# Creating Safe Space: Changing Communities to Support Survivors

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November 1, 2017

# Community

Composed of people who are connected to each other based on kinship, location, shared values, common interests, or emotional bonds (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010)

# Safe Space?

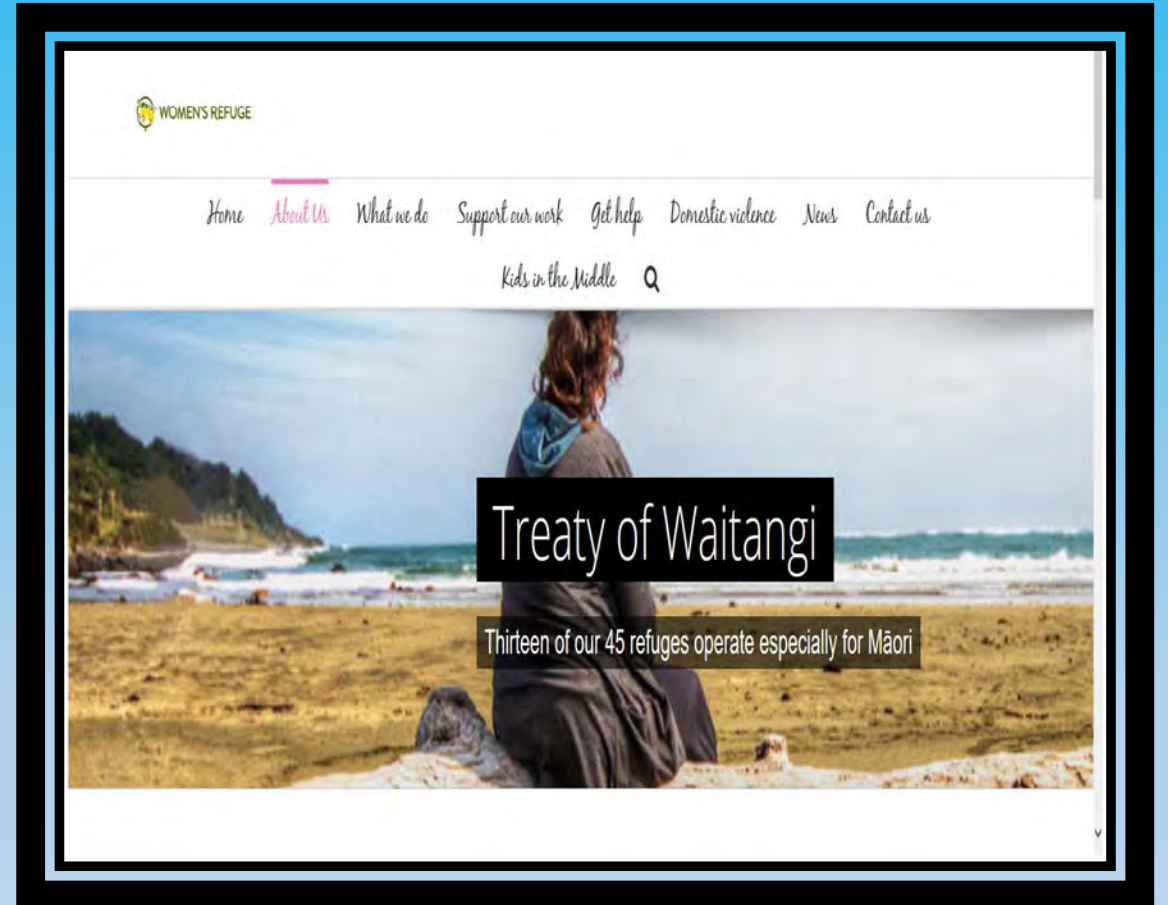# Challenges to the Creation of Safe Space

- Communal/collectivist identity supersedes individual identity (e.g., tribal communities)
- high levels of poverty levels (e.g., developing countries);
- geographic isolation (e.g., islands)
- low anonymity (e.g., rural areas, college campuses)

# Communal/Collectivist Identity: Safety Planning in New Zealand

# Māori Survivors and Safe Space

- Refuges exclusively for Māori women
- Culturally sensitive services
- Safety conferencing

# Benefits of having informal supports in safety planning meetings

**Emotional support**

- Setting up connection to someone who understands what victim is going through
- Reconnecting to family
- Reconnecting to community

**Target hardening**

- More people monitoring victim
- Family safer when included in safety planning
- More people monitoring perpetrator behavior

**Logistical support**

- Call police for victim
- Provide interpretation
- Keep keys, other emergency items for victim
- Alternative housing

# Benefits of having informal supports in safety planning meetings, cont'd

**Cultural sensitivity**

- Recognition of communal identity
- Bringing in church representatives so that victim does not have to choose between church and refuge

**Unique insight**

- Memory of past incidents
- Familiarity with victim
- Bringing up options the victim has not considered

**Social change**

- Educate allies of victim about domestic violence
- De-stigmatization of victim

# Safe Space and Island Culture: Raise Your Voice, Saint Lucia

# Self-Reported Domestic Violence Victimization (UNDP, 2012)

- **Caribbean**                    **10.9% (both men and women)**
- Guyana                          17.3
- Antigua & Barbuda               15.7
- Suriname                        11.7
- **St. Lucia**                    **9.7**
- Barbados                         9.6
- Trinidad & Tobago               8.3
- Jamaica                          5.9

# Lack of social support for GBV victims

- Informal social support fear of perpetrator or ill-prepared to support the victim

- Formal support (law enforcement, social services) inadequate

- Lack of confidentiality leads to low reporting rate

Hadeed & El-Bassel, 2006

# PROSAF
## Positive Reactions or Secrets & Fear

# Raise Your Voice, Saint Lucia, Inc.

# Identify the obstacles: How are GBV survivors discouraged from reporting/continuing a case?

- **Communication** with survivors?
- **Satisfaction** level of survivors with services?
- Sufficiency, **accuracy**, consistency of data collection?
- How is **information shared** between agencies?
- What is the investigation **protocol**?
- Do survivors feel **supported** in the process?
- Are services **coordinated**?

# Challenges to Changing Institutional Response to GBV:

- Structural challenges

- Attitudes about gender-based violence

- Confidentiality regulations affecting survivors of GBV

- The reporting process

- Challenges to interagency collaboration

# Moving From Here to There

1. Are there points in the protocols where more collaboration would address one or more of these challenges? How might that happen?

2. What types of training would be needed for more collaboration? Be specific.

3. Are there ways to share information in a collaborative process, but preserve the confidentiality of victim identity?

# Workshop Conclusions

1. *Cultivate trust* through regular meetings, cross-agency, joint trainings.

2. Decide on *how collaboration will take place* to improve agency response.

3. Work out *confidentiality issues and sharing data* in order to work together more efficiently, maximize privacy, and minimize the number of times a victim has to repeat her/his story.

4. Use controversial incidents as *a jumpstart for discussions* about policy and protocol revision.

5. *Written protocols and continued training* with new hires will help to ensure consistent responses to gender-based violence.

6. Designate a *contact in each agency* as a touchstone for collaboration.

# Rural Nicaragua and Safe Space

# Ley 779

- Violence against women is human rights violation
- Increased penalties for violence against women
- Establishes domestic violence courts
- Improves treatment of victims by criminal justice system

# Workshops

Discussion-based themes:

- Social construction of gender
- Causes of domestic violence
- Legal rights under Ley 779
- Women's health
- Sexual violence
- Women's rights and social change

# Theater of the Oppressed

## Participant Feedback



- Changes in attitudes of participants
- Changes in attitudes/behaviors of spouses/family members
- Understanding of new law on violence against women
- Safe space offered to others

# Conclusions: Creating Safe Space in Challenging Contexts



- Respect for cultural identity
- Recognition of the impact of structural violence
- Understanding and using the strengths of local communities in programming
- Reflect the uniqueness and unique challenges of each community
- Collect data!

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