



# Strengthening What Works: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Communities

## A Progress Report

### INTRODUCTION

*The Strengthening What Works initiative seeks to evaluate and enhance the evaluation capacity of community-based organizations using innovative and/or promising approaches to prevent intimate partner violence<sup>1</sup> in immigrant and refugee communities in the United States.*

*In 2007, a solicitation by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), [Fresh Ideas: Improving the Health of Immigrant and Refugee Communities](#), identified two key issues of importance to people working with immigrant and refugee communities:*

- *Many organizations serving immigrants and refugees lacked the technical capacity to evaluate their efforts.*
- *Intimate partner violence (IPV) affecting immigrant and refugee communities generated a high level of interest and merited targeted attention.*

*RWJF launched Strengthening What Works in 2009 in response to these needs and has authorized \$4.5 million for the program from February 2009 to February 2013.*

*Strengthening What Works is part of RWJF's Vulnerable Populations portfolio. [LTG Associates, Inc.](#), provides technical assistance and direction for the program. Nathaniel Tashima, PhD, and Cathleen E. Crain, MA, managing partners at LTG, are program co-directors;<sup>2</sup> Alberto Bouroncle, PhD, LTG senior research associate, is deputy director.*

*See [Appendix 1](#) for a list of individuals interviewed for this report.*

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<sup>1</sup> RWJF defines intimate partner violence as actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, psychological, financial, and verbal harm, including stalking, by a current or former partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, or someone wanting a romantic relationship.

<sup>2</sup> See profile of Tashima and Crain on RWJF [website](#).

## WHAT IS STRENGTHENING WHAT WORKS ABOUT?

About a third of respondents to the *Fresh Ideas* solicitation requested assistance in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV), according to RWJF Program Officer Wendy Yallowitz, MSW, but the next step was unclear. To understand better the challenges that prevention and treatment of intimate partner violence faced in immigrant and refugee communities, RWJF conducted an environmental scan in 2007. First, the team commissioned the Family Violence Prevention Fund<sup>3</sup> to gather and report information from a literature review and interviews with relevant stakeholders.

“What we learned,” says Yallowitz, “is that there are numerous programs out there targeting different cultures but none of these had been evaluated. With vulnerable populations, we really like to find that promising approach to spread. But we couldn’t do that if none of these programs had shown evidence that they worked.”

As part of this environmental scan, staff from RWJF and LTG Associates worked with consultant Mieko Yoshihama, PhD, MSW,<sup>4</sup> to identify organizations across the country that conduct IPV prevention programs for immigrants and refugees. The Foundation invited the 48 identified organizations to apply for the new program and selected 10 to receive evaluability assessments—short determinations of the organizations’ potential for evaluation.

“The method of evaluability assessment that we employed derived directly from RWJF’s Early Assessment of Programs and Policies to Prevent Childhood Obesity, which resulted in an article, ‘The [Systematic Screening and Assessment Method: Finding Innovations Worth Evaluating](#),’”<sup>5</sup> says Laura Leviton, PhD, RWJF’s senior advisor for evaluation. “The difference between the systematic screening and assessment method and usual evaluability assessments is that with systematic screening and assessment, we try to get a high volume of nominations, then whittle them down to a smaller number based on the plausibility of the program on paper—and then conduct evaluability assessments to see which ones have a prospect of being evaluated.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Family Violence Prevention Fund is now [Futures Without Violence](#), which works to prevent and end violence against women and children around the world. It is headquartered in San Francisco.

<sup>4</sup> Yoshihama is professor of social work at the University of Michigan.

<sup>5</sup> Leviton LC, Kettel Khan L, Dawkins N. “The Systematic Screening and Assessment Method: Finding Innovations Worth Evaluating.” *New Directions for Evaluation*, 125: 1–5, 2010. This publication is featured on RWJF’s [website](#), and won the 2011 award for best publication from the American Evaluation Association.

<sup>6</sup> *Strengthening What Works* was RWJF’s second application of this method. Subsequent applications at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention include cardiovascular health and additional obesity prevention projects. “At RWJF, we have used it in the areas of nursing education, primary care workforce, and most recently, community dentistry,” says Leviton.

As a result of the assessments, RWJF awarded three-year grants of \$175,000 each to eight organizations. They focus on Asian (including Korean), Latino and Arab populations. The experiences of two organizations are part of this report:

- Asian Women’s Shelter, a comprehensive domestic violence shelter and community-building program in San Francisco
- Enlace Comunitario, a community-based organization in Albuquerque, N.M., that serves Spanish-speaking immigrant victims of domestic violence

Three other grantee organizations also serve Asian communities, and two others serve Latino/Latina communities. The Arab American Action Network works with the Arab community in Chicago. See [Appendix 2](#) for a complete list of funded projects.

Developing organizational capacity to design and conduct evaluations was to be RWJF’s contribution to the field. Yallowitz describes her thinking: “We’d provide some of the promising programs with funds and teach them how to evaluate their programs, enabling them to understand their data and what they’re learning, and use it to help their programs. Further, they would acquire tools they could use to evaluate other programs they operate and build their own evaluation capacity.”

“This was a notable departure from our usual policy that research & evaluation (R&E) officers must oversee all evaluations,” says RWJF’s Leviton. “Why was that permitted? Because we were short-staffed in R&E at the time; because Wendy had asked me to advise her in creating the program; and because I had identified for her a contractor, LTG Associates, that I knew from previous experience to be highly competent in this type of community-based participatory research, with a strong focus on rapid ethnography and cultural competence.”

“This initiative is completely different,” adds Yallowitz, “because no funding goes to the direct services delivered by the prevention programs themselves. All the funding has to go to evaluation and evaluation activities. When we stop funding, those activities will be complete and the organizations will not have to keep trying to fill that funding bucket.”

“We didn’t know a lot about the field of IPV and immigrant and refugee communities,” says RWJF Senior Program Officer Jane Isaacs Lowe, PhD, director of the Foundation’s Vulnerable Populations Team. “We also didn’t have a lot of cultural competence. We wanted to try to understand both the culture and the capacity of the organizations. This process [of environmental scan followed by evaluability assessment] made a lot of sense in this situation where there was not a well-developed field or a well-developed understanding of the problem.”

## WHAT PROBLEM DOES *STRENGTHENING WHAT WORKS* ADDRESS?

While the overall goal of *Strengthening What Works* is the prevention of intimate partner violence in immigrant and refugee communities, the Foundation sought a broader impact by helping organizations build their own capacity to evaluate the services they offer that prevent intimate partner violence.

“The Foundation recognized that there were few evidence-based practices focused on immigrant and refugee communities,” says National Program Co-Director Cathleen E. Crain, MA, “and that those who provided services were often not in a position to determine whether their services had evidence to support them. That was the base of this as a dual capacity-building and evaluation program.”

“The idea of turning practice into evidence is at the core of the initiative,” says National Program Co-Director Nathaniel Tashima, PhD. “We started with the assumption that grantee organizations are engaged in practices that address IPV successfully. Now we work with them to either strengthen their evaluation or create evaluations of the programs they’ve been running.” Throughout this process, says RWJF’s Leviton, “LTG continues to update me on the project and solicit my guidance on next steps.”

Effectively addressing intimate partner violence among immigrants and refugees requires a sensitivity to and understanding of how different populations view domestic violence. “Different immigrant and refugee groups may have very different cultures from the mainstream American culture,” notes national advisory committee member Catherine Woodstock Striley, PhD, MSW, MPE.<sup>7</sup> “If you add language and literacy issues, then being ethnically and culturally competent in this regard is important.”

For refugee and immigrant families, adjustment to American culture presents significant stress in many areas of life. In situations of domestic violence, “it is hard to divide up families because they are already economically challenged,” says national advisory committee member Jocelyn Ancheta, MA.<sup>8</sup> “To take a working income out of that family is not going to work. The feminist view of domestic abuse is very hard for a lot of immigrants and refugees to understand. The challenge for these projects is to stop the abuse and violence but keep the relationship functioning as people adjust to a new culture.”

Ancheta raises another factor at play in some refugee communities: the war environments refugees have experienced, “where violence is normal. They have become desensitized to

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<sup>7</sup> Striley is professor of epidemiology in the College of Public Health and Health Professions at the University of Florida.

<sup>8</sup> Ancheta is senior program officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.

the violence and it becomes a normal way to resolve a conflict. The context is very different from trying to resolve the issue with nonviolent response and communication.”

## **WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM’S KEY COMPONENTS?**

The program has a number of key components. They include:

### **Technical Assistance**

The program’s technical assistance component has moved each participating organization through a series of steps beginning with development of a theory of change for the program they are evaluating for *Strengthening What Works*. This leads to a logic model for the evaluation, which in turn leads to measurable outcomes developed through a set of evaluation instruments. “The agencies pilot their evaluations and then do a full implementation of the evaluation of the intervention,” says Tashima.

Teams from LTG Associates provide technical assistance to the eight grantee organizations in several ways, according to Tashima:

- Site visits and conference calls
- Development of resources that include a reviewed bibliography, “Understanding the Challenges of Preventing Intimate Partner Violence: An Analytical Bibliography.”
- A series of 12 modules on qualitative research methods, informed by grantee questions. “It gives everybody a common language and reference points,” says Tashima.

### **Program Capacity Consultant**

Each grantee organization is assigned a program capacity consultant—referred to as the PCC by national program and grantee agency staff. The PCC is a local professional, identified by LTG and local staff; the PCC provides evaluation advice, guidance, and assistance for the course of the program under the direction of the national program office technical assistance team.

The PCCs are a varied group that includes professors in local universities, graduate students, working social services professionals, and others. Some work primarily in evaluation; for others, evaluation is just a part of what they do. In most cases, the PCC is already known to staff at the IPV prevention program, and most have some background in intimate partner violence services. They hold in common knowledge about the local area, the ability to support the agency in its effort to build evaluation capacity, and the potential to help sustain that capacity after the evaluation is completed.

The PCC is, adds RWJF’s Yallowitz, “someone in the community that knows and understands the community, but also understands evaluation enough to work with the grantee organization. Staff at participating agencies can call the PCC with questions and ask for technical assistance. While the PCCs do not work for the organization but for LTG, they have easy access to the agency and can be the liaison to LTG.”

During the first two years, the PCCs helped grantee agencies develop their logic models and evaluation instruments. During their remaining time (through March 2012), the PCCs are collaborating with their agencies to develop a case study as a final report. “They will be co-authors with the agency staff on the report,” says Tashima. “This is a way to keep PCCs working with us a bit longer and also for them to get some professional return on their work from the last couple of years. That was important.”

Claudia Isaac, PhD, MPA/URP,<sup>9</sup> describes the several roles she fills as the PCC for grantee agency [Enlace Comunitario](#) in Albuquerque, N.M.:

- **Trainer.** “Enlace has a strong evaluation culture but they’ve wanted to learn how to do formal evaluation for a long time. LTG provides that training as well, but I’m onsite and they’re able to come to me with questions. We spent a lot of time working on instruments—what’s a good question, what’s a bad question, does this question actually reflect an objective and the logic model.”
- **Instrument coordinator.** “Enlace has two programs and a lot of instruments—both qualitative and quantitative. I developed a matrix to track where everything is.”
- **Interlocutor between grantee and LTG.** “Because I am onsite, they can talk through questions with me such as: ‘What did LTG want here? Is this consistent with what we’re trying to accomplish in this evaluation?’ During LTG site visits I help fill in the LTG staff on where I see things going and where I see issues and questions that they can help resolve.”

[Asian Women’s Shelter](#) (San Francisco) PCC Michelle Morales, MSW,<sup>10</sup> joined a year into the program when agency staff had developed the theory of change, logic models, and evaluation tools. “Joining a little later allowed me to provide a fresh pair of eyes and a fresh perspective on what they were working on and what they had developed. So I helped them refine their thinking around the tools.”

In order to gain a firsthand understanding of the program and its evaluation, Morales participated—as a community member, not an evaluator—in one of the two projects being evaluated, the Chai Chat series of group meetings focused on healthy relationships. Her active participation in the series included completing the questions in the evaluation forms presented at the end of every session. “Previously I had always approached an

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<sup>9</sup> Isaac is associate professor, community and regional planning at the University of New Mexico.

<sup>10</sup> Morales is research assistant, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County.

organization from the perspective of an evaluation consultant,” she says. “I had the outsider’s view on evaluation without being sympathetic to the relevance of evaluation to the community.”

## **Learning Collaboratives**

The national program office has begun to convene small learning collaboratives based on identified promising approaches to IPV prevention, each comprised of two or three grantee organizations. Each collaborative addresses a specific topic. The first collaborative addressed healthy relationships and included representatives from two national resettlement agencies that have worked with domestic violence programs supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ACFORR). The resettlement agencies oversee evidence-based models offered through ACFORR, while the two *Strengthening What Works* grantee agencies developed their own interventions, which they are evaluating.

The collaboratives “are a fascinating endeavor,” says Tashima. With the first one, there was “a coming together of evidence-based and practice-based activities. We are working in the middle of that ground to find commonality and take the best of both worlds.”

Orchid Pusey, project director of the *Strengthening What Works* project at Asian Women’s Shelter,<sup>11</sup> was a grantee participant in the first collaborative. She notes that the meeting helped bridge the divide between refugee resettlement advocates focused on maintaining marriages and those whose attention is drawn to human trafficking. “I learned, from being in the room, where the gaps are—in a direct way, instead of the theoretical,” she says. “If you don’t meet in person, there will be no bridge. Having it small helped to prevent everyone from staying in their own camps.”

## **Compilation and Dissemination of Best Practices**

After grantee agencies complete their projects, national program staff will compile the best practices identified through the projects for wide dissemination. “Our challenge will be getting information out and helping the grantee groups develop their understanding of how the initiative has been useful for them and what they’ve learned from the evaluation,” says Crain. “Our job will be doing the cross-study analysis and communicating the lessons, both from the process, and also from the outcomes of the initiative.”

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<sup>11</sup> Pusey is interim executive director of the Asian Women’s Shelter.

## Grantee Agency Meetings

The first grantee agency meeting, January 20–22, 2010, was “a getting-to-know everyone meeting that set out basic understanding of the program,” as Program Co-Director Crain describes it. The second meeting (October 31–November 2, 2010), was “very interactive, with speakers who provided different perspectives on intimate partner violence and on theories and research.”

Crain anticipates a final meeting in late summer/early fall 2012 that will be “highly engaged by the grantee agencies themselves.” Agency staff should have analyzed their data by then and be writing case studies. “It should be a very different meeting,” she says.

## WHAT HAS *STRENGTHENING WHAT WORKS* ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE?

### Provided a New Perspective on Evaluation

As a result of the first two years of the program, “all of the grantees now understand how to do a logic model and have come up with logic models for their projects,” says RWJF’s Yallowitz. “They understand their theory of change and what that means for the evaluation and how to collect data and what that looks like.” At this point, reports Crain, “the agencies have developed, piloted, and fielded their instruments and are gathering data.”

Enlace Comunitario Project Associate Director Sandra Orstman MA, MCRP,<sup>12</sup> points to her agency’s accomplishments in this aspect. “One of our ambitions, which hadn’t come to fruition, was to really evaluate our intervention services in a more meaningful and systematic way. So, it was really, really exciting to us to be part of a three-year evaluation, with experts to help evaluate the prevention program, but also to gain that capacity ourselves so that we can do more evaluation of our intervention services. It [*Strengthening What Works*] actually started a culture of evaluation at Enlace.”

Crain describes the initial learning as “a very pleasing, early accomplishment.” A number of organizations discovered, when they put together their theory of change and logic model, “that not everything was clearly and logically linked, one to the other. The adjustments they made created clarity and clear linkage among the elements.”

“Evaluation has become a standard part of new proposals the agencies are writing,” according to Tashima. “They have incorporated evaluation into some of their standing programs. It has allowed agency staff to look at evaluation and talk with national program staff about what it means and how it operates and is used. It has demystified

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<sup>12</sup> Orstman is director of violence services at Enlace Comunitario.

evaluation and taken it from being a punishing activity to being one that supports transparency and accountability in a lot of ways.”

National advisory committee member Striley says, “The earliest accomplishment, which I think was really profound, was the way this program was designed to make sure that true, long-lasting capacity building was going on in these organizations, coupling it with anthropologically-informed evaluation, and setting it up so we had a two-tier recommendation system for selecting grantee agencies. That process is a real accomplishment and is something that needs to be in the literature, because it’s an unusual one.”

Also, the program is bringing its evaluation perspective to a wider audience. Program staff, along with RWJF’s Leviton, has presented at the annual meetings of the American Evaluation Association in 2009, 2010, and 2011 and will do so again in 2012. Notes Crain: “This year [November 2011] we had a bigger, more engaged audience because we were talking about how this was all coming together. It was very interesting for the audience.”

An article describing the program, “[Preventing Partner Violence in Refugee and Immigrant Communities](#),”<sup>13</sup> appeared in October 2011 in *Forced Migration Review*.

In addition, from the Foundation’s perspective, Team Director Lowe says “it’s given us a real understanding of the different ways that cultural groups respond to the issues of intimate partner violence—and I think that has been enormously helpful. It’s made us more culturally competent.”

### **Made New Connections Among Grantee Organizations**

The eight grantee organizations have formed a community, with “a nice synergy” among them, as Yallowitz puts it. “Now they have this new network.” Lowe describes the network as “a teaching/learning community in which everybody has something to teach and everybody has something to learn.”

Enlace Comunitario’s Ortsman agrees. “I really love getting to meet with folks from the different agencies,” she says. “I have learned a lot from them. Learning about their work and the similar challenges has been exciting.”

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<sup>13</sup>Uehling G, Bouroncle A, Roeber C, Tashima N, Crain C. “Preventing Partner Violence in Refugee and Immigrant Communities.” *Forced Migration Review*, 38: 50–51, October 2011. Available [online](#).

## Developed an Effective Model in Program Capacity Consultants

### *Contributions to the Projects*

The experience of PCC Morales as a community participant in Chai Chats at Asian Women’s Shelter allowed her to identify gaps in the evaluation tools—places that did not make sense for the individual actually filling out the form. “I was able to provide that perspective to LTG and Asian Women’s Shelter staff after the workshop series,” she says. “They have taken some of the feedback and used it to refine their evaluation tools.”

Morales also came to understand the “importance of trust building in intimate partner violence programs in marginalized communities. There was a great deal of trust for AWS [Asian Women’s Shelter] among the community members. Because of this trust, they were very willing to fill out the evaluation forms—and that is key when you are trying to develop internal evaluation capacity for this type of work.”

Asian Women’s Shelter has been clear to its participants about the evaluation’s purpose: to refine and make the workshops more reflective of participants’ needs and concerns, according to Morales. They stress to participants that they “really do take into account” what participants say in their evaluation forms. “This builds trust,” she says. The goal of evaluation is to make programs better, and, she says, “I see that reflected at every level of the program: project development, implementation, and evaluation.”

Enlace’s Ortsman is enthusiastic about the contribution of Claudia Isaac, the PCC working with Enlace Comunitario. The previous connection that Enlace had with Isaac has been reinforced by this relationship, as has Isaac’s understanding of Enlace. Isaac has trained new staff on evaluation procedures and has been “a great advocate for Enlace.” Ortsman calls her “a great resource who can connect us with other resources in the community.”

### *Benefits for the PCC*

The program capacity consultant role has been “an incredible leadership opportunity for the PCCs,” say Yallowitz, “and not only do they feel they’re gaining additional credibility as a leader, but they have honed their skills, which makes them marketable.”

Through her work as a PCC, Morales has begun to “look at qualitative evaluation methods with more appreciation. Quantitative data are an important part. But they don’t tell the whole story. Now with new evaluation projects I definitely turn to qualitative methods initially, and then I look at how quantitative methods can fill in the gaps. Before I used to go quantitative first, and then use qualitative to fill in the gaps.”

Involvement as a PCC has also had professional benefits for Enlace Comunitario's PCC Isaac. "This project has added to my evaluation toolbox. I see more value in mixed method approaches to evaluation than I did before and am building my expertise in that."

## Grantee Organizations Accomplish a Lot

Grantee organizations have enhanced their understanding of evaluation and their capacity to design and conduct evaluations. Following are examples from two projects:

### *Asian Women's Shelter*

Asian Women's Shelter is evaluating two initiatives of its Queer Asian Women and Transgender Support (QAWTS) project, which targets the Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community of San Francisco. They are:

- **Chai Chat**, a series of workshops on healthy relationships
- **Homophobia Busters**, a curriculum to reduce barriers and increase services for the queer Asian and Pacific Islander community.

Key accomplishments at Asian Women's Shelter include:

- **Articulating the underlying premise of the agency's work.** "We were initially not able to articulate, to others outside the organization, why ending homophobia is part of preventing intimate partner violence," says project director Pusey. "A big accomplishment was articulating that better so that people who haven't thought about it that way will understand that relationships are healthy in an environment that recognizes them and doesn't denigrate them, and in which you can actually talk about what's going on."
- **Developing evaluation methods.** "We have developed and implemented qualitative, quantitative, pre-test, and retrospective pre-test models," says Pusey.<sup>14</sup> "We have the protocol, questions, and equipment to do long-range qualitative analysis."
- **Establishing the ability to voice what prevention does.** "There is a split between direct service and prevention," says Pusey. "*Strengthening What Works* helps to bridge that divide. Direct service people think: There's a crisis and we have to work on it and what can prevention do? Now we can say what prevention does."
- **Recognizing the role of qualitative evaluation methods.** "Listening to staff at Asian Women's Shelter—their values, mission, and how they interact with their community members and facilitate understanding—there would be no way that quantitative data could capture the meaning and the significance of their work," says PCC Morales.

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<sup>14</sup> Retrospective pre-test data is gathered after the beginning of a program, but it reflects the pre-test situation.

## **Enlace Comunitario**

The two Enlace Comunitario projects being evaluated are:

- **A leadership development program in which former victims of intimate partner violence are trained as promotoras.** Promotoras are community members trained as paraprofessionals, mostly in public health, who educate others on health-related issues, in this case on domestic violence.

“In addition to community presentations, the promotoras help us develop materials and act as liaisons to the community—telling us what is working, and what is not working, and what the main issues are that the community faces,” says Enlace co-founder and Executive Director Claudia Medina, MA, JD.<sup>15</sup>

- **A youth leadership development program for the adolescent children of domestic violence victims.** This program mirrors the promotora project with in-depth leadership training. The youth leaders make presentations in their high schools on dating violence, healthy relationships, changing attitudes toward women, and so on.

Project staff cites several key accomplishments at Enlace thus far:

- **Developing a logic model.** “The process made us clear about exactly what we were trying to do: what we were trying to measure, what impact we were trying to have,” says Ortsman.
- **Using the logic model.** “We used it to develop tools for evaluating the development of the leaders (both the promotoras and the youth) and for evaluating the impact that their work is having in the community,” says Ortsman.
- **Implementing promotora exit interviews.** Each year a new cohort of promotoras is trained. Enlace staff now interview those who are ending their service to ask about what was good, what can be improved, what impact they are having, and what else Enlace could do. As a result, “We’ve started a men’s leadership project,” says Ortsman. “The impetus for that came from the exit interviews of the promotoras. They all said that we need to be working with men.”
- **Integrating evaluation throughout the organization.** Enlace staff has developed a logic model for the new men’s program and has asked their program capacity consultant Isaac to supervise a graduate student intern to develop an evaluation plan for the program.

“As they learn each step they are incorporating it into the work of the organization,” says Isaac. “This is a perfect moment in their organizational development, as they turn their desire to be evaluators into the capacity to be evaluators.”

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<sup>15</sup> Medina is executive director of Enlace Comunitario.

## WHAT CHALLENGES IS STRENGTHENING WHAT WORKS FACING?

### Program Challenges

- **Lack of a broad range of grantee organizations.** “Now we’re finding out about a lot of other programs that would have been interesting to explore that we just didn’t know about,” says Yallowitz. “For example, we do not have a range of African refugees. Finding programs serving those populations—hidden gems in the community—was a huge challenge. It may have made more sense to work with two consultants with different networks when doing the initial identification of potential applicants.”

“Finding agencies that served different groups in different parts of the country was a little challenging,” says national advisory committee member Striley. “Some places—like Boston, San Francisco, and New York—do better at that than other places.”

- **Organizations not ready for capacity-building.** “Some of the organizations that we would have loved to have funded were not yet at a stage for capacity-building,” says Striley. “It would have swamped them to give them as much money and assistance as RWJF made available.”
- **Using different approaches for different cultures.** “When working with many different cultures, different approaches may be needed to reach different populations,” says Yallowitz. “It can be a challenge to manage that process.”
- **Organizational attention to competing demands.** “The reward of evaluation is the end result,” says Yallowitz. “Evaluation is not very rewarding while you are doing it. Staffers at the grantee organizations are doing their everyday jobs, while trying to understand the skill sets needed to do an evaluation.”
- **Organizations burnt by previous “helicopter research.”** “Some grantees have been burnt by what I call ‘helicopter research’ and have bad feelings about trying to make what they do more evaluable,” says Striley. “A surprising level of animosity toward the health research and evaluation fields in general was evident at the second grantee meeting. I believe that it is an artifact of years of neglect of people doing work on the edges, and then people who use the empirical literature asking them for something they are not prepared to give and castigating them when they do not have it.”

Striley believes that the program was designed to build relationships from the start and that people in the program “have learned to work together pretty well.” But, she says, “I don’t think that one program is going to eradicate all the bad feelings. They may have been turned down for money in the past because they could not supply this fact or that fact or they feel that they must distill everything down to a few numbers that do not capture what they’re doing. Although this approach is really trying to undo that and capture everything, it still has that feeling.”

- **Differing views among staff of the pros and cons of “expert” assistance.** “Direct-line staff at the grantee organizations can be suspicious of the outside ‘expert’ who has never been on the ground, doing the same work that they do, and may—in their view—lack empathy and understanding,” says national advisory committee member Ancheta.

“At the same time, the leadership—the executive director or the board—may like having somebody with a PhD, who understands evaluation, working with them because it will help them to say: ‘This has a strong evaluation component to it. It was done by an expert.’ It elevates the power of their work among the funders.”

- **Division between providers of services for immigrants and refugees and providers with a general population focus.** “Organizations that focus on immigrants and refugees are sometimes denied funding because they don’t serve a broad base,” says Striley. “They get animosity from broad-based providers who think their programs are doing a good job of serving everyone—but in fact do not appreciate the challenges of serving immigrant and refugees and do not understand the role of the niche provider.”
- **Paucity of research on intimate partner violence prevention.** “Research on empirically valid prevention methods in general—not just for immigrants and refugees—is very limited,” says Striley. “Almost everything is not rigorous quality research or even anecdotal. So there is not a ready pool of literature to draw upon.”

## Site Challenges

### *Asian Women’s Shelter*

- **Establishing staff support for evaluation.** “A challenge for us is that we, the project staff, are totally bought in, but we have to get the buy-in of other staff who haven’t been able to be part of all the meetings and the site visits,” says Pusey.
- **Clarity about the role of the PCC.** “While LTG staff said that we would figure out the role of our PCC ‘as we go’, that didn’t quite work, and confusion was a little high for both us and our PCC,” says Pusey. “We did not spend time at site visits talking about the role and that might have helped.”

“Because it was a work in progress, I wasn’t always sure what my role was, what my responsibilities were,” says PCC Morales. “I know that LTG wanted the PCC to be a sort of local, trusted resource for the grantees to turn to when they had questions on evaluation. I don’t know if I was used for that full capacity. The fact that I came on a year into the project could have contributed to that.

“I think the PCC could be leveraged more to ease the tension around the power dynamic between grantor and grantee. I don’t think this is Asian Women’s Shelter’s experience particularly. But just having the PCC there in that role as someone who

can ease that tension would be beneficial for the project and for any similar project or initiative.”

- **Being an independent evaluator.** “It is a challenge to be an independent evaluator,” says Morales. “You don’t really have a relationship with the funder. While that offers an unbiased eye, a lack of trust building and relationship building among the organizations, funders, and evaluators makes evaluation difficult for staff in the field. We should have honest conversations about what we want, what kind of data we want and what we want to do with the data.”

### ***Enlace Comunitario***

- **Conducting evaluation with a low-literacy population.** “We have really struggled with creating the pre- and post-test evaluation forms,” says Ortsman. “We are reaching a very low literacy population that speaks only Spanish and has little formal education. It has been a lot easier with the youth because, even though they are immigrant youth, they are way more integrated into the community and are bicultural and fluent in English. In our last year we are creating lower literacy evaluation tools. This will help us in all the projects where we work with adults on preventing domestic violence.”

- **Convincing staff of the value of evaluation.** “We encountered a lot of resistance from some of our staff to the creation of an evaluation framework,” says Ortsman. “They wondered why we are doing an evaluation when we know the program is working. We have had some turnover in staff and it has been an advantage to train new staff in our evaluation methods right from the start, with no resistance.”

PCC Isaac agrees. “It took a while in the first year for the Enlace staff to really understand not only what a logic model was but how it could be useful. While they get it now, they were frustrated at first about time spent on this little chart.”

- **Clarity about the role of the PCC.** “We spent a lot of time in the beginning getting clear on the role of the PCC,” says Ortsman. “For example, is the role to teach us evaluation? Or to analyze the data we are collecting? It wasn’t 100 percent clear. I would recommend, if this were to be replicated, to have a little more clarity.”
- **Balancing external views with internal understanding of project ownership.** “It has been a challenge to be clear about the role of LTG staff, the PCC, and Enlace staff,” says Ortsman. “It has been necessary to remind ourselves that this is our project and these are suggestions. If, based on our experiences, we don’t agree with a suggestion—even if we can’t yet articulate why—it is our project.”

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? ARE WE DOING ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY AS A RESULT?

### Lessons From Program Leaders

- **The knowledge and expertise acquired by grantee staff and program capacity consultants will be useful beyond the grantee organizations.** “Because these grantee staff members have this new expertise I think it’s going to widen their reach and really put them out there as people to contact for help,” says RWJF’s Yallowitz. “I expect the PCC role to be successful in its own right, beyond just helping these programs. We now have a set of experts who have worked with each other and there might be more joint writing and learnings that can inform the field.”
- **Helping organizations understand what they are doing while building their evaluation capacity promotes greater sustainability of the organizations’ work.** “This is especially relevant for smaller nonprofits,” says RWJF’s Lowe. “Rather than provide programmatic funding that could overwhelm an organization or cause it to ramp up and not be able to maintain that level of effort post-funding, these agencies are learning to evaluate their services and build a relationship with a local evaluator. They will be able to strengthen interventions that work and let go what does not work. They will be in better shape to apply for further grant or state dollars or local fundraising.”
- **A clear understanding of where grantees were starting from would have helped to accelerate the beginning of the program.** “If we had looked more carefully at the data about each program we would have been more on point faster,” says Tashima. “The basic lesson is that the more you communicate the better.”

### Lessons From Grantee Project Staff

#### *Asian Women’s Shelter*

- **Evaluation tools are critical for operating in the current evidence-based climate.** “I have learned what I have been dying to learn for so long: how to show the outside world that what we’re doing works,” says Pusey. “It’s a new world now. The whole climate is now evidence-based. Some of what we do is strong and needs to get out there. I knew that intuitively, but if we didn’t get these tools, we still would be at risk of going extinct.”
- **To continue as a trusted service provider, care must be taken in the use of community feedback.** “At Asian Women’s Shelter there is a deeper appreciation and understanding of evaluation and its relevance for the organization’s work,” PCC Morales says. “They realize that, in order to continue as a trusted service provider, they must be more systematic in how they use the community’s opinions and feedback to form their programs, interventions, and activities. The whole process of

gathering feedback is very much at the forefront of our planning for the next couple of months, and they are trying to be thoughtful and careful about how they do that.”

- **Good evaluation is more than just having data.** “Before doing this project, I had approached evaluation from a very academic point of view,” says Morales. “Doing this has made me realize that it’s more than just having the data. It’s about being connected to the community. It’s been really humbling for me to see their heart in this, and how they grapple so much with the evaluation terminology and the concepts because they really want to improve their programs. They want to make sure they are doing everything they can to be thoughtful and deliberate about their program planning and implementation. This involvement with AWS’ project has allowed me to have a deeper appreciation for the folks at the front lines.”

### ***Enlace Comunitario***

- **Use of a logic model and other evaluation methods leads to clarity of project purpose.** “Before this program, we were so in the implement, implement, implement mode that we did not always articulate the main objectives and their connection to the broader goal,” says Ortsman. “They weren’t always consistent and didn’t go back to a logic model. Thinking in this way has had an impact on other projects. Now, from the beginning of a project we more carefully consider what we are trying to do and if a particular activity we are including in the leadership training or the community presentations clearly connects to our objective. When we interview job candidates we ask about their evaluation skills and how they feel about evaluation.”
- **Understand the importance of documentation.** “While we’ve always documented our intervention services, we have never been great at documenting our prevention work in a systematic way,” says Ortsman. “One of the things we gained from the evaluation is that you need to put everything down on paper. We’ve gotten much better at documenting what we do—and not just in these two projects. We are documenting the changes we make to curricula in new prevention projects, including all the reasons why we decided to make those changes. We have a new way of doing things.”
- **In order to put the immigrant community at the center of an organization’s work, involve community members in the evaluation as well.** “We have engaged our leaders, both promotoras and youth, in the development of our evaluation tools and in the creation of our presentations,” says Ortsman, “and asked for their feedback on what can be improved. This has demystified the evaluation process somewhat.”
- **Understand the real cost of an evaluation to ensure sustainability.** “Enlace staff is now building into their fundraising strategy realistic numbers of the person-hours needed to be really systematic about evaluation,” says PCC Isaac. “I am more confident than I was a year ago that they will be able to sustain this initiative because they are much more cognizant of the real costs to do that.”

- **Having a previous relationship with the organization can help a PCC contribute quickly.** “I was able to dive right in since I knew what Enlace was doing and their values and goals. PCCs who were new to their organization took quite a while to move up the learning curve about what their organization was trying to accomplish.”

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

### Plans for Additional Learning Collaboratives

Two additional learning collaboratives will take place in 2012—one on cultural norms and the other on the promotoras model of community members leading an intervention.

“The programs can be placed in any one of the three programmatic areas [i.e., healthy relationships, reframing cultural norms, and the peer-education model] because they all work with each of those issues,” says Tashima. “The grantee agencies we are bringing together for each of the learning collaboratives provide the strongest focus on each of these topics. The real difference for the learning collaboratives is that this is practice going to evidence, instead of the other way around.”

### Hope for Program Impact on Grantee Organizations and Beyond

Program leaders expressed the hope that the results of *Strengthening What Works* will resonate well beyond the projects being evaluated and the eight grantee organizations.

- “I think that all of the organizations that were funded are going to be in a position to take more leadership,” says national advisory committee member Striley. “A couple of them are already big national players, but a lot of them aren’t. Also, the broadening of domestic violence prevention that can come out of this program, as a result of each agency’s unique prevention efforts, is important.”
- “I hope that all of the grantees embrace and continue to actively use evaluation in every aspect of their organization. I also hope that programs that cannot use evidence-based practices because those practices are not relevant to their communities can get the respect they deserve through a process that allows them to create evidence of the utility of their practice. That would be a perfect outcome from my perspective,” says Program Co-Director Crain.
- “If these eight organizations can demonstrate that, with sufficient technical assistance and resources,” says Consultant Yoshihama, “they can conduct program evaluation and advance knowledge based on real practice and rigorous evaluation methodologies, then we can spread that in the field and demystify evaluation as being too costly and too hard.”
- “If the initiative is successful,” says Program Co-Director Tashima, “I hope that this starts to shift the conversation between the academic research world and the practice

world, and that work that the practice world is engaged in is more valued by the academic side of the world.”

### **Caution About Replicating Best Practices**

How to take an evidence-based model from one population and adapt it to the same aged population but with different cultural circumstances is important to consider when replicating best practices, according to Lowe. “The idea that everything has to be adopted with fidelity keeps organizations from taking on a new practice, because they don’t have the capacity or they don’t have the funds. We are addressing the adaptation of evidence-based projects so that the underlying core principles of the intervention are held to fidelity, but the program fits the circumstances of the new community and organization.”

The academic portion of evaluation is a hard sell to many charismatic leaders in immigrant and refugee communities, Ancheta notes. “First generation immigrants and refugees are more likely to follow the advice of the leaders, which is not necessarily well-documented and researched.”

There is something of “a bias in this cohort of grantees toward larger programs with well-established approaches,” adds national advisory committee member Ancheta. “Smaller organizations may not see program conclusions as relevant for them because of their size, age, or organizational maturity.”

### **Spreading Evaluation Use by the Grantee Sites**

#### ***Asian Women’s Shelter***

Asian Women’s Shelter will be doing more rounds of both Chai Chat and Homophobia Busters. “We are thinking about how to use evaluative data not just to strengthen the programs but also to use it as a giveback to the community and engage the community and encourage others,” says Pusey. “That’s sort of a final frontier of year three.”

Pusey hopes to “spread the tools to our other programs first and then to other organizations that aren’t established enough to catch the eye of the Foundation. They need to get the information too. I don’t want us to win and them to lose. They need help.”

PCC Morales reinforces this: “After the initiative ends other organizations around the nation that want to implement similar programs will turn to Asian Women’s Shelter for that expertise. They already are well-known because of their long history. I think awareness of the program will increase and its public image will be enhanced—which will be really great for them.”

## **Enlace Comunitario**

Enlace Comunitario leadership expects to build on the evaluation skills developed under *Strengthening What Works*. “We plan to write an evaluation component into all of our grant proposals, funder permitting,” says Ortsman. “This is all part of using the methods and approaches from the project in our other work.”

“I expect to focus on the case study in the next few months,” says PCC Isaac. “Enlace recognizes the value of evaluation in their own work. Having a more formal evaluation set of skills will also help them in their public engagement and in fundraising. It will help them tell their story in a more coherent and credible way.”

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Program Officer: Wendy Yallowitz

Grant ID # IRP, 66167, 66166, 65825, 65683, 65670, 65653

Program area: Vulnerable Populations

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## APPENDIX 1

### Progress Report Interviewees

**Jocelyn Ancheta, MA**

Senior Program Officer  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota  
Foundation  
Eagan, Minn.

**Cathleen E. Crain, MA**

Managing Partner  
LTG Associates  
Takoma Park, Md.

**Claudia Isaac, PhD, MPA/URP**

Project Capacity Consultant  
Enlace Comunitario  
Associate Professor  
Community and Regional Planning  
University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**Laura Leviton, PhD**

Senior Advisor for Evaluation  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Princeton, N.J.

**Jane Isaacs Lowe, PhD**

Senior Program Officer  
Team Director, Vulnerable Populations  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Princeton, N.J.

**Claudia Medina, MA, JD**

Executive Director  
Enlace Comunitario  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**Michelle Morales, MSW**

Project Capacity Consultant  
Asian Women's Shelter  
Social Worker

Catholic Charities  
San Francisco, Calif.

**Sandra Ortsman, MA, MCRP**

Associate Director  
Enlace Comunitario  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**Orchid Pusey**

Interim Executive Director  
Asian Women's Shelter  
San Francisco, Calif.

**Catherine Woodstock Striley, PhD, MSW, MPE**

Professor of Epidemiology  
Department of Epidemiology  
College of Public Health and Health  
Professions  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Fla.

**Nathaniel Tashima, PhD**

Managing Partner  
LTG Associates  
Turlock, Calif.

**Wendy Yallowitz, MSW**

Program Officer  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Princeton, N.J.

**Mieko Yoshihama, PhD, MSW**

Professor of Social Work  
School of Social Work  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

## APPENDIX 2

### List of Funded Projects

#### **Arab American Action Network (Chicago, Ill.)**

Evaluating the Family Violence Prevention Program for the Arab community

ID# 066944 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

##### **Project Director**

Rania Shkairat

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#### **Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (Boston, Mass.)**

Evaluating ATASK, a social norms outreach program preventing intimate partner violence in Asian immigrant populations in Massachusetts

ID# 06649 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

##### **Project Directors**

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#### **Asian Women's Shelter (San Francisco, Calif.)**

Evaluating the Asian Women's Shelter's IPV prevention program for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual immigrants and refugees in San Francisco

ID# 066948 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

##### **Project Director**

Orchid Pusey

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#### **Casa de Esperanza (St. Paul, Minn.)**

Evaluating two strengths-based community engagement strategies used to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) in the Twin Cities

ID# 066947 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

### **Project Directors**

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### **Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc. (Atlanta, Ga.)**

Evaluating the “C3” Women's Empowerment Campaign of service delivery, economic empowerment, leadership development and advocacy

ID# 066950 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

#### **Project Director**

Marianne Chung, MPH

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### **Enlace Comunitario (Albuquerque, N.M.)**

Evaluating a social norms program to prevent intimate partner violence in the Latino immigrant community in Albuquerque, N.M.

ID# 066954 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

#### **Project Directors**

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### **Korean Community Center of the East Bay (Oakland, Calif.)**

Evaluating Shimtuh, a Korean faith-based IPV prevention program in the East Bay area of California

ID# 066946 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

#### **Project Directors**

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**Migrant Clinicians Network (Austin, Texas)**

Evaluating the Hombres Unidos Contra la Violencia Familiar program for Latino migrant farm workers

ID# 066945 (November 2009–October 2012) \$175,000

**Project Directors**

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### Articles

#### **Journal Articles**

Uehling G, Bouroncle A, Roeber C, Tashima N, Crain C. “Preventing Partner Violence in Refugee and Immigrant Communities.” *Forced Migration Review*, 38: 50–51, October 2011. Available [online](#).

### Communications or Promotions

#### **Grantee Profiles**

*Evaluating Models for Prevention of Intimate Partner Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Communities: A Profile of Nathaniel Tashima, PhD, and Cathleen E. Crain, MA.* Available [online](#).