or receiving disclosures of abuse. Know the boundaries of their role, including refraining from providing mediation or counselling between victim-survivors and perpetrators, and support referrals to professional services in the family violence system (e.g., specialist family violence services, legal services, housing services, children's services, etc.). Promote faith settings as safe spaces, at the centre of the faith community, where people can reach out and seek support and find healing from the harms caused by violence and social oppression.

The following quotes provide insight into how faith leaders view their roles and responsibilities in violence prevention and response:

"As leaders and as a faith community we have this privileged position to be able to speak into, not just in reaction to people who are experiencing violence, but actually into that preventative cultural shift because we are a place where people come and learn and grow together. "

– Anglican Church faith leader

"I just think that we should be working towards creating an environment where we are tackling gender equality, and that we really believe through our faith, and the dharma, that women are equal."

– Buddhist faith leader

The pilot projects developed and conveyed the potential of faith leaders' role in various ways, through collaborative co-design work, training, communications (e.g., newsletters, social media), resources (e.g., guidelines, manuals, policies), and coaching and peer learning opportunities (where available).

Importantly, however, the evaluation found differing capacities for ordained and lay leaders with respect to their role. For ordained leaders, the consistency and extent of their capacity varied due to their own individual sense of commitment to the project, as well as the busy nature of their positions within the faith community as they oversaw numerous operational, spiritual, and pastoral care demands. Lay leaders tended to be more consistently involved and took the lead on local implementation work, although it should be noted that many were in voluntary positions and could be similarly time-poor.

The project with the Sikh community provided particular insight into the important role of lay leaders, as they were viewed by stakeholders as the most appropriate people for all aspects of violence prevention and response work in the faith community. This was due to the fact that the spiritual role of the Granthi is often occupied by individuals residing temporarily in Australia on a religious worker visa and were generally not considered by stakeholders as the appropriate person to authorise project work, deliver teachings relevant to violence against women and family violence, or handle victim-survivor disclosures. That said, project stakeholders suggested that Granthis could still benefit from participating in the training in the future.

Overall, partnership work between ordained and lay leaders to determine differing and complementary roles and responsibilities was seen to be most beneficial for implementing violence prevention and response initiatives in the faith community and within faith settings.

KEY LESSONS

- Faith leaders can incorporate violence prevention and response into their roles in many ways, through authorising project work, capacity-building, prioritising safety, and leading faith communities through change.
- The context and constraints bearing on faith leaders, whether ordained or lay, must be considered to determine appropriate role and responsibilities.
- Partnerships between ordained leaders and lay community leaders may enable complementary roles within the faith community and support implementation of violence prevention and response work.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

As per the methodology, findings relevant to the development and implementation of the Faith Communities Project are presented according to nine principles developed in the Evidence Guide during Phase 1 (Vaughan et al., 2020). Note that these findings are underpinned by analysis of implementation enablers and barriers across the projects, as shown in Appendix B.

A summary of each of the key principles is followed by a brief analysis of implementation findings and concludes with key lessons relevant to each principle.

PRINCIPLE 1: PRIORITISE SAFETY

Principle summary

Research has shown that some faith leaders may place other concerns (such as the sacredness of marriage, reputation of family or community, or particular interpretations of sacred texts) above the safety of those experiencing violence. Ensuring that women and children are safe must be everyone's highest priority when discussing or addressing family violence and violence against women in faith communities. Interventions to address violence must support faith leaders to make a public commitment to prioritise women's and children's safety above all.

Implementation findings

The principle of safety was interwoven into the pilot projects in various ways. Examples included:

- Embedding non-tolerance for violence against women and family violence into the mandates of faith-based organisations (e.g., through resolutions, strategic plans, policies, and procedures).
- Providing training to faith leaders in both violence prevention and response knowing that prevention projects often lead to disclosures of violence and abuse.
- Organising opportunities for faith leaders to connect with specialist family violence services through training and special 'meet and greet' events.

- Ensuring that project resources (e.g., training materials, brochures, posters, etc.) and media (e.g., newsletters, social media, websites) communicated the importance of victim-survivor safety to faith leaders and the faith community and included referral information for specialist family violence services.
- Developing guidelines outlining expectations, tools, and service information to enable appropriate responses to victim-survivor disclosures.
- Integrating the projects with other related initiatives, such as the child safe standards in faith-based organisations and faith settings.
- Resourcing ordained faith leaders to use faith teachings as opportunities to condemn violence, including spiritual abuse, and promote gender equality and healthy relationships.
- Implementing dedicated roles, typically occupied by lay leaders, to handle victim-survivor disclosures, provide initial support and facilitate referrals to specialist services.

On this last point, similar roles already existed in the Hindu ISKCON centres (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) through established women's leadership positions. The Buddhist and Anglican pilot projects implemented dedicated roles called 'family violence outreach workers' and 'family safety champions', respectively. Similar positions were considered for further implementation at local gurdwaras in the Sikh project. While the Uniting Church did not develop such positions, they had the particular advantage of implementing the project in partnership with the Church's service arm, Uniting Vic.Tas (formerly known as Uniting Care), providing a potentially more streamlined approach for referrals for family violence support.

The development of a safety focus is still relatively new in some of the faith communities and the extent to which such approaches are effective for victim-survivors requires further research. Key informants also advised that further work is needed to determine appropriate responses to perpetrators and address the needs and safety of children, while prioritising safety and confidentiality in close-knit faith contexts.

KEY LESSONS

- There are many ways that faith-based organisations and leaders can prioritise victim-survivor safety, from establishing internal mandates, implementing capacity-building initiatives, through to strong and repeated messaging into the faith community.
- Dedicated roles for handling disclosures may help to maintain a focus on safety within faith settings and provide options for victim-survivors seeking support.
- More development work is required to enable faith leaders to respond appropriately to individuals within a family, including victim-survivors, perpetrators, and children, without compromising safety and confidentiality.

PRINCIPLE 2: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SPECIALIST SECTOR

Principle summary

Faith leaders must receive training to understand the gendered drivers of violence against women and know how to identify and respond appropriately to community members experiencing violence. However, faith leaders cannot and should not be expected to be experts in violence prevention nor meet all the support needs of victim-survivors within their spiritual leadership or pastoral care roles. As such, building referral pathways and relationships with violence prevention and response organisations is vital.

Implementation findings

Specialist family violence services and prevention agencies were involved in the pilot projects primarily through the training programs. This occurred either because the project personnel themselves worked concurrently in these sectors and were able to incorporate their expertise and sector connections into the training or because violence prevention or response practitioners were engaged for co-

design and delivery of training sessions. For example, the Buddhist Council of Victoria employed project personnel with experience as a specialist family violence practitioner and worked closely with project partner, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, to develop and deliver the training to the Buddhist temples. A 'meet and greet' event was also held providing an opportunity for Buddhist faith leaders and temple members to connect with specialist family violence services in their local area. Some of the other pilot projects similarly engaged prevention and response practitioners in training design and delivery directly to faith leaders. Key informants advised that this helped demystify the role of both specialist services and faith leaders during these collaborative exchanges.

The connections made with specialist family violence services were still evolving by the time the pilot projects came to an end. As faith leaders continue to develop their capabilities, there remains a need to further build relationships and streamline referral processes for victim-survivors. Indeed, key informants described difficulties progressing referrals to specialist family violence services for a range of reasons, such as the high demand for such services, victim-survivors' reticence to access professional support, victim-survivors' concerns about using interpreters, the lack of multi/bi-lingual specialist practitioners available in the sector and worries that mainstream services would not understand their culture or faith.

Key informants were particularly concerned when specialist services expected victim-survivors to leave their family, and therefore their connections with their cultural and faith community, as part of a safety plan. Key informants reported concerns that the difficulties experienced by victim-survivors in accessing professional services would cause them to lose trust in the process and faith leaders were often left managing ongoing risks. This led some key informants to suggest there was a need for resourced family violence response services provided by faith and cultural communities, rather than relying on the mainstream system.

“We need a pathway for women making disclosures so that we don’t sensitively hold them through a disclosure and then we’re like ‘now you have to leave your church, your temple, your husband, your family.’ That is their entire community. You lose your connection to your only supportive community as a migrant. How is that offering an empowering experience for a woman who has experienced family violence? We really need to offer in-faith support and that needs funding.”

– project personnel

While some strides were made in connecting faith leaders with the response sector, key informants reported fewer connections with the prevention sector. The most consistent connection was the role played by the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, however, this role was limited by short-term funding and concluded just as the pilots began to gain momentum.

Additionally, while some project personnel collaborated with state-wide prevention networks, they were generally hesitant to connect faith leaders with local prevention agencies (such as women’s health services). This was due to concerns that the prevention sector’s strong use of gendered language and feminist principles may cause some of the more conservative faith leaders to disconnect from the project and lose the opportunity to keep them involved in transformative change. Key informants advised, however, that relationship building with the prevention sector is essential, not only for sharing information and resources, but to also share the unique experiences and capabilities offered by faith-based prevention projects:

“We have found through the project people talking about the healing they have experienced. Women being able to share their experiences, not only about violence, but discrimination and sexism, and men hearing that and wanting to be allies, and the healing that could come from those conversations. It’s something that is different and missing from the prevention space. If you can tap into that, the potential is just massive. It flows through their whole lives.”

– project personnel

Key informants advised there was a lack of government coordination to strategically integrate the Faith Communities Project with other relevant initiatives or link them into the existing state-wide or regional sector networks. The connections that did eventuate, as described above, came from project personnel reaching out to specific agencies in these sectors on an individual and ad hoc basis. For example, one of the project personnel contacted the regional Family Violence Principal Strategic Advisors to build relationships between the local faith leaders and specialist services in the area. This only came about, however, because the project worker was personally aware of these roles in the family violence system, rather than via a systematic and strategic approach at the government level.

“It’s very siloed from rest of the prevention sector, which is such a shame because we know that doesn’t work, that was a barrier. It would be more helpful to have more coordination around the different and complementary initiatives going on.”

– project personnel

KEY LESSONS

- Involving specialist family violence services and prevention agencies in project design and implementation, and particularly providing opportunities to directly connect with faith leaders (including through training), enables relationship building and demystifies the roles of both parties.
- Barriers accessing specialist family violence services must be removed to ensure that faith leaders are not left managing risk beyond the limitations of their role.
- Faith community projects must be part of wider violence prevention and response networks and not siloed as separate or ‘one-off’ initiatives divorced from broader sector goals for social change.

PRINCIPLE 3: CO-DESIGN AND CO-DELIVER INITIATIVES

Principle summary

All evidence from evaluated initiatives to address violence against women and family violence in faith communities suggests that interventions and programs should be jointly designed by faith leaders, communities, and specialist sector experts. Involving faith leaders and community in design and delivery ensures resources are appropriate and relevant to local faith contexts and that communities are engaged.

Implementation findings

As described, violence prevention and response experts were involved in project design and delivery, particularly for the training programs (see Principle 2). This was only one aspect of the co-design processes involved in the development and implementation of the pilot projects. Faith leaders and community members participated in a range of consultations, governance and advisory groups, and reflective practice opportunities to design tailored capacity-building activities and resources.

One of the critical aspects of the co-design and implementation work within the pilot projects was building on the many strengths within faith communities. All of the faith communities had some degree of prior involvement with initiatives addressing violence against women and family violence. For example, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has delivered a smaller-scale prevention project since 2011, which encompassed training and other capacity-building resources for lay and ordained leaders. In the Hindu community, ISCKON established an international statement condemning family violence and an ISCKON faith leader in a high position has led initiatives to address family violence since 2016. Women's Health in the Southeast (WHISE) and the Victorian Sikh Gurdwaras Council had previously worked on family violence initiatives together. The Buddhist Council of Victoria's project was enabled by the prior work of Sakyadhita, a national Buddhist women's organisation promoting gender equality. The Uniting Church has addressed family violence issues for several years through training programs and policy work. Some of the faith communities were also experienced with other social programs that helped pave the way for the projects, for example, prior work on mental health initiatives, child safe standards, youth groups, playgroups, and financial aid programs.

The people involved in leading the projects also brought a wide range of knowledge, skills, and expertise into their work. In particular, project personnel recruited by faith-based organisations were individuals who were either of the faith themselves or connected to it through previous work with the faith community. They also held unique skillsets with combined expertise in community development, adult education, and preventing violence against women and family violence.

Furthermore, people within the faith communities provided their own expertise, not only about the faith itself, but from their professional backgrounds and personal knowledge and skills in education, legal services, organisational change management, social sciences, social work, and counselling. Some people also shared their personal experiences with family violence to bring a victim-survivor's perspective.

Transparent governance and advisory processes were an important part of project co-design. Although the structure and make-up of the governance and advisory groups differed across the projects, they generally included senior faith leaders (ordained and lay) and individuals with expertise in the faith and in preventing violence against women and family violence.

Key informants described the value of setting up appropriate governance and advisory processes within the faith context, including:

- Ensuring that faith leaders and community members, particularly those who may feel reticent or resistant to the project, understood that the work was internally driven and designed by and for the faith community.
- Providing opportunities for faith leaders to share their views across the spectrum of theological differences within the faith community in order to find common ground on violence prevention and response goals.
- Enabling transparent processes across all aspects of design and implementation, particularly in faith communities with less hierarchical leadership structures and multiple competing stakeholder views and interests.
- Bringing faith leaders together with representatives from the prevention and response sectors to share knowledge and enable relationship-building.

- Ensuring that women’s knowledge and perspectives were central to co-design, particularly within male-dominated environments.

Although there were many strengths within the co-design processes, key informants noted that starting up the pilot projects and undertaking this work in a genuinely collaborative way took a significant amount of time.

In some projects, finding qualified people with expertise in the faith and preventing violence against women took several months causing implementation delays, with further impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, in some faith communities, protocols are required to respectfully meet with ordained faith leaders (e.g., such as bringing offerings) and it is necessary to work around their busy schedules and competing demands. Similarly, lay leaders were often volunteers and engagement processes had to take place after-hours as they juggled their faith commitments with family, home, and work responsibilities. Taking time was also required to build trust and ‘socialise’ the project in a highly relational way, pre-emptively managing resistance from individuals who may be opposed to change.

These various conditions within faith communities meant that some of the pilot projects required most of the 18-month timeline to develop and prepare activities. This speaks to the importance of providing longer timelines to initiate faith community projects and of sustained resourcing to maintain momentum in their work, as described by this key informant:

“There is deep merit in working with faith communities in a faith-informed manner. We bandy about terms like ‘co-design’, and try to put a structure around it, but the organic co-design was truly valuable. We need to see that allowed and encouraged.”

– project personnel

This finding is congruent with previous research which found that faith-based organisations are frequently pressured to deliver immediate, tangible results that may not necessarily translate into sustained change (Le Roux, 2015, p.44).

KEY LESSONS

- Faith communities contain a broad range of assets and enablers for co-designing violence prevention and response projects, including prior work in this area (or related issues), and the expertise and skills of people in faith settings.
- Clear and transparent governance and advisory processes are essential for engendering trust in the project across the faith community.
- The community development work required to collaboratively initiate, design, and implement projects addressing challenging issues, such as violence against women and family violence, takes a significant amount of time and resourcing.

Case study: Uniting Church Project – Partnership work to co-design and co-deliver

The Uniting Church pilot project centred around the development and implementation of a training program for ordained and lay faith leaders across Victoria. Other activities included informal coaching support to faith leaders, a community of practice where faith leaders could discuss teaching and preaching on family violence issues, and a newsletter to keep faith leaders and church members updated on project activities.

As discussed under Principles 2 and 3, all pilot projects collaborated with violence prevention and response experts to design training and resources. For the Uniting Church, this provided an ideal opportunity to partner with their service arm, Uniting Vic.Tas, which provides family violence services through specialist counselling programs and support groups for victim-survivors, behaviour change programs for men who use violence, and case management and family support for adolescents using violence in the home.

Uniting Vic.Tas provided a training specialist to work closely with Uniting Church project personnel. Together, they undertook processes to ensure the training was tailored for the Uniting Church context. This included consulting with a women's advisory group consisting of lay and ordained faith leaders who provided feedback using their theological expertise and experience as women in the Church. Furthermore, a pilot training session was delivered to a group of 12 faith leaders from across the state to build their confidence in the training format and content, make adjustments from their feedback, and recruit them as project champions.

Through their collaborative work, the Uniting Church and Uniting Vic.Tas developed a training program and accompanying manual that reflected the needs and values of Uniting Church faith leaders. As such, the training was designed to equip faith leaders with the skills and knowledge to recognise the signs of abuse, handle disclosures and referrals, and use Christian teachings to promote the church as a safe place that aims to prevent and respond to family violence.

Furthermore, the training reflected the inclusive values of the Uniting Church recognising the impacts of family violence on women and children and people across the social spectrum including those who identify as LGBTQI. As many faith leaders work in regional and rural communities, the training also included content relevant to their contexts.

Key informants advised they hope to use this experience to further develop other tailored capacity-building resources and activities for faith leaders, including bespoke approaches for multicultural communities in the Uniting Church.

PRINCIPLE 4: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Principle summary

Gender inequality plays a central role in driving violence against women and family violence. There is considerable evidence that some faith leaders and communities may reinforce expressions of gender inequality, such as men's control of decision-making or rigid gender roles and identities. In many faith communities, leadership roles are also predominantly held by men, reinforcing notions of men's power over women, and rigid gender roles. Activities designed to prevent violence against women and family violence should model equality and respectful working relationships between men and women. It is also important to centre the perspectives of women of faith by establishing women's advisory groups and promoting opportunities for women's leadership.

Implementation findings

Promoting gender equality was built into the pilot projects in a few ways. Firstly, project personnel drew on evidence-based prevention resources as they developed tailored training content and resources for specific faith contexts. Such resources included Our Watch's Change the Story Framework, Respectful Relationships materials from the Department of Education and Training, and the Evidence Guide developed during Phase I.

Secondly, the project provided opportunities for faith leaders to critically engage with the sacred texts and scriptures of the faith that have been used to perpetuate gender inequality and abuse against victim-survivors, as well as those texts that counteract those harms and promote values of equality, love, compassion, and non-violence. This 'faith-focused' approach enabled faith leaders to access their own theological expertise and ground the project work within the faith context.

“I come from a Hare Krishna background, and I've been able to introduce scriptural references and references from our founding spiritual master that speak very strongly against any form of domestic violence.”

– Hindu faith leader

Furthermore, all pilot projects ensured that women's voices and leadership were incorporated into their work, primarily through the establishment of women's advisory

groups. These groups were engaged as part of the co-design process, either through existing mechanisms within the faith community or new groups formed for the pilot projects. Across the projects, the women's advisory groups helped to:

- Provide feedback on training content, capacity-building activities, and resources in development.
- Suggest community engagement approaches that would work within the specific faith context, including ways of approaching male faith leaders who may be initially resistant to change.
- Strategise ways to connect the project goals with cultural and faith-based values and teachings.

In the Hindu project, it was noted that engaging with women was instrumental in brokering access to youth leaders who themselves took an interest in the project work and engaged in youth-specific training sessions.

“I think the fact that the women were so open was fantastic. The fact they wanted this course, they gave us access to their youth. That's a fantastic sign. I think that is what will help the next generation too because their mothers want that change.”

– project personnel

Finally, women's leadership was also strengthened through the positions created within the pilot projects themselves, as the majority of project implementation roles both centrally within the faith-based organisation and at local faith settings were held by women.

Despite these positive signs, key informants acknowledged ongoing challenges for tackling gender equality in their faith communities. This was particularly difficult in settings where women were not permitted ordination and where men dominated organisational leadership structures, relegating women to supporting roles 'behind the scenes' in faith settings. As such, some of the projects had difficulties modelling gender equal relationships between men and women, as outlined in the principle summary above. Key informants noted that making significant cultural shifts on these matters requires a long-term, multi-pronged, and multi-generational effort.

KEY LESSONS

- Evidence-based violence prevention resources (such as Change the Story) help promote consistent messaging, however, such resources need to be tailored to maximise engagement in diverse cultural and faith-based contexts.
- Engaging with the texts and teachings of the faith itself helps build on faith leaders' own expertise and intrinsic motivations to address the gendered drivers of violence against women and family violence.
- Gender equality can be integrated into the project design through women's advisory processes and the establishment of new roles, such as project leads and dedicated support roles for victim-survivors.

Case study: Hindu Project – Engaging women's leadership

The Victorian Government funded the Faith Communities Council of Victoria to work in partnership with Kulturbrille, a specialist consulting practice working with organisations to develop and deliver culturally informed family violence programs. The Kulturbrille consultant is from a Hindu background and is an experienced specialist family violence practitioner and trainer. This enabled collaborative co-design processes and the development of tailored training and resources with two Hindu organisations – the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the Global Organisation of Divinity (GOD).

Engaging women within both ISKCON and GOD was a critical aspect of the co-design process for the pilot project. This primarily involved setting up advisory groups with women who were active volunteers in these organisations, performing duties such as coordinating rosters, events, Sunday schools and community support programs. Workshops were held with women in both ISKCON and GOD to co-design and tailor the training program and accompanying resources for their particular faith contexts.

Key informants advised that the women brought their experiences and expertise as women within the Hindu faith to the co-design process sharing their knowledge of Hindu teachings and values and particular skills and capabilities from their professional backgrounds.

The women participated in community engagement processes, provided feedback on training content, and highlighted the potential issues of opposition and resistance in their faith settings. Importantly, they also brokered relationships with youth leaders who themselves expressed interest in information about forming healthy relationships. This resulted in a series of training sessions targeting faith leaders and congregants with specific workshops designed for men, women, and youth.

This approach exemplified both the importance of engaging women as leaders and advisors and taking a flexible, organic co-design approach to develop capacity building strategies situated within the nuances and contexts of the faith community.

PRINCIPLE 5: ANTICIPATE AND ADDRESS RESISTANCE

Principle summary

Efforts towards gender equality and changes in gender norms can create strong responses in both men and women, regardless of their faith or background. In faith communities, negative feelings about gender equality initiatives can sometimes be reinforced or justified by interpretations of scripture and rigid gender roles in faith contexts. Resistance is, therefore, to be expected and can be countered by planning and developing strategies to specifically address this issue.

Implementation findings

Overall, the pilot projects attracted faith leaders and community members who were enthusiastic about addressing violence against women and family violence issues. However, key informants advised that some individuals expressed:

- Reticence due to past negative experiences with mainstream prevention education that was not tailored to the faith community or cultural context.
- Worries that involvement in the project would stigmatise their faith community or specific faith setting if others thought this meant they had a particular problem with violence.
- Beliefs that the project was going to impose a secular 'outsider' agenda and dismiss the values and beliefs of the faith.
- Oppositional attitudes that denied the connection between gender inequality and violence against women and/or its relevance to the faith community.

Even in projects where such concerns were not overtly expressed, some key informants wondered if the difficulties they experienced engaging some 'silent' faith leaders was a sign that they were opposed or worried about the project in some way.

Much of this resistance was situated in the vast spectrum of theological, ideological, and cultural differences *within* faith communities that shape peoples' perspectives on sex, gender, family relationships, and issues of equality. Key informants noted how views on these matters within faith communities, even at local faith settings, range from highly

progressive and egalitarian through to more conservative and 'traditional'. For some at the more conservative end, gender equality messaging is in direct opposition to their theological position and structures that uphold men's leadership in the faith community. Project personnel were in the difficult position of engaging faith leaders situated on both ends of the spectrum and everywhere in-between.

Finding ways to anticipate and manage resistance across these intra-faith complexities was an ongoing endeavour for the pilot projects, however, data analysis revealed some of the ways project personnel and faith leaders themselves handled this issue.

One of the most critical avenues for managing resistance was through the 'faith-focused' approach described in Principle 4. This was particularly important for reaching out to more conservative audiences while also finding common ground amongst all faith leaders who share in the values and teachings of their religious traditions.

“We have to show that there is a strong mandate for this – it is something that has been happening long before the Victorian government decided to do work with faith communities. In our faith we have examples that go before that.”

– project personnel

This was not necessarily always an easy process and certainly key informants described challenging discussions amongst faith leaders. Nevertheless, the opportunity to find common ground in the faith itself was an important aspect of overcoming resistance and moving project work forward.

Another approach involved careful use of language to enable broad engagement and pre-emptively manage backlash at the outset. This was challenging in that the key informants experienced the 'push and pull' of wanting to maintain a strong focus on the underpinning gendered drivers of violence against women and family violence, while also wanting to engage with faith leaders 'where they were at' and keep them on board with the project. As such, the pilot projects found different terms to describe their work, and sometimes shifted language flexibly depending on the specific audience or faith setting emphasising either violence against women, family violence or intimate partner violence, controlling or abusive behaviours, or broader ideas about healthy families and respectful relationships.

Finally, another approach involved identifying faith leaders and faith settings that expressed readiness for change and were less likely to face substantial resistance. This meant working with faith leaders where there was ‘fertile ground’ for them to participate and take ownership of implementation, and ‘putting on hold’ those who were not ready to take this on. Most of the projects experienced this to some extent and in some cases, this resulted in pausing implementation work and re-strategising to gently bring people on board.

KEY LESSONS

- Resistance may be based in reticence, fear of stigmatisation, and/or opposition to change and may be further complicated by the theological, ideological, and cultural ‘intra-faith’ tensions within the faith community.
- Resistance can be managed with a ‘faith-focused’ approach to explore the common ground and motivations amongst faith leaders and community members to address violence against women and family violence.
- Project language may need to be tailored to maximise engagement from a broad range of community stakeholders and mitigate potential backlash from the outset.
- Readiness is essential for engagement and some faith settings may need more time, and initiatives may need to be re-strategised, to overcome issues of resistance.

Case study: Anglican Project – Overcoming resistance and enabling ownership

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has delivered prevention initiatives since 2011, which was formalised in 2018 through the recruitment of a full-time program manager and expanded via the funding support provided through the Faith Communities Project. As such, the Diocese developed their pilot project as an inter-connected initiative within their broader Preventing Violence against Women program.

Five churches were selected to participate in the pilot ‘whole church’ initiative where ordained and lay faith leaders participated in training in violence prevention and response, peer learning, and coaching support. They were also provided with a range of supporting resources including sermon guidelines, a Bible studies series, gender audit tool, videos, posters, and other materials.

Given their prior history in violence prevention work, the Diocese were aware that resistance to project implementation was likely situated within the broad spectrum of intersecting theological, ideological, cultural contexts across the Anglican Church, which influence faith leaders and community members views on issues pertaining to gender equality and the roles of men and women in family, the church and society.

To pre-emptively manage potential conflicts and tensions, the Diocese undertook a collaborative process with faith leaders with differing theological positions to develop a communications guide based on shared Christian values and objectives to address violence against women and promote safety in the Church. The guide was an asset for introducing the project at the pilot churches and provided information to faith leaders and community members about the importance of the project to the Diocese. That said, there were some instances of resistance arising at the pilot church level related to different views on gender equality issues alongside practical implementation support needs.

One particular pilot church demonstrated a strategy to overcome these challenges. In this setting, resistance emerged from some influential members of the congregation during a period of time when there was a gap in leadership as the original vicar, who had initially endorsed the project, transferred to another church. The project was put on hold while the lay leaders undertaking project implementation sought support from the coaching offered by the Diocese. This led to securing the endorsement of the incoming vicar and making adaptations to the training to gently bring church members on board with the project. Notably, this strategic work was also enabled by the expertise of the lay leaders who were experienced in organisational change management and violence prevention work.

The training adaptation transformed the original one-day format into a cycle of learning and reflection held over several weeks. Training was split into two separate sessions with reflective discussions held before, during and after these sessions. This enabled participants in the church to discuss their different points of view as they reflected on their learning, find common ground through their shared Christian values, and develop their own collective motivations for project implementation. As such, the project was re-invigorated with support from the new vicar and influential church members going forward.

PRINCIPLE 6: RECOGNISE INTERSECTIONALITY

Principle summary

Faith communities in Victoria are highly diverse, with members from a range of cultures, language groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and migration pathways. Efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and family violence must take an intersectional approach and recognise how gender inequality intersects with other forms of social oppression. Faith leaders also need skills for working cross-culturally and in a trauma-informed way.

Implementation findings

The experiences of those working in the pilot projects highlighted the importance of understanding that a 'faith community' is not a monolithic construct, and that 'people of faith', including faith leaders and faith community members, are not singular in their identities nor necessarily homogenous in their interpretation and relationship to their faith. What aspects of faith a person relates to and their presence and interaction within a faith community is inevitably shaped by other intersecting factors including their social and cultural backgrounds, political ideologies, access to power and privilege, and experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Finding ways to take an intersectional approach was one of the more challenging implementation issues across all pilot projects. Key informants identified the need to:

- Find ways to talk about intersectionality in a practical and concrete manner (rather than as an abstract theory), particularly by drawing on peoples' lived experiences of gender inequality, racism, xenophobia, trauma, and socio-economic disadvantage.
- Manage challenges engaging with community members facing intersectional marginalisation in the faith setting, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, culturally-specific congregations, and young people.
- Consider intersecting barriers where there were language differences, precarious visa status, and socio-economic barriers (e.g., casual employment) prohibiting participation.
- Work with different cultural norms around family relationships and gender roles, particularly where community members minimised the seriousness of family violence given traumatic experiences of state-

sanctioned violence, conflict, and war in their countries of origin.

- Understand that community members may have different levels of awareness of Australian laws about family violence depending on how recently they migrated to the country.
- Support victim-survivors who experience compounding disadvantage due to language barriers, precarious migration status, poverty, and concerns about ostracisation and isolation from their family, community, and faith if they seek help.
- Address the lack of in-language and culturally/faith appropriate prevention education resources available.

Many of these concerns were still outstanding when the pilot project timelines came to an end. This reinforces the key lesson under Principle 3, recognising that community development work within faith communities requires lengthy periods of engagement and co-design and considered reflective practice.

“When you live in the dominant culture, you’re used to living in it, and you don’t realise that people perceive the world differently. There are conversations to be had [about violence against women] that respect people as proud of their culture.”

– Uniting Church faith leader

Despite these challenges, the pilot projects were able to navigate some aspects of an intersectional approach, through:

- Finding people who could volunteer time to co-design, translate, and deliver training and other capacity-building activities in community languages.
- Adapting prevention resources to improve their relevance to cultural contexts with specific examples that would resonate with faith community members.
- Tailoring training and capacity-building activities for the cultural context and traditions of specific faith settings.

KEY LESSONS

- Engagement with faith leaders and faith communities on issues of intersectionality must be grounded in an understanding of community members' own lived experiences, rather than abstract theoretical concepts.
- Taking an intersectional approach means scoping project timelines that adequately enable in-depth engagement with faith leaders and community members across diverse backgrounds with consideration to the intersecting constraints that create barriers to participation (e.g., precarious migration status, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers, etc.).

Case study: Buddhist Project – Tailoring for intersectional and theological diversity

The Buddhist Council of Victoria engaged with faith leaders and community members who were diverse in theological traditions (i.e., Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana Buddhist traditions), cultural backgrounds, languages spoken, and migration experiences, including those who had lived experiences as refugees fleeing persecution in their countries of origin.

Given this theological and intersectional diversity, project personnel undertook co-design processes to develop capacity-building activities and resources tailored to varying faith traditions, cultures, and languages within the Victorian Buddhist community.

This work was undertaken in close partnership with an advisory group that consisted of representatives from Buddhist temples engaged with the project, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, the University of Melbourne, and a consultant researcher with expertise in the intersection of the Buddhist faith and gender equality. Guidance was also sought from an advisory group of Buddhist women faith leaders. Furthermore, a pilot session was run with a group of faith leaders from various temples to refine the training prior to online delivery during COVID-19 restrictions. This enabled the development of training content and resources that both drew on the prevention evidence base and reflected the values and teachings of diverse Buddhist faith traditions and cultures.

As a result of these co-design processes, the Council were able to provide training in violence prevention and response to ten temples and one monastery with additional sessions provided in-language at Chinese and Vietnamese temples (the latter focusing particularly on elder abuse issues). Resources were also produced and disseminated to all Buddhist faith communities via the Council's website and communications processes. This included a toolkit guiding faith leaders in violence prevention and response, family violence help cards in community languages (Chinese, Vietnamese, and English), posters, and YouTube videos featuring prominent Buddhist leaders, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and specialist family violence services promoting prevention messages with English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Sinhalese subtitles. The Council also worked closely with three temples to recruit 'family violence outreach worker' roles to support local implementation and handle victim-survivor disclosures and referrals.

This process demonstrated the nuanced co-design work required to deliver capacity-building initiatives tailored to intersectional and theological diversity and signals the importance of integrating an intersectional lens into faith community projects from the outset.

PRINCIPLE 7: MULTI-FACETED APPROACHES TO CAPACITY BUILDING

Principle summary

Previous efforts to build the capacity of faith leaders to prevent and respond to violence against women and family violence have taken multi-faceted approaches both within faith communities and via inter-faith initiatives. Choosing the most effective approach will depend on the particular circumstances, context and needs of the faith community. Prior research has shown that peer mentoring approaches are effective for changing faith leaders' attitudes and some studies also suggest that online approaches can support faith leaders with limited time (although online engagement may not be effective on its own). Multifaith (aka interfaith) approaches may help build momentum, commitment, and collaboration between different faith communities, however, evidence suggests that there can be challenges due to different organisational and hierarchical structures and, in particular, different starting points regarding beliefs about gender inequality.

Implementation findings

As described in the Background, the capacity-building centrepiece for the pilot projects (with the exception of the multifaith project), was the provision of violence prevention and response training to faith leaders.

Training development responded to recommendation 163 from the Royal Commission into Family Violence (see Background). Notably, this recommendation also suggested that training must include pre-service learning for faith leaders within their own faith education institutes. However, this recommendation was not equally applicable across different faith communities – many faith leaders active in Victoria have not had formal training through an educational institute, and many others received their theological training or official accreditation for their role prior to arrival in Australia.

Even in faith communities where there are faith education institutes present in Victoria, implementation of this recommendation was particularly challenging given the limited resources and timeline afforded to the pilot projects and the fact that some of these institutes are separate entities from the faith-based organisations undertaking the project work. Some progress was made, for example, in

the Anglican project where the Diocese engaged staff from the Anglican colleges (Trinity and Ridley) in their training sessions, however, this was only an initial foray into the pre-service setting.

Key informants from the pilot projects noted that further resourcing and partnership work with faith training institutes is required, particularly as these institutes often report an overcrowded curriculum, making it difficult to embed new teaching. Integration of violence prevention and response content into existing courses or alternative approaches may need to be explored through a specific project.

Key informants advised that while training was a critical entry point for faith leaders' capacity-building, other capacity-building initiatives and resources were required to progress the kind of 'personal journey of change' needed to transform and sustain faith leaders' capabilities and enable further reach and impact into the faith community in the long-term.

“Sustainability can only happen when we're not asking people to express an interest in doing the training, we need to look at the long-haul game where we need to include education as part of the Sunday school program, not just as respectful relationships but as serious consent, control, power issues.”

- Sikh community faith leader

As such, the pilot projects endeavoured to implement complementary capacity-building initiatives, which varied depending on their resourcing and limited timelines. These other initiatives included individual coaching and mentoring for faith leaders, peer learning opportunities, special forums and events (see Appendix A). Notably, the separate evaluation of the Anglican project found that the combination of training, coaching and peer learning was viewed by faith leaders as effective for sustaining their learning and confidence to progress violence prevention and response work in their local settings (Davis et al., 2021), complementing similar evidence found previously in this faith context (Holmes, 2011).

Previous studies have also suggested that online capacity-building approaches may provide a solution for engaging time-poor faith leaders, although there is limited evaluation of their effectiveness (Choi et al.,

2017; Nason-Clark et al., 2017). The pilot projects did not necessarily set out to test this as face-to-face engagement was deemed more appropriate in most settings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, all projects were forced to pivot to online engagement for co-design processes, training sessions and other capacity building activities. Key informants advised that this did enable busy faith leaders (ordained and lay) to engage more easily and provided greater reach across geographic distances. For example, the Uniting Church, which delivered their training program at a state-wide level, were able to engage online with faith leaders in rural and regional locations and tailor training to address their specific concerns.

That said, online engagement did not work for everyone. One of the faith communities that was originally considered for the Hindu project do not normally engage online and decided that they would pause their involvement until COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Challenges also arose for engaging culturally-specific groups within faith communities who were limited in their online engagement due to access and language barriers.

Capacity-building at the multifaith level was a particular challenge in the project work led by the Faith Communities Council of Victoria as exemplified in the case study below.

KEY LESSONS

- Training is a critical entry point for capacity-building, however, sustaining change likely requires complementary initiatives such as coaching and peer learning to support faith leaders to put their learning into practice.
- Integrating violence prevention and response training into pre-service faith education institutes is a project unto itself and requires dedicated resourcing and partnership work.
- Online engagement can help reach time-poor faith leaders in flexible ways, across geographic distances, however, this is not always suitable for specific faith groups and cultural communities.
- Enabling transformative change on violence against women and family violence issues requires specific, tailored approaches led by and for faith communities, as multifaith projects struggle to progress past initial collaborative work.
- Multifaith approaches may be more useful for enabling communities of practice amongst leaders involved in developing and implementing faith-specific projects.

Case study: Multifaith project – The challenges and benefits of multifaith collaboration

The Faith Communities Council of Victoria were tasked with developing a multifaith website and manual to provide guidance to a broad spectrum of faith leaders and faith communities interested in addressing violence against women and family violence. In particular, these resources were intended for smaller faith communities not funded by the Faith Communities Project.

There was certainly a willingness and commitment by faith leaders in the multifaith project to develop these resources, however, once project work progressed to discussion of detail, it became apparent that a lengthy co-design period was required to work across the different structures, approaches, and belief systems held by diverse faith communities. In particular, there were significant challenges finding agreed language about violence and gender equality, similar to the intra-faith tensions described in Principle 5.

Key informants advised that during consultations with the project's multifaith advisory group, it became clear that a single manual for all faith communities to use would be impractical as it would not sufficiently resonate with their specific and diverse contexts and beliefs. Advisory members noted that faith leaders would be much more likely to use violence prevention resources developed within their own faith community. There were also concerns that disseminating a manual without complementary funding for training and ongoing support across faith communities could result in misapplication and potentially put victim-survivors at risk. This highlighted the importance of resourcing project work led by and for specific faith communities themselves, as seen in the other pilot projects.

Given these circumstances, the decision was made to prioritise website development instead of the manual and ensure that the website provided specific sections and resources for each faith with links to further information and support for prevention project work. The website was launched near the end of Phase II and can be found at <http://faithsafe.org.au/>.

While multifaith projects may have limitations, multifaith collaboration was seen as particularly useful, informative, and important for building solidarity and reducing isolation amongst those leading transformative work within their own faith communities. This was particularly evident in the community of practice led by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and project meetings with DPC's Multifaith Advisory Group. Both multifaith settings enabled pilot project personnel to share ideas and resources, discuss design and implementation issues, debrief challenges, and encourage one another.

PRINCIPLE 8: ENGAGE SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Principle summary

Evidence suggests that in faith communities with clear governance and hierarchical structures there are opportunities to engage senior leadership in planning and authorising prevention work, including encouraging wider community engagement, investing resources, promoting awareness, and reducing potential resistance. However, research is needed to understand the most appropriate and sustainable approach to engaging leadership in non-hierarchical and decentralised faith communities.

Implementation findings

Key informants across all pilot projects advised that implementation would not have been possible without the support of influential faith leaders who authorised the projects, participated in governance structures, and communicated the importance of the initiative to the faith community.

"People that make change are individuals in high positions, you can have the best program, the best funding, but unless you find that individual that is high up, that is willing to make that change, you've got no chance."

– project personnel.

In the hierarchical faith communities (e.g., Anglican and Buddhist projects), ordained leaders in high positions within the faith-based organisations (e.g., Bishops, Venerable Buddhist Leaders) were engaged to authorise the projects. This in turn enabled project personnel to set up governance and advisory mechanisms, engage faith leaders and community members into co-design processes, encourage participation in training, and progress implementation in local faith settings.

In non-hierarchical faith communities, ordained leaders also provided this authorising role, as seen in the Hindu and Uniting Church projects where respected faith leaders promoted the project and encouraged participation of other faith leaders and community members. In the Sikh community, the authorisation role was held by respected lay leaders, which was deemed more appropriate for their context (see Role of Faith Leaders).

While the mandate given to projects by influential faith leaders was integral for project implementation in most cases, it did not always facilitate a smooth path into local faith settings. There were examples in the pilot projects where faith leaders or other powerholders (such as members of the faith settings' governing council) were reticent or resistant to project implementation. While project personnel could sometimes leverage from the higher faith leaders' endorsement, additional work at the local level was required, sometimes using resistance management strategies (see Principle 5) to move the project forward (see Principle 5).

KEY LESSONS

- Authorisation from influential faith leaders (ordained or lay, or both, depending on context), is critical for initiating project work and gaining access to the people and structures within the faith community.
- Additional authorisation may also be required at the local faith setting level to facilitate implementation and overcome potential resistance.

Case study: Sikh Project – Leadership in a non-hierarchical setting

The Victorian Sikh Gurdwaras Council (VSGC) partnered with Women’s Health in the Southeast (WHISE) to establish the pilot project with four gurdwaras across Greater Melbourne and one regional location.

Project activities included training sessions delivered to separate groups of community leaders, men, women, youth, and a mixed gender group, an extensive communications strategy using multi-media to reach out to the Sikh community, and resources to support referral pathways to specialist family violence services.

The leadership signified by the partnership between VSGC and WHISE was described by key informants in the Sikh community as critical to the rollout of the implementation activities (Moosad et al., 2021). Key informants advised that this was underpinned by transparent governance processes, which helped engender trust in the project, and the combined faith and violence prevention expertise offered by representatives from both organisations. As one Sikh community member suggested, “we’re not experts in this domain, that’s why we get experts to build capacity”.

VSGC and WHISE worked together to recruit members for the steering committee and appoint specialists (Kulturbrille and InTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence) to develop training, communications, and referral pathway resources. The processes of calling for expressions of interest and interviewing potential applicants for the steering committee and consulting roles were described as bringing ‘professionalism’ and ‘fairness’ to the project. WHISE and VSGC also collaborated to ensure adherence to project timelines and reporting expectations from government funders.

For their part, WHISE was clear that their ‘backbone’ role was just that. Ultimately, the pilot project was community-owned and led and decisions about training and resources were made by the steering committee in consultation with the Sikh community members.

The partnership between VSGC and WHISE in establishing clear leadership and governance processes strengthened the participatory action research nature of the pilot project and helped to facilitate strong engagement from gurdwaras.

PRINCIPLE 9: BUILD THE EVIDENCE BASE

Principle summary

While there is growing evidence about responding to and preventing violence against women and family violence in faith communities, there are still considerable gaps in knowledge. Most research is focused on the major denominations of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths with less known about smaller and non-Abrahamic faith communities. Additionally, there is a lack of evidence about what works to enable behaviour change in religious men who perpetrate violence and abuse. Faith communities should be properly resourced and supported to measure and share learnings about the impacts of their efforts.

Implementation findings

The Faith Communities Project focused on developing the capacity of faith leaders specifically to prevent and respond to violence against women and family violence. As such, some aspects of this principle were out of scope for the pilot projects, such as research into appropriate behaviour change responses for religious men.⁴ Nevertheless, the findings of the Phase I literature review alongside the findings of this evaluation at the end of Phase II, contributes to the evidence-base, particularly with respect to defining the role of faith leaders and navigating the complexities of implementation work in faith communities.

Additionally, while this evaluation was focused on the development and implementation of pilot projects, data analysis found emerging signs of change worth noting, as per the evaluation objectives. Key informants observed that many faith leaders were:

- Demonstrating improved confidence and capability to identify the signs of family violence, sensitively seek out and respond to victim-survivor disclosures, understand their role boundaries to support referrals to specialist services.
- Describing their attitude shifts on issues of gender equality and making connections between the gendered drivers and detrimental outcomes of violence against women and family violence.

- Encouraging cultural shifts in their local faith settings so that people feel comfortable and supported to talk about gender inequality, violence against women and family violence issues.
- Interested in implementing designated lay roles, and potentially care teams, to support victim-survivors, particularly those who may not be ready or able to access specialist services.
- Looking for opportunities to support women's leadership and modelling of positive and equal relationships between men and women.
- Developing and practicing prevention messaging through their communications and religious lectures (e.g., sermons, dharma talks, spiritual study groups).
- Enthusiastic to learn more with requests for additional training and education about bystander interventions and responses to perpetrators.
- Motivated to take ownership and sustain continue project implementation into the future.

It should be noted that these positive signs varied across the pilot projects and there may be other plausible alternative influences on faith leaders' attitudes and capabilities, such as public discourses on violence against women and their personal experiences. However, overall, these emerging signs of change represent the potential for future impact outcomes if the faith-based organisations continue to progress this important work.

KEY LESSONS

- Evidence is emerging about the specific roles of ordained and lay faith leaders for addressing violence against women and family violence alongside implementation strategies that may enable this work into the future.
- Early signs of change observed in faith leaders indicate the need to further investigate the transformative impacts of projects addressing violence against women and family violence in faith settings.

⁴Responses to perpetrators were noted as an area for further development in Principle 1. Such work could potentially involve a collaborative project involving faith communities and the men's behaviour change sector.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this evaluation provide information about the role of faith leaders in preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence, the barriers, and enablers to project implementation in faith communities, and the emerging signs of change that indicate possibilities for future impact should these projects continue to develop, embed, and sustain their initiatives.

The evaluation found many strengths in the pilot projects that enabled development and implementation, including the dedicated commitment of faith leaders and project personnel who brought their knowledge and skills into this work, a faith-focused approach that connected project goals with religious teachings and values, and flexible and highly relational co-design processes that developed and iterated capacity-building activities and resources in response to faith contexts and community needs.

There were barriers that hindered projects from furthering their implementation work. Most notably, there were limitations on what could be accomplished in an 18-month funded period. While much progress was made during this time, for some projects most of this period was taken up with project establishment and developmental processes. Other barriers included the detrimental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, navigating resistance to change, and challenges engaging with marginalised voices, particularly of community members from migrant and refugee backgrounds, culturally-specific congregations, and young people.

The evidence generated by the pilot projects demonstrated the application of principles for developing and implementing faith-based prevention projects (as outlined in the Phase 1 Evidence Guide). This evidence also adds new information to these principles. In particular, Principle 7 originally addressed the challenges of multifaith work, which was certainly confirmed by the experiences of the multifaith project led by the Faith Communities Council of Victoria (see Case Study: Multifaith project – The challenges and benefits of multifaith collaboration).

However, the findings show that faith-based projects must also contend with the challenges of intra-faith tensions situated within the complex interplay of theological, political, and cultural differences amongst faith leaders and within faith communities and settings.

Furthermore, Principle 5 noted the importance of anticipating and strategically managing resistance. This evaluation found that resistance is not only a matter of opposition to change, but also related to past negative experiences with mainstream prevention approaches, and concerns about stigmatisation. Strategies were developed to manage these issues within the faith context, including taking the aforementioned ‘faith-focused’ approach and the careful use of language to maximise engagement.

Positive signs of change emerged from the pilot projects that could signify the future impact of this work. This includes faith leaders reporting increased confidence to respond to family violence and offer support to victim-survivors, observations of attitudinal shifts on gender equality, and new opportunities for women to take up leadership roles in faith settings.

Despite these positive signs, key informants were realistic that the pace of change is slow and further resourcing, time and support is required to shift entrenched gendered and intersectional power dynamics in some faith settings. The enormity of this task is not unique to faith communities but one that is common to all social and institutional contexts across Australia, and indeed, globally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are derived from the findings, including the key lessons described in this report to further implement and sustain faith-based projects addressing violence against women and family violence. The recommendations are targeted at either project funders and policy makers or faith-based organisations, but they are also not mutually exclusive, and may be useful across these stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND POLICY MAKERS

1. Ensure that faith-based organisations are adequately resourced and funded with dedicated roles and multi-year timelines to progress ongoing, collaborative prevention work with stakeholders in faith communities.
2. Conduct longitudinal evaluation using participatory processes to capture evidence about implementation lessons, continuous improvement, and the longer-term impact of faith community prevention projects.
3. Support faith-based organisations to establish multi-faceted approaches to capacity-building, including but not limited to training, peer support, coaching and educative resources.
4. Apply an intersectional lens to ensure that project funding, co-design, and community engagement processes help to remove barriers to participation for diverse cohorts across faith communities and integrate their needs into project work.
5. Coordinate partnerships between faith community projects and prevention and response agencies to enable knowledge exchange and collaboration.
6. Work with specialist family violence services to remove referral barriers for victim-survivors and perpetrators of faith, and increase service capacity, including through the recruitment of multi/bi-lingual specialist practitioners with cultural and faith-based backgrounds.
7. Establish multifaith communities of practice (rather than multifaith projects) where people leading faith community projects can collaborate, share resources, and support each other.
8. Consider funding dedicated roles within local faith settings (i.e., gurdwaras, temples, churches) to support the implementation of capacity-building initiatives and handle disclosures and referral pathways for community members seeking support.
9. Consider funding dedicated project work to support faith leaders to safely respond to perpetrators in faith communities, alongside responses to victim-survivors and children.
10. Consider dedicated funding to implement recommendation 163 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence to integrate violence prevention and response training in faith leaders' pre-service education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

1. Assess readiness for change during project scoping and initiation by considering:
 - a. Strengths and assets within the faith community, such as prior experiences addressing violence against women, family violence or related issues, and the expertise and skills of people within faith communities who can lead, contribute to, and champion the project; and
 - b. potential resistance to change amongst faith leaders and community members to design strategies to overcome such resistance.
2. Establish clear and transparent governance and advisory processes to engender community trust in the project, combine expertise in faith and violence prevention, and ensure the voices of women and people who experience intersecting oppressions are centralised in project design and implementation.

3. Take a 'faith-focused' approach that engages faith leaders' theological expertise and intrinsic motivations to address violence against women and family violence through the teachings and values of their faith.
4. Consider the multi-faceted and complementary roles that both ordained faith leaders and community lay leaders can play to authorise and design projects, build capacity, promote safety, and lead change in faith communities.
5. Promote gender equality in the project design through establishing new leadership roles for women in faith settings, establishing women's advisory groups, and opportunities for men and women to share responsibilities and model respectful relationships in the faith setting.
6. Locate or develop tailored evidence-based prevention and response resources, including in community languages, that maximises engagement of faith leaders and community members across diverse backgrounds.
7. Establish suitable methods for community engagement (online, in-person, after hours, weekends) that provide opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in co-design and ensure that projects meet their specific needs.
8. Create opportunities for faith leaders and community members to meet professionals from specialist family violence services and prevention agencies to demystify each other's roles, establish referral pathways and build solidarity in prevention efforts.

REFERENCES

- Allen, K., & Wozniak, D. (2010). The language of health: Women's voices in healing and recovering from domestic violence. *Social Work in Mental Health*, 9(1), 37–55.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). *2016 Census of Population and Housing: Religion in Australia. ABS cat. no. 2071.0*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/bySubject/2071.0~2016~MainFeatures~ReligionDataSummary~70>
- Bains, S. K. (2020). Interrogating gender in Sikh tradition and practice. *Religions*, 11(34), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010034>
- CFIR Research Team. (2019). *Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research*. Center for Clinical Management Research.
- Chen, J. (2017). *Intersectionality Matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women*. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839440933-003>
- Choi, Y., Phua, J., Armstrong, K., & An, S. (2017). Negotiating the cultural steps in developing an online intervention for Korean American intimate partner violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 26(8), 920–936.
- Cox, P. (2015). *Violence against women in Australia: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012: Key findings and future directions*. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Davis, E., Vaughan, C., Moosad, L., & Sullivan, C. (2021). *Evaluation of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne's Preventing Violence Against Women Program*. Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and the University of Melbourne. <https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/pvaw/evaluation/>
- Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2017). *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. State of Victoria. <https://www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence>
- Domestic Violence Victoria. (2020). *Code of Practice: Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim-Survivors*. 2nd Edition. Domestic Violence Victoria.
- Ferris, E. (2005). Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87(858), 311–325.
- Ghafournia, N. (2017). Muslim women and domestic violence: Developing a framework for social work practice. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 36(1–2), 146–163.
- Holmes, S. (2011). *Anglican Peer Mentoring Program: Equipping Anglican Leaders in Violence Prevention*. Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.
- Karam, A., Clague, J., Marshall, K., & Olivier, J. (2015). The view from above: Faith and health. *The Lancet*, 386, 22–24. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)61036-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)61036-4)
- Kwok, W. L. (2013). *Evaluating preventing violence against women initiatives: A participatory and learning-oriented approach for primary prevention in Victoria*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.
- Le Roux, E. (2015). *A scoping study on the role of faith communities and organisations in prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence: Implications for policy and practice*. UK Department for International Development. <http://sidebysidegender.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/DFiD-scoping-study-role-of-faith-re-SGBV.pdf>
- Moosad, L., Vaughan, C., & Davis, E. (2021). *Implementation Evaluation of the Victorian Sikh Gurduwaras Council's Prevention of Family Violence Pilot Project (unpublished)*. University of Melbourne.
- Nason-Clark, N., Fisher-Townsend, B., Holtmann, C., & McMullin, S. (2017). *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence: Understanding the challenges and proposing solutions*. Oxford University Press.

- Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), & VicHealth. (2015). *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*. Our Watch.
- Patton, M. Q. (1994). Developmental evaluation. *Evaluation Practice*, 15(3), 311–320.
- Patton, M. Q. (2006). Evaluation for the Way We Work. *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 13(1), 28–33.
- State of Victoria. (2016). Royal Commission into Family Violence: *Report and recommendations (Parl Paper No. 132)*. State of Victoria. <http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246.
- Vaughan, C., & Sullivan, C. (2019). *Technical Paper: Faith communities supporting healthy family relationships: a Participatory Action Research project with the Multifaith Advisory Group*. University of Melbourne. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511791376.004>
- Vaughan, C., Sullivan, C., Chen, J., & Vaid Sandhu, M. (2020). *What works to address violence against women and family violence within faith settings: An evidence guide*. University of Melbourne.
- Westenberg, L. (2017). “When She Calls for Help” - Domestic Violence in Christian Families. *Social Sciences*, 6(3), 71–81.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PILOT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following summarises capacity-building activities and resources delivered by the pilot projects during Phase II of the Faith Communities Project. For detailed information about resources please visit project websites or contact the organisations directly.

Project: “Preventing Violence against Women Whole Church Project”

Organisation: Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Website: <https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/pvaw/>

Primary objective: To support and equip ordained and lay leaders and Anglican communities to respond and prevent violence against women.

Target audience: The ‘whole church project’ was delivered to faith leaders and church members at five pilot churches within the Diocese’s broader pre-existing Preventing Violence against Women Program. As such, the pilot churches benefited from both Diocese-wide and pilot-specific activities and resources.

Diocese-wide activities and resources:

- Prevention and response training sessions delivered to 248 participants between July 2019 and November 2020.
- Regular mentoring and coaching support for faith leaders.
- Monthly peer learning sessions covering a range of topics such as family violence responses in pastoral care, intersectionality, and bystander action.
- Training and implementation of 22 dedicated church-based Family Safety Champion roles to handle family violence disclosures and referrals.
- Communications guide to support faith leaders to understand and talk about violence against women issues.
- Bystander action resources to support safe interventions when witnessing abusive behaviours or

violence-supporting attitudes.

- Physical and digital posters with contact information for family violence support.
- Family Violence Policy package to support appropriate responses to employees, volunteers and parishioners experiencing family violence.
- Statement of commitment for faith leaders to pledge their commitment to preventing and responding to violence against women and family violence.
- YouTube videos tailoring violence prevention and response information for Anglican audiences.

Additional ‘Whole Church’ pilot activities and resources:

- Gender assessment tool for pilot churches to analyse gender equality issues in their structures and practices.
- Sermon guide on gender equality issues for ordained clergy.
- Gender justice Bible study series and discussion sessions (with facilitators’ guides) for adults and youth/children’s ministries.

Project: “Buddhist Faith Communities Supporting Healthy Family Relationships”

Organisation: Buddhist Council of Victoria

Website: <https://bcv.org.au/buddhist-family-violence-pilot-project/>

Primary objective: To build the capacity of Buddhist ordained and lay faith leaders to effectively identify, respond to and prevent family violence and violence against women.

Target audience: Faith leaders across the Buddhist Council of Victoria with specific resources for three pilot temples.

Activities:

- Recruitment of dedicated family violence outreach workers at three temples to handle family violence disclosures and referrals.

- 28 participants from ten temples and one monastery attended a series of three 2-hour workshops delivered online in English over two rounds (6 workshops delivered in total) in January and February 2021.
- Additional training was provided in Mandarin to 15 participants at one of the temples (through partnership work with the Chinese Community Social Services Centre) in March 2021.
- 17 participants from three temples, including faith leaders and family violence outreach workers, participated in train the trainer sessions.
- The family violence outreach worker at one of the temples delivered three elder abuse education sessions to a total of 75 participants in Vietnamese.
- The family violence outreach worker at a Tibetan Buddhist centre implemented an internal women's reference group to support ongoing project work.
- An online community event was held in November 2020 to engage Buddhist faith leaders across the state, featuring presentations from the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, the Chairperson of Victorian Multicultural Commission alongside prominent Buddhist leaders.
- Meet and greet events held with local specialist family violence services and other service providers at two temples from March to May 2021.
- Mentoring and coaching support provided to faith leaders as requested.

Resources:

- Supporting Buddhist Communities to Prevent and Respond to Family Violence Toolkit.
- Manual to complement the train the trainer activity.
- Minimum standards of competency for newly arrived monks about family violence and gender equality laws and policies in Victoria.
- Library of Buddhists teachings for use in Dharma talks to promote gender equality, women's leadership, promoting safety, and managing resistance to change.
- Pocket-size help cards providing referral information for specialist family violence services in English, Chinese and Vietnamese.
- Physical and digital posters with contact information for family violence support.

- YouTube video series featuring prominent Buddhist leaders, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and specialist family violence services promoting prevention messages with English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Sinhalese subtitles.

Project: "FaithSAFE: Creating safe communities"

Organisation: Faith Communities Council of Victoria

Website: <http://www.faithsafe.org.au/>

Primary objective: To utilise a multifaith approach to prevent family violence and violence against women.

Target audience: Faith communities and faith leaders across Victoria.

Activities/Resources:

- The main activity for this project was the development of a website with violence response and prevention information for faith leaders with sections with resources for specific faith communities.
- Online webinar and panel discussion delivered to faith leaders and community members across diverse faith communities, prevention sector leaders, and government representatives in November 2020 during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

Project: "Creating violence free and safe faith communities: Primary Prevention for Hindu Faith Communities"

Organisations: Faith Communities Council of Victoria and Kulturbrille

Website: None available.

Primary objective: To increase awareness about family violence among Hindu faith leaders (clergy and lay) and their congregations to better prevent and respond to violence against women among Hindu community.

Target audience: Faith leaders in two Hindu organisations - the Global Organisation of Divinity (GOD), and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

Activities:

- Fourteen 2-hour training sessions were provided from April to August 2020 in English, Hindi, and Tamil to separate groups of faith leaders, men, women, youth, and a mixed gender group.
- Mentoring and coaching support provided to community lay leaders as requested.

Resources:

- 'Love shouldn't hurt' brochure distributed in ISKCON centres describing signs of family violence, information about support services, and ISKCON's position condemning violence including spiritual abuse – this resource aligns with ISKCON's multi-national Statement Against Domestic Abuse.

Project: “Uniting Church Family Violence Awareness Training Project”**Organisations: Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and Uniting Vic.Tas**

Website: None available.

Primary objective: To educate members of the Uniting Church about the drivers for family violence, the forms of family violence and appropriate responses from faith communities to those experiencing family violence.

Target audience: Faith leaders across the Uniting Church in Victoria.

Activities:

- Four 3-hour training sessions were delivered to 68 Uniting Church faith leaders from across Victoria in March 2021.
- A community of practice of committed faith leaders to discuss and champion teaching and preaching on family violence issues.
- Mentoring and coaching support provided to faith leaders on an as needed basis.

Resources:

- Family violence response and prevention manual for faith leaders.
- Quarterly newsletter for the Uniting Church community about family violence and violence against women prevention issues.

Project: “Victorian Sikh Community Prevention of Family Violence Project – Happy Family, Happy Society”
Organisations: Victorian Sikh Gurdwaras Council and Women's Health in the Southeast

Website: <http://www.vsgc.org.au/family-violence-prevention/>

Primary objective: To work with the faith and non-faith leadership of the Victorian Sikh community to establish ongoing and sustainable foundations of a primary prevention strategy for family violence.

Target audience: Community faith leaders and council members in four gurdwaras across Greater Melbourne and one regional location.

Activities:

- Four training sessions delivered between December 2020 and April 2021 to separate groups of community leaders, men, women, youth, and a mixed gender group (in English, Hindi, and Punjabi).
- One training session was provided to faith leaders and community member to specifically address bystander action in August 2021.
- 11 community leaders from the five gurdwaras attended a full day train the trainer program.
- Communications strategy to raise awareness about the project and family violence issues to the Sikh community via SBS radio, websites, Facebook, and gurdwaras' noticeboards.

Resources:

- Manual for community leaders to support the train the trainer program and continued capacity development.
- Online community portal (on the VSGC website) with resources to facilitate understanding of family violence, handle disclosures and referrals for victim-survivors, and respond to resistance and backlash to change (provided in English, Punjabi, and Hindi).

APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTATION ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

The findings of this report are underpinned by an analysis of common implementation barriers and enablers found in the Faith Communities Project. This analysis is informed by evidence-based implementation domains developed by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR Research Team, 2019).

CFIR Domain	Barriers	Enablers
<p>Outer setting: Characteristics of the context or environment (social, political, cultural) surrounding the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited timeline and funding provided for the pilot projects within faith communities. • Diminishing central coordination of the project due to personnel changes in government and limited funding for Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health. • Lack of strategic integration of the project with the prevention and response sectors. • Challenges building relationships and progressing referrals with high-demand mainstream family violence services and a general lack of culturally-specific and faith-informed services available. • Hesitancy to establish local relationships between faith leaders and secular prevention agencies due to lack of faith-informed prevention approaches that may cause faith leaders to feel alienated and disconnect from the project. • Delays and challenges associated with COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions for places of worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader social change discourses and political mandates that put the spotlight on addressing violence against women and family violence, including within faith settings. • Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence articulating the important role of faith leaders to prevent and respond to family violence and violence against women. • Research into violence prevention issues in faith settings. • Existing relationships and partnerships between faith-based organisations and local agencies involved with the prevention and response sectors. • Sense of urgency to address the risks and harms of family violence during periods of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

<p>Inner setting: Characteristics of the organisation or system within which the initiative is being implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays with project lead recruitment due to specific requirements of the roles and resource limitations in faith-based organisations. • The busy roles of ordained faith leaders who faced competing demands and projects within the faith-based organisation and places of worship. • High reliance volunteer lay faith/community leaders to undertake local implementation work at places of worship. • Faith-based organisations and committees dominated by male leadership requiring additional internal processes to identify and engage women into project work. • Challenges navigating the complexities of theological, ideological, and cultural differences regarding beliefs about family relationships and gender equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness for change in the faith-based organisation and local faith settings. • Strong mandate from ordained faith leaders and/or respected community leaders, who endorsed and championed the project. • Pre-existing internal governance, administrative and communications structures within the faith-based organisation that helped streamline implementation processes.
<p>Individual characteristics: Characteristics of the people involved in implementing the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about engaging in a prevention project due to past negative experiences with mainstream, secular approaches. • Oppositional attitudes to change, particularly with regard to gender equality issues, and/or denial that the problem of violence against women and family violence were relevant to the faith community. • Silence and lack of responsiveness from some faith leaders. • Fatigue experienced by leaders and implementation champions who are continuously called upon for social change work within the faith community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project leadership and champion roles held by individuals who were either ‘of the faith’ or connected to it through previous work with the faith community. • Faith leaders and community members who emerged as strong implementation champions with passion and commitment to the projects. • Capabilities and expertise held by project leads, faith leaders and other implementation champions due to backgrounds in community development, adult education, faith and spirituality, violence against women and family violence. • Willingness of people to engage with faith teachings that support their journeys of personal reflection and change and values of care, compassion, and non-violence.

<p>Implementation process: Characteristics of the implementation process for the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short timelines did not match the lengthy, organic community co-design processes required to foster project buy-in. • Challenges identifying the appropriate type of faith leader (ordained, lay/community or both) for project involvement. • Obstacles to effectively engage with marginalised voices within the faith community, particularly people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, culturally-specific congregations, and young people. • Working with different cultural norms around family relationships and gender roles as well as different thresholds for ‘violence’ due to the normalisation of certain types of controlling behaviours, or past traumatic experiences of violent political oppression • Navigating the tensions of engaging faith leaders and community members who were enthusiastic about the project while also seeking the buy-in of powerful stakeholders who may be potential resistors to change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up transparent governance and advisory mechanisms with faith leaders, including women’s advisory groups, to co-design training and other capacity-building activities. • Taking time to engage with faith leaders in a way that was appropriate to their position in the faith community (e.g., bringing offerings) and mindful of the demands on their time. • Engaging with volunteer lay community leaders in a flexible way (e.g., meeting in the evenings or on weekends). • Using a strengths-based approach to learn from prior prevention and response work that may have already occurred within the faith community and building on capabilities developed previously through ‘adjacent’ social programs within the faith community, such as mental health initiatives, and child safety standards • Working in highly relational, open, and collaborative way during co-design discussions to engender trust and alleviate concerns about a secularly imposed agenda and pre-emptively manage signs of resistance. • Pivoting training and other capacity-building activities to online engagement during COVID-19 lockdowns. • Allowing enough flexibility in the design and delivery of capacity-building initiatives to tailor messages to specific audiences (e.g., women, men, youth) and enable faith leaders and implementation champions to take ownership of implementation within their own specific faith setting.
---	--	--

<p>Initiative characteristics: Characteristics of the initiative (project, program, policy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge of tailoring capacity-building initiatives to the varying levels of knowledge about violence against women and family violence issues within faith communities (and within heterogenous theological, political, and cultural complexities). • Lack of pre-existing policies and procedures to address family violence and handle disclosures within the faith environment. • Obstacles to creating multifaith and intra-faith resources that would be considered acceptable within specific faith community environments and places of worship. • Difficulty providing information about intersectionality in a practical and concrete manner (rather than as an abstract theory). • Ongoing resistance to the language of violence prevention and response used within project documentation, activities, and resources. • Isolation of project leads and local implementation champions in separate faith-based organisations and places of worship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifaith forums such as the community of practice provided opportunities to share resources, learnings and offer mutual support. • Taking a multi-faceted approach to capacity-building within project design through training as well as other initiatives, where feasible, such as coaching, peer learning, resource production and special events. • Using evidence-based prevention resources and research while also tailoring the language, messaging, and resources in a faith-informed and culturally sensitive manner. • Finding community members who could volunteer time to co-design, translate, and deliver training and other capacity-building activities in community languages • Ensuring that prevention education was delivered with complementary guidelines and tools for identifying and responding to family violence. • Prioritising victim-survivor safety in capacity-building activities and resources, including establishing dedicated roles within places of worship to handle disclosures and facilitate referrals. • Engaging specialists in family violence prevention and response to co-design and co-deliver training sessions. • Strengthening women’s leadership through roles and opportunities created within the pilot projects themselves.
---	---	--