



'A Woman's Country'?

Addressing the fears and misconceptions impacting the cultural adjustment of refugee families.

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Welcome!

Thank you for participating in this peer exchange and your interest in this very important topic!

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- During the Q&A session, please use the chat pod on the right to submit your questions. Any unanswered questions will be posted and responded to on BRYCS Blog: <http://brycsblog.blogspot.com/>
- At the close of today's presentation, you will be redirected to a short evaluation.

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Goli Amin Bellinger;
MSW, LICSW

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Objectives

- Connect to refugee fears and goals of family preservation
- Distinguish Situational Couple's Violence
- Strategies for approaching family safety

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Background



Credit: Amy Adams STUDIO5/USCHI

- 2007-11: Refugee Family & Marriage Strengthening Program
- Communication and conflict management skill training program
- Acculturation and managing stressors to the family
- 8-24 hours of Psycho-educational workshops
- Over 7000 refugees served, 30 ethnic communities, 7 states
- Team of 10 refugees/ immigrants at resettlement agencies

Initial Project funding provided to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Administration for Children & Families

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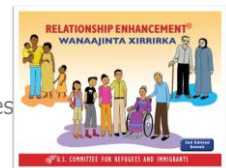


Project Goals

Support refugee:

- Adjustment to resettlement
- Acculturation to USA
- Integration into communities

Family violence prevention



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Project Components

8- 24 hours of skills training

- "Introduction to Relationship Enhancement®"
- "Family Stress and Conflict Management"
- "Relationship Enhancement and Financial Literacy®"

Curricula for workshops can be ordered from:
Institute for the Development of Emotional and Life Skills www.skillswork.org

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First Observation: Refugee Goals



*'Success for my family in America'
'A good future and education for our children'*

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Second Observation: Marriage in America

'America is a Woman's Country'

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Refugee Discussions on Marriage in America

- High divorce rate
- Disorderly and independent children
- Problems in marriages
- Women leaving their husbands

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The Misconceptions 'A Woman's Country'



- The police will arrest you and put you jail.
- Social workers can take your children.
- The government may deport you.

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Our Empathy

1) The refugee journey



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Our Empathy

- 1) The refugee journey
- 2) Refugee men were not angered or annoyed about their wives having rights; *they were scared of losing their wives and families.*



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Our Empathy

- 1) The refugee journey
- 2) Refugee men were not angered or annoyed about their wives having rights; they were scared of losing their wives and families.
- 3) Women were unsure how to balance their new lives and responsibilities



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Our Empathy

- 1) The refugee journey
- 2) Refugee men were not angered or annoyed about their wives having rights; they were scared of losing their wives and families.
- 3) Women were unsure how to balance their new lives and responsibilities
- 4) Misunderstandings and fears of U.S. laws



= Our Opportunity

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Interpersonal Couples Violence (IPV)

Situational Couples Violence

versus

Classic Domestic Violence/ Intimate Terrorism

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World Health Organization (2006)

- 15-71% reported lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2015)

- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been physically abused by an intimate partner

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**VIOLENCE & ABUSE
ARE UNIVERSAL &
NOT CULTURE SPECIFIC**

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Interpersonal Violence

Situational Couples Violence

- Milder, less frequent, less intense, sometimes death
- Violence mutual, both sexes, no clear victim
- Power and control over the relationship is absent. Absence of systematic coercion & Intimidation
- Fear of violence & danger is absent

Classic Domestic Violence/ Intimate Terrorism

- Severe and often results in physical harm, can be fatal
- "Battering." Batterer is male, victim typically female
- Violence motivated by domination & control/ coercion & Intimidation.
- Victim lives in profound fear

Source: Scuka 2006 *Relationship Enhancement Therapy: Healing Through Deep Empathy and Intimate Dialogue* National Institute of Relationship Enhancement* www.nire.org

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Interpersonal Violence

Situational Couples Violence

- Neither party feels powerless or trapped
- The violence typically is spontaneous
- There is some recognition that violence is damaging to relationship

➤ **Most Common**

Classic Domestic Violence/ Intimate Terrorism

- The victim feels powerless and trapped
- Violence is and can be calculated
- The perpetrator usually is in denial and the victim may not recognize the severity of the situation due to complex psychological issues (in both)

Source: Scuka 2006 *Relationship Enhancement Therapy: Healing Through Deep Empathy and Intimate Dialogue* National Institute of Relationship Enhancement* www.nire.org

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Preventative Recommendations for Approaching Family Safety

- Resettlement agencies
- Community providers
- Schools



*Focus is on Prevention of Situational Couples Violence

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Address on Multiple Levels:

- Individual
- Couple
- Family
- Extended family group
- Groups of unrelated individuals
- Multi couple/ multi family groups

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Approach to Acculturation Topics on Family Safety

Start with Empathizing w/ Fears & Misconceptions
"A Woman's Country"

- The police will arrest you and put you jail.
- Social workers can take your children.
- The government may deport you.

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Approach w/ Strength-Based Focus

Begin discussions by 'Remembering the Good'.¹

Learn client's goals to draw on the strengths. Appeal to refugee goals for:

- Family well-being
- Family success in America
- Safety and security in the U.S.



¹Guernsey, B.G., Ortwein, M., Amin, G. (2007). "Relationship Enhancement" for Refugees and Immigrants" Leader's Guide. Institute for the Development of Emotional and Life Skills. Available at www.ilds.org

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Validate Impact of Immigration on the Family

- Challenges to traditional gender responsibilities for both men and women.
- Losses in support systems such as the extended family & community and religious leaders.
- Differing rates of acculturation in families, ex: between spouses, children, parent and child, and elders.

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Emphasize Importance of Inter-couple communication

"Now that there is a loss of support systems through the immigration, it is important to begin having direct discussions with your spouse regarding fears, concerns, desires, and challenges related to the losses and gains from immigration".

"Increasing communication in the family will help you to focus and better prepare to achieve goals and be successful and protect family well being in America".

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Orient to American Values on Safety

- 1) "The United States cares about individual safety.
- 2) Refugee resettlement is consistent with safety values, to keep people safe.
- 3) The U.S. government takes responsibility in systematically ensuring safety and keeping all its residents safe, regardless of religious or political affiliation.
- 4) This includes protection to you, your wife/ husband and children".

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Highlight Risks of Violence and Non-tolerance Policy

- 1) Verbalize with empathy disruptions to family function and ongoing stressors.
- 2) Recognize that conflicts not addressed can boil into violence.
- 3) Highlight the dangers of physical discipline to children when one is angry.
- 4) Then highlight the agency's/ schools non-tolerance of violence, intentional or unintentional.

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Promote a Non-tolerance Policy

- Purpose: For family safety and well being.
- Educate: Physical and emotional abuse is a serious obstacle to family stability and healthy relationships.
- Connect: Provide hotlines and referrals to domestic violence providers and shelters.
- Target: Both men and women

- ✓ Train all agency staff in IPV- Situation and Classic DV.
- ✓ Partner with Domestic Violence Agencies.

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Non Tolerance Policy: Underlying Principles

(Agency) recognizes that domestic violence is a complex problem. Physical and emotional abuse is a serious obstacle to family stability and healthy relationships. The staff is committed to ensuring that all (program) activities are provided in a manner that does not compromise the safety of any family member. We recognize the diversity of the refugee families in our communities that we serve and the importance of providing culturally sensitive approaches to supporting the development of safe and healthy relationships.

Excerpt from *Domestic Violence Protocol* in ORR grant recipients of Refugee Healthy Marriage funds; FY07-FY11

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Incorporate in the following settings:

- Cultural orientation
- Psycho-educational workshops
- Psychotherapeutic interventions
- Parent-Teacher Association mtgs & conferences
- After school activities & teen dating programs
- Community events
- Religious institutions- including premarital education

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Sources: Situational Couples Violence

- Scuka, R. Checklist for differentiating two different forms of Interpersonal violence. Available at National Institute of Relationship Enhancement www.nire.org
- Holtzworth-Munroe, A., Meehan, J. C., Rehman, U. & Marshall, A. D. (2002), Intimate partner violence: An introduction for couple therapists. In Gurman, A.S. & Jacobson, N. S. (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 441-465). New York, Guilford Press.
- NCADV (2015) *Domestic violence national statistics*. Available at www.ncadv.org

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Sources: Refugees & Relationship Enhancement

- Amin Bellinger, G. (2013) Negotiation of gender responsibilities in resettled refugee populations through the Relationship Enhancement model. *Journal of Transcultural Psychiatry*.
- Guernsey, B.G., Ortwein, M., Amin, G. (2010- 2011) "*Relationship Enhancement® for Refugees and Immigrants 2nd Edition*" Illustrated Participant Manual. *Translations in Arabic, Burmese, Farsi, Karen, Nepali, Somali, Tigrinya*. Arlington, VA. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.
- Amin, G., Smeir, I. (2010) "*Overcoming Barriers: A toolkit for helping refugees adjust to life in the United States*." Arlington, VA. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.
- Guernsey, B.G., Ortwein, M., Amin, G. (2007). "*Relationship Enhancement® for Refugees and Immigrants- Leader's Guide*". Frankfort, KY. Institute for the Development of Emotional and Life Skills. Available at www.skillswork.org

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Questions?

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Contact Us

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info@brycs.org
 1-888-572-6500



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