



# Highlights Report: CCR National Forum on Trafficking in Persons, Montreal, QC, November 2016

On 23 November 2016, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) hosted a National Forum on Trafficking in Persons in conjunction with the CCR Fall 2016 Consultation in Montreal.

Over 60 individuals participated in the forum, primarily from Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Alberta and British Columbia. The forum facilitated dialogue between representatives of non-governmental organizations (including anti-trafficking and social justice advocates), service providers, academics, as well as representatives of different levels of government.

The objectives of the Forum were:

- To encourage collaboration among the pan-Canadian network of NGOs, service providers and others working to protect trafficked persons and raise awareness about trafficking in Canada;
- To share experiences, responses and effective strategies around awareness-raising and service provision;
- To identify and analyze trends, needs, policy concerns and priorities to improve protection of trafficked persons in Canada (locally, provincially, nationally);
- To discuss advocacy strategies and specific actions to address the barriers to protection.

## Highlights

The forum was organized around one regional panel, two roundtable discussions and seven breakout sessions covering the following topics:

- Assessing challenges, promising practices, trends and emerging needs across the country
- Lessons learned from grassroots community responses to human trafficking
- Building bridges with Indigenous communities
- Collaboration between service providers and grassroots collectives
- Working with vulnerable communities: ensuring harm reduction and anti-oppression practices as guiding principles of anti-trafficking work
- Evidence-based advocacy strategies: Building evidence and promising practices on a national, regional and local level through coordinated assessment, data collection, and collaboration
- Policy Reform: action strategies for access to permanent protection
- Survivor-centred recourse to human rights protection: using employment standards and human rights complaints
- Research and data gathering strategies
- Engaging with government to influence and implement policy

Overall, participants emphasized that meetings such as the CCR National Forum on Trafficking in Persons are particularly useful for sharing, collaborating and contributing to processes, strategies and initiatives that inform trafficking work on various levels across the country. The feedback received from forum participants will continue to inform future CCR forums on trafficked persons as well as CCR's goals to protect and prevent trafficked persons in Canada.

## Priorities in moving forward

Participants at the Forum identified a number of priorities to address the needs of trafficked and potentially trafficked persons. These have been organized around the areas of knowledge-building, services, policy and collaboration, and are intended to guide the ongoing work of NGOs, service providers, law enforcement, immigration agencies, policy makers, and other groups involved in anti-trafficking work across Canada.

### Knowledge building

- Invest in research to support evidence-based advocacy strategies. In particular, the need for research on labour trafficking, impacts of legislation, and legal advocacy was identified.
- Raise awareness about human trafficking among service providers, anti-trafficking advocates, allies, government stakeholders and the general public. Suggestions included:
  - Developing resources and information exchange platforms to clarify the difference in the way service providers understand trafficking operationally, and how it is defined in legislation.
  - Reframing the narrative on human trafficking in the media in order to prevent unintended harms from sensationalist messages and images.
- Improve expertise on trafficking among legal practitioners, including the use of employment standards and human rights tribunals as avenues to protection.

### Services

- Provide more financial support to service providers to carry out their work.
- Invest in housing resources for trafficked persons with specialized needs, and find the means to create a Fund for survivors.
- Develop resources and tools for service providers to provide faster and more appropriate referrals on a national level.
- Provide training on identifying and assessing trafficked and potentially trafficked persons, as well as on integrating an anti-oppression approach among service providers, government, and other actors.

### Policy

- Use concerted awareness-raising and advocacy strategies to improve access to protection, for example:
  - Engagement and collaboration strategies to create the political will for change;
  - Media advocacy strategies to change the narrative on trafficking.
- Continue to call for a legislative amendment to provide permanent protection for trafficked and potentially trafficked persons. This includes adding specific calls to streamline the process and rules around Temporary Residence Permits (TRPs), and reform the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- Work to encourage municipalities and provincial governments to be more active in raising awareness about human trafficking and the needs of survivors.

### Collaboration

- Continue to build partnerships between grassroots collective, service providers, rights groups and other stakeholders in order to leverage strengths, develop joint actions and strategies, and improve access to coordinated services for trafficked and potentially trafficked persons.
- Continue to support networking and information sharing to build understanding and cooperation among stakeholders.

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