

Together For Equality & Respect

Final Evaluation Report
2017 – 2021



Women's Health East acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We affirm that sovereignty was never ceded and that colonialism and racism continue to impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and can contribute to the high rates of violence that might be experienced. We recognise the strength, resilience and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and express our hope for reconciliation.

Contributors

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- TFER Evaluation Working Group for their skills, expertise and for collecting and analysing the partnership's evaluation data.
- TFER partners who undertook collective action to prevent violence against women and contributed evaluation data during the four year period covered in this report.
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**The Together
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Executive summary

The Together For Equality and Respect (TFER) partnership is a cross-sector collaboration of organisations in Melbourne's east that have worked together to prevent violence against women since 2012.

This report presents the final evaluation of the TFER strategy 2017-2021, with a particular focus on primary prevention activities that were delivered to communities who reside in Melbourne's east between 2019 to 2021.

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership delivered a range of sophisticated, effective, evidence-based health promotion programs and capacity building initiatives to prevent violence against women.

The partnership demonstrated an impressive reach. Quantitative evaluation data from 38 projects working across 10 settings found that:

- 12,069 people took part in a TFER activity, such as a project, training or co-design process
- 469,379 people saw, read or heard a gender equality message developed by TFER partners.

Five key themes emerged from the qualitative evaluation data that described the impact of the partnership and how partners are advancing gender equality across the region. These themes relate to partnerships, intersectionality, adaptability, honouring lived experience and leadership.

The evaluation findings demonstrate that TFER is an established and robust partnership achieving results. The interim evaluation report found that 'TFER capital' had been built through working together in partnership over many years with a shared focus on gender equity and preventing violence against women. This resulted in a growth in confidence, networks and skills that support collaboration and partnership.¹

The evaluation shows that TFER provides regional primary prevention infrastructure. Partners have a shared understanding of violence against women and a commitment to sustained collective action, listening, adapting and learning. This has resulted in a range of impacts in the community, workplaces, and across the region. Partners spoke of changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among their colleagues and participants in prevention programs and initiatives. The data demonstrates that TFER has built a capable, trained and expert workforce and a mechanism for coordinated and collective action in partner organisations and across multiple settings.

Primary prevention of violence against women and work to advance gender equality has become more established as a result of TFER and indicators of the emergence of systems-level change are captured in the evaluation.

The report outlines six recommendations to strengthen the TFER partnership and its approach to shared evaluation over the next four years.

TFER is a long-term, complex intervention that provides the infrastructure for coordinated, regional primary prevention action. There is much for the TFER partnership to be proud of, and to build upon, as work commences under its 2021-2025 strategy.



Introduction

Together For Equality and Respect (TFER) is a cross-sector collaboration of organisations that work together to prevent violence against women. The partnership operates across Melbourne's eastern region, which is an area spanning 3,000 square kilometres with a population of over 1.1 million people, which is around 17 per cent of the Victorian population.

The TFER partnership has been working collaboratively since 2012. At the time of this report, TFER has the commitment of 32 organisations that includes women's health, local government, community health, legal services, universities, Victoria Police, state government departments, private utility services, specialist family violence services and community services.

The partnership is guided by a four-year strategy, which is supported by a regional action plan and monitored via an evaluation framework. Women's Health East acts as the lead and backbone organisation and employs the manager to coordinate and resource the partnership, support collective action across the region, and build the capacity of partner organisations to deliver effective primary prevention activities. This role is funded by the Women's Health Services Workforce Capacity Building Program, a key initiative of the Victorian Government's Free from Violence Strategy and 10-year Industry Plan.

An interim evaluation report was published in October 2020, that included an assessment of the work of TFER against the partnership's four strategic directions. This evaluation concluded that:

TFER partners are successfully directing their efforts towards the components of systems change to promote gender equity and reduce violence against women in the eastern metropolitan region... the capital build through working together in partnership over many years with a shared focus on gender equity and preventing violence against women... has resulted in a growth in confidence, networks and skills that support collaboration and partnership.^[1]

Following the publication of the interim report, TFER's Leadership Group and Evaluation Working Group met to discuss its findings and to consider how to progress TFER's final evaluation report. It was agreed that the evaluation would focus more specifically on the work of the partnership under TFER's first focus area which is to '*work with the eastern metropolitan region community across all settings*' and the second focus area, which is to '*work with diverse community groups within the eastern metropolitan region*'.

This evaluation report amplifies the voices of diverse community groups and TFER partners who work with these groups. The evaluation uses the Most Significant Change method to learn more about how TFER partners are engaging with communities and diverse community groups and how change is occurring. It was the first time the TFER partnership had used this evaluation method. Partners attended an online workshop where they contributed stories of change for the regional evaluation.

A total of 13 stories were collected, 12 of which the Evaluation Working Group received consent to include as data in the evaluation. An additional four stories of change were gathered from TFER partners who were not able to attend the workshop.

To complement the data gathered through the Most Significant Change process, the Evaluation Working Group and Women's Health East implemented a second evaluation technique. This involved distributing a proforma that had been developed by the Evaluation Working Group as a common tool to collect information from all partners about their activities against focus areas one and two of the TFER action plan during the final two years of the strategy. The aim of the tool was to collect quantitative data about the number of activities that occurred, the reach of these activities, the target populations, and the format of the primary prevention activities.

The tool was disseminated electronically to all TFER partners and could be completed via Survey Monkey or in a Word document. Eleven health and community organisations and local councils provided 26 Community Activity Records to the Evaluation Working Group for the purpose of the evaluation. This report draws on the data collected by the Community Activity Record tool and the Most Significant Change process.

COVID-19

Every partner reported that the disruption caused by COVID-19, lockdowns and public health restrictions, which took effect from March 2020, impacted planned prevention activities and created significant uncertainty for staff, organisations and communities. Partners adapted quickly and many identified that the partnership was an enabler for work continuing.

“Due to changes like COVID-19, TFER made things easier, as we all know each other. We’ve been able to engage in online platforms and continue our partnership work. It wasn’t difficult, because we have established strong relationships with TFER partners, which made the work easier.”

– Most Significant Change story 4.

Limitations

TFER is a complex intervention with various activities undertaken across organisations and communities in Melbourne’s east. As such, a number of evaluation limitations were identified.

The diversity of partners, combined with the variety of ways partners fund, resource and deliver primary prevention work leads to a heterogeneity of data collected under TFER. Partners are committed to a regional evaluation process, but also have organisational demands, including their own evaluation requirements and tools, and requirements of funders. These competing priorities make implementing a shared measurement system challenging, which was exacerbated by COVID-19. As a result, only 56 per cent (n=18) of TFER partners contributed data to the evaluation, although more expressed a desire to be involved.

This was the first time that TFER used the Most Significant Change approach and, as such, it was an exercise in learning by doing. Challenges arose from implementing the approach solely online, which was necessary due to COVID-19 public health requirements. The Most Significant Change method requires practitioners to put aside several consecutive hours to develop their stories of change, and engage in discussions about the resultant stories. It also requires resourcing to transcribe the stories and for the storyteller to review. Due to time and resourcing constraints, it was only possible to hold one Most Significant Change storytelling workshop, which limited participant numbers and practitioner’s familiarity with the methodology.

A further limitation is that TFER is yet to develop a standardised evaluation tool to collect regional evaluation data. Partners have provided feedback that the existing regional data collection framework needs to be simplified in order to be accessible for all partners. This, together with competing priorities, limited the amount of quantitative data that was collected.

Evaluation findings

Reach

The evaluation primarily draws on qualitative data to assess how TFER partners work with the community, with some quantitative data gathered through the Community Activity Record tool. Seventeen TFER partners contributed quantitative data relating to the reach of their interventions. Data was analysed from 38 projects that were delivered in a range of settings as summarised in Graph 1.

The quantitative data showed that:

469,379

Reactive reach

Gender equality messages were developed and distributed by 18 partners who recorded a reach of 469,379 people, the majority of which was ‘reactive reach’ where the activity message was seen, read and heard.

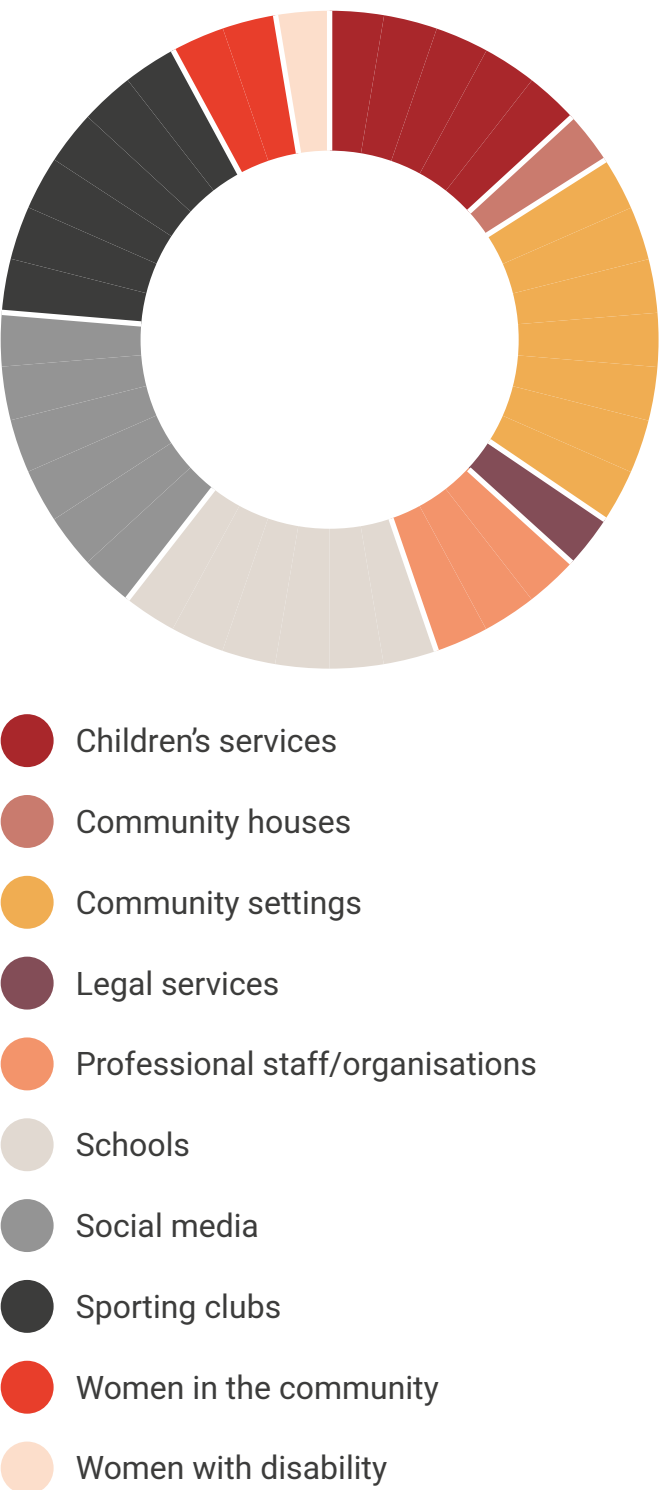
12,069

Proactive reach

A proactive reach of 12,069 people was recorded, which refers to the number of people who took part in an activity that included attending a training or being part of a co-design process.

The reactive reach data is the result of proactive engagement between partners, allies, supporting institutions and communities.

Graph 1: Settings where TFER partners delivered primary prevention activities to the community



Qualitative findings

The data collected by the Most Significant Change stories and the Community Activity Record shows five interconnected themes that describe how TFER partners work with communities in Melbourne's east to progress gender equality. The themes are partnerships, intersectionality, adaptability, honouring lived experience and leadership. Under these five themes, a number of sub-themes emerged that show how TFER contributes to change via collaborative action. It is important to note that the themes reinforce and intersect with one another to create change, with many examples demonstrating multiple themes. Stories included in this evaluation report have been edited for length.



Partnerships

Regional partnerships are recognised as playing ‘a critical role in driving collective action across local communities’ for the primary prevention of violence against women. The regional partnership plays a critical role in connecting practitioners, organisations and activities and breaking down practice silos.

During this four-year evaluation, strong partnership enabled Women’s Health East and TFER partners to secure funding for the following region-wide, collaborative partnership projects:



Critical friends model to support the roll out of the **Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR)** program in schools (2017-ongoing). This project established relationships between the Department of Education and Training, schools and community-based TFER partner organisations to support evidence-based implementation of the RRRR program.



Messaging for Gender Equality project (2020-2021). This partnership project between TFER and VicHealth, with the support of the Outer East Primary Care Partnership, undertook research on evidence-based messaging for gender equality. This led to the creation of the Framing Gender Equality Message Guide and a series of regional applied practice masterclasses.



Margins to the Mainstream: Preventing violence against women with disabilities (2020-2023). This project, led by Women’s Health East in partnership with Women with Disabilities Victoria and the TFER partnership, amplifies the voices of women with lived experience of disabilities and builds the capacity of partners to prevent violence against women with disabilities.

A number of sub-themes about what enables effective partnerships came through in the analysis of the Most Significant Change stories and Community Activity Records collected, which are detailed below.

“[As a result of TFER] I have built more connections with practitioners in this field, which makes me feel more comfortable in undertaking partnership work in this area. TFER network enables us to undertake partnership work, rather than us working in silos.”

– Most Significant Change Story 4.



Taking time to build strengths-based relationships and respect diverse contributions, which includes and goes beyond co-design processes²

A partnership between Community Houses in the Outer Suburbs (CHAOS), EDVOS, EACH, Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges Councils, and Women's Health East supported 15 community houses across the region to take part in the Knox PLEDGE Gender Equality Clothesline Project.

"There was enormous capacity, expertise and interest within the community house sector relevant to the work of promoting action on gender equality [prior to the project] ... It was important that this project built on the work that the houses had already been doing in the area of prevention of violence against women and promoting gender equality ... The project was able to, through the partnership, leverage the existing interest, skills and resources to build momentum and amplify good examples across the region." - Community Activity Record 4.

Working in a strengths-based way was reiterated in BREAK THE SILENCE: The Knox PLEDGE Gender Equality Clothesline Kit (2020), which was developed as a result of the partnership between TFER organisations and CHAOS. The number one tip offered in the kit is:

"Do it your way... do what you can, given your time and resources, and adapt to your local context." - Community Activity Record 4.

A steering group established by Eastern Health for the Promoting Healthy Masculinities in the East project was another successful example of a partnership.

"[It] had representation from women's health organisations, including Women's Health East, and EDVOS, Department of Education and Training, Rotary, Yarra Valley Water and Belgrave Leisure. All partners provided different levels of support from direct program design and delivery to smaller efforts, such as advocacy and promotion of the groups projects." - Community Activity Record 10.

The steering group worked to support a wide range of activities, including two online workshops for professionals working with families in Melbourne's east. The Engaging Men: Reducing Resistance and Building Support Guide³ was also developed by Eastern Health, EDVOS, and the Queensland University of Technology.

"An increased number of organisations invested their time and resources to engage with boys and men for violence prevention. Over 8,300 people were reached from the

seeded projects. Eastern Health was invited to support VicHealth in the design of the healthier masculinities framework, to be a guest speaker at many practitioner events across the state, including participation at the annual ANROWS conference alongside Our Watch's masculinities policy advisor. Yarra Ranges Council also included a focus on masculinities within their 2021-2025 public health and wellbeing plan." - Community Activity Record 10.

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) was working with Falam Chin and Karen communities to design a primary prevention project called Matter of Respect when COVID-19 hit.

"The impact on the communities themselves was ... significant and their priorities changed and shifted as they lost employment, faced health issues, a lack of information in language and an increase in incidents of family violence.... Pivoting the prevention focus to response, through providing training to the community members on a range of topics relevant to their immediate needs, such as family law, family violence, legal needs and employment rights. Information was delivered in language to ensure as many community members were able to access it." - Community Activity Record 5.

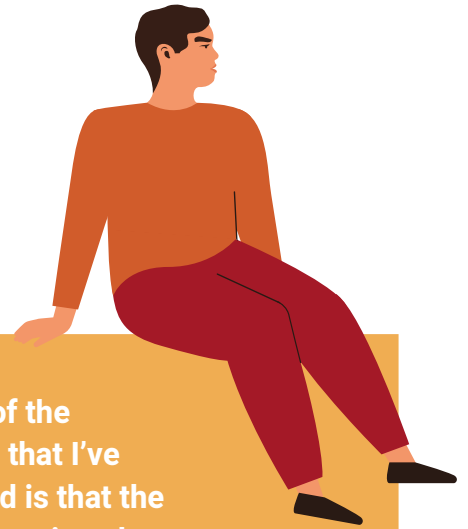
Once this training was delivered, and 'the community was ready to commit' to taking part in primary prevention work, women and men 'of different ages' took part in workshops that used translators and which were held 'during times that supported mothers to attend'. - Community Activity Record 5.

ECLC partnered with the communities to develop five videos in Falam Chin and Karen that included a focus on prevention of violence against women. Six primary prevention postcards, posters and social media graphics that were 'relevant and culturally meaningful' and challenged unhealthy gender norms with messaging in Falam Chin and Karen were also developed.

Partnering with organisations outside of the primary prevention sector

A shift noted by partners in the evaluation findings, was the expansion of partnerships between organisations involved in primary prevention work and non-traditional primary prevention organisations, such as community houses, universities, ethnic minority communities and utility services.

One striking aspect of the data was the role that TFER played in the development of these partnerships.



“One of the things that I’ve noticed is that the conversations have shifted from this really all-encompassing discussion into understanding or drilling down to nuanced differences and I think the TFER project has enabled that to happen over the last couple of years ... that might be for me related to different organisations coming into the TFER umbrella that aren’t purely feminist organisations or aren’t refuge organisations.” - Most Significant Change story 14.

“There has been quite a change in the number of organisations that come along and become part of TFER. Women’s Health East has done a really good job of engaging organisations and settings like Yarra Valley Water and university settings. We’re starting to move away from just working with organisations that have a strong understanding of preventing violence against women and finding new organisations to be a part of the conversations.” - Most Significant Change story 11.

“The value that TFER offers is huge through the fact that I can pick up a phone and talk to someone at Boroondara (City Council) or Migrant Information Centre or Eastern Community Legal Centre or Country Fire Authority or Police or Aquareena and talk about TFER and they understand and have a shared language about gender equality.” - Most Significant Change story 13.

Intersectionality

Taking an intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women means acknowledging that some people are subject to multiple, compounding forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage, such as gender inequality, heteronormativity, racism and ableism.⁴ Intersectionality also ‘reminds us that gender is not experienced in the same way by everyone. For example, our age, gender identity, life stage, ability, sexuality, indigeneity, race, ethnicity, class, religious beliefs, family, geographical location and profession can all change our perceptions of gender, as well as the way our gender is perceived and treated by the law, policy, institutions and others’.⁵

TFER partners developed a range of work to explicitly address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of oppression that drive violence against some women. Table 1 provides an overview of this work.

Intersectionality reminds us that gender is not experienced in the same way by everyone.

Evaluation data found that discussions about intersectionality often coexisted alongside discussions related to partnerships, adaptability, activism and leadership. For example, the Most Significant Change story featured as an example of adaptability (below) recognised that for people whose first, second or third language is not English, primary prevention materials developed in English do not meet their needs. Prioritising intersectional approaches requires spending time building genuine partnerships. One intervention reported that they “tried to recruit as diverse a field of women as we could” but despite their efforts, they were not able to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as ‘further relationship-building was needed.’ - Community Activity Record 22.





Table 1: A summary of intersectional primary prevention work undertaken by TFER partners

Project	Activity	Priority population
Margins to the Mainstream	A range of activities that support and promote experts by experience. The project amplifies the voices of women with disabilities and builds the capacity of TFER partners to address the intersection of gender inequality and ableism.	Women with disability
Eastern Community Legal Centre, Matter of Respect	In-language workshops and resources developed with community input.	Falam Chin and Karen speaking Burmese people
Baby Makes 3	State-wide training Eastern metropolitan region consultations and gender equity training	Rainbow families, Aboriginal families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, and families living in rural and remote locations across Victoria. Indian community, which will be followed by work with Chinese and Burmese communities
Monash Council, This Girl Can	LGBTIQ inclusion training for staff Exercise posters translated into Italian, Greek and Chinese Women's health webinar led by women with disability	LGBTIQ people Culturally and linguistically diverse communities Women with disability
Thai Community Stand Up for Gender Equality and Respect - EDVOS	Capacity building training and resource development in consultation with Thai teachers	Thai students, teachers and parents
Access Community Health Free To Be Me	Revised assessment tools and active promotion to multicultural early childhood centres	Culturally and linguistically diverse children and parents
Faith Communities Unite for Safety and Respect – Inner East Councils	A forum and workshops	Culturally and linguistically diverse Interfaith communities in the Inner East
Ambassadors for Gender Equity – Inspiro	Training sessions on diversity and intersectionality	School students
Whitehorse Strengthening Action for Family Violence Prevention	Bystander training	Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Willingness to learn from people's experiences and the importance of inclusion

The Margins to the Mainstream: Preventing violence against women with disabilities project is a three-year TFER project funded by the Department of Social Services and led by Women's Health East in partnership with Women with Disabilities Victoria and a project advisory group of TFER partners. Primary prevention experts across the east were involved in a range of capacity-building activities to increase their understanding of the ways ableism intersects with gender inequality to drive violence against women with disabilities. The project is led by a group of project experts who are women with disabilities, who design resources and deliver activities that draw upon their experiences of gender and disability stereotypes and discrimination, as well as what equality and human rights mean for them.

The Monash Council's Community Leaders United by Sport (CLUBS) is a project that responds to community-level desire for inclusion that goes beyond women and girls. The CLUBS project was established to help sports clubs challenge gender stereotypes and roles to create environments where everyone feels equal and respected, and to increase women's participation in all aspects of sport and recreation, including decision-making. In year one of the project, club representatives:

"Had identified that often they were not particularly culturally diverse – especially at leadership level – and also understood from existing research, including council's own engagement with our community, that sports clubs are not always very welcoming to people who identify as LGBTIQ. Therefore we wanted to ensure that we took an intersectional approach to considerations beyond just gender and understand and support clubs to be more inclusive particularly of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and/or who identify as LGBTIQ." - Community Activity Record 23.

The project ensured that communities' grassroots ideas and experiences were heard and acted on via information gathered in focus groups and embedded in leadership training discussions.

The need to proactively consider intersecting inequities in program design and delivery

Eastern Health and Yarra Valley Health established the Taking it Step by Step Mentoring Women program for women in the Yarra Ranges who have identified personal and professional development goals. Participants are connected to women who have the skills, capacities and wisdom to provide mentoring. When recruiting program participants care was taken to promote the opportunity:

"Within the community via Yarra Valley Health, disability service organisations, Aboriginal organisations, as well as the broader community through partner networks to ensure women experiencing disadvantage were aware of the opportunity." - Community Activity Record 9.

The following story has been chosen to illustrate the importance of intersectional work that acknowledges and builds on the strengths of diverse communities.

Unite for Safety and Respect – Most Significant Change story 6

This story started at the end of 2017 when TFER finished a year of good work... I was the only person who was not a staff member at a meeting representing interfaith and CALD networks. There were four representatives from local councils - Boroondara, Manningham, Monash and Whitehorse. I am a member of interfaith networks in these four council areas. At that time, most faith groups would say there was no family violence in their communities.

I had the idea: why don't we get these four councils and interfaith networks to work together to tackle the prevention of violence in CALD communities?... I had a very pleasant surprise and was delighted when all four Councils came back and said let's work together. The Councils realised that \$10,000 would not go far and agreed to provide in-kind support and were also prepared to supplement the small grant funding.

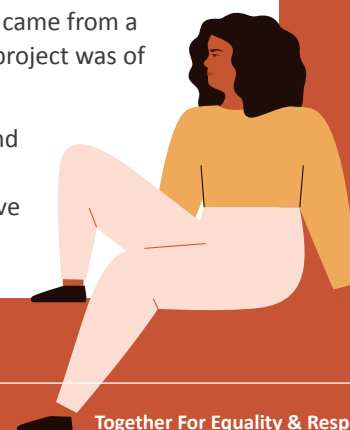
We went to the four interfaith networks and had consultations with faith leaders. Altogether over 10 faith groups were consulted: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Islam, Sikh, Zoroastrian, some spiritual groups such as Heavenly World Peace and Light and the Humanist group. Once we had them in the room and said what we wanted to do, we were met with such a wall of resistance. Most said there is no family violence in our faith group. They used words like there is health, happiness and peace in our communities. After these consultations, we realised that talking about the prevention of family violence would not get us far. We came up with another name, Unite for Safety and Respect.

We went back to conduct other consultations and said that we want communities to come together to stand united and have a life of respect. Everyone said yes – we then had consensus. In all the consultations it was intergenerational, we had young women as well as older women, and many men who were happy to join in. We talked about how we worked with the 3 Cs: consultation, consensus and collaboration. We went back to co-design and asked what was needed by the faith communities... The things wanted were some statistics on violence against women, consideration of and involvement of different groups, to hear from women themselves, and to have tools to be able to recognise and respond and to do role plays. We wanted to have buy-in from the community to call out power, disrespect and control issues.

It was a year of workshops – we couldn't rush it. It wasn't possible to just do one session. Cultures, languages, traditions typically all contributed to men being seen as heads of households, whether these were husbands, fathers or men in extended families. We needed to do all this carefully, not to put anyone in danger. By mid-2019, we had a workshop with 150 people in the room. We invited Women's Health East's Speaking Out advocates— women who had experienced family violence in their lives - to speak, and a man called Tarang Chawla, from the Hindu faith group, whose sister had been murdered. He spoke about how that affected members of his family. There was also a panel who spoke.

It is really significant that not a single faith group stepped away from this project.... We invited the Faith Communities Council of Victoria to the final project workshop. As a result, three faith groups – the Sikh, Buddhist and a Christian faith group— were part of a series of workshops in a pilot program from Faith Communities Council of Victoria in 2021. Since this small grant project ended ... faith leaders and community leaders now have the ability to speak about family violence. There is no longer an issue about naming and shaming. The best compliment came from a senior woman in one community who was part of this project. She said 'this project was of the community, by the community, for the community in their faith centres'.

I am proud that a project with humble beginnings went on to address faith and community groups in the eastern Melbourne region across intersections of gender, age, ethnicity, abilities, faiths and cultures...I hope that such productive co-design partnership initiatives continue well into the future.



Adaptability



Adaptability is a key component of primary prevention work. The impact of COVID-19 tested the adaptability of TFER partners, requiring ‘drastic changes to the way in which we were working’ - Most Significant Change story 1. The Most Significant Change evaluation data emphasised how TFER enabled ‘adaptability’ through the strength of the existing partnership.

The importance of ensuring that interventions are fit for purpose, not ‘one size fits all’

The evaluation findings highlight the importance of primary prevention interventions that are tailored to the setting and that listen and adapt to feedback provided by communities. The [Free to Be Me](#) project implemented by Access Health and Community (AccessHC) in partnership with Women’s Health East supported early childhood educators and kindergarten staff to promote gender equality, role model respectful relationships, and challenge gender stereotypes.

“We made the decision to develop our own gender equity training so we could adapt and revise the training to meet the educators’ needs and what they wanted to get out of the session. We worked with early years centres using the tools to assess their policies, practices, language use, the spaces and play environments and the learning activities they provide the children. Those centres that have completed the program, have created an action plan and the changes they have seen include building educators’ capacity to better understand the links between gender equity in the early years and preventing violence against women, increased capacity to implement gender equity strategies within their centres (e.g. their language used around the children via role modelling) increased their skills to talk to children about diversity, different roles and opportunities, and to challenge those gender stereotypes with the children.” - Most Significant Change story 7.

Evaluation data from the [Matter of Respect](#) and the Unite for Safety and Respect projects highlight the need to listen to communities and adapt accordingly. In both instances, communities were clear that they wanted to know more about responses to violence before primary prevention projects could commence.

“We had to go back to basics and also meet people where they were at. These are people who are dealing with disclosures within their communities.” - Most Significant Change story 9.

Pushing the boundaries by engaging in emerging practice

In recent years, TFER has begun to focus more strongly on intersectional, strengths-based primary prevention approaches with men and boys and other emerging areas of practice.

“When we are delivering the communities of practice, the things we need to address now are more complex. People want to know more about intersectional approaches, how do we make transformative change, how do we push the envelope a bit more and try to really get down to the complexities. There was no way we talked about things like that nine years ago. So, that’s really shifted over the years.” - Most Significant Change story 18.

“A big challenge for this steering group was placing a focus on engaging men and boys whilst still ensuring that all actions were aimed at preventing violence against women. To overcome this we ensured that all efforts aligned with Our Watch’s essential actions to prevent violence against women”. - Community Activity Record 10.

The following story illustrates how adaptive TFER members have been throughout COVID-19.

Together For Respect at Home (TFRAH) campaign – Most Significant Change story 1

The TFRAH campaign is a social media project, which aims to promote respectful relationships at home and came about in response to COVID-19. The campaign is made up of TFER partners, including EDVOS, Outer East Primary Care Partnership, Inspiro, Women's Health East, Eastern Health, Maroondah City Council and Yarra Ranges Council.

In March 2020, when we were starting to feel the real impacts of COVID-19, we realised that the way in which we would have to work with our partners and engage with our community was going to have to change. We also recognised that the severity and intensity of family violence was likely to increase. This is what the data tells us when there are natural disasters and large scale emergencies. In response to this, EDVOS did a call out to partners in the region to see if there would be interest in being involved in a social marketing campaign to support our community during COVID-19, which there was!

Once the working group was established, we met weekly via Zoom, and this was a first for many people, pivoting from face to face networks and meetings, to connecting in this new virtual world. From here an action plan, goals and clear objectives were established, where we decided we would focus our resourcing on promoting healthy and respectful relationships in the home.

The working group developed a series of social media tiles, posters, translated materials, videos and a communication guide, to support the implementation of the campaign. The content developed included topics around elder abuse prevention, early intervention support for those experiencing family violence, engaging boys and men in respectful relationships and encouraging shared responsibility within the home. We also developed some translated materials based on community need and consultation with community. The languages we translated [materials into] were Hakha Chin, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hindi.

When we looked at the reach of the campaign we found that our messages had a really broad influence, reaching over 127,000 people across Melbourne's east, but also state-wide. Our resources were shared by over 80 organisations, with a large proportion of those being TFER partners. Looking at the success of the campaign, we recognised that the campaign mobilised really quickly and was responsive to the impacts of COVID-19.

...The partnership is still working together and this year released a video made up of community members and TFER partners answering the question "What does respect in the home really mean?" In the video, we had local police officers, representation from [TFER partners] Eastern Community Legal Centre, Women with Disabilities Victoria and EDVOS and other local community members.

The TFRAH campaign was successful for many different reasons, but we cannot understate the importance of the broader TFER partnership in bolstering this prevention project. Having partners that were already invested in this work and committed to progressing the prevention of violence against women, supported us greatly. This is a true representation of the important and integral role that TFER plays. Having commitment and investment from various organisations across the region to collectively prevent violence against women and children is very unique to our region.

Honouring lived experience

TFER partners have delivered a range of activities that amplify women's voices, elevate women's leadership and create opportunities for women to gain skills and confidence. Increasing sector and organisational capacity to listen to women's voices was evident in the stories shared by partners. Lived experience is recognised as a valuable lever for effecting social change, as it empowers individuals and delivers more effective programs that achieve better outcomes for people who they are designed to impact.

Learning from the community leads to better outcomes for all

Activities that centre women's voices and lived experience were delivered across a range of settings. Partners have observed the transformative impact for participants who interact with and hear from those with lived experience.

"The AFL Outer East Women's Advisory Group developed and delivered two online webinars in November 2020. The aim of these webinars was to build leadership capacity and encourage women to step into leadership positions. Women leaders from across the league presented on the ins and outs of being at the forefront of their clubs." - Community Activity Record 8.

"We have really noticed a difference in the way that staff and volunteers are working. We have one volunteer who is now doing, doing, doing – parents wouldn't realise she isn't a paid staff member, but her confidence has grown. This has given us the opportunity to reflect on how far we have come and what has changed, and the increased confidence in our staff and volunteers." - Community Activity Record 25.

"We also had female participants becoming members of their club committees for the first time; one club creating new position descriptions for all their committee roles; one club formalising their governance processes, and planning Come and Try events for women and girls." - Community Activity Record 23.

"The (co-design) process will be used as part of further discussions with areas at council as part of the Gender Equality Act. These are areas of council that previously thought their work didn't intersect with prevention of violence against women and gender equality." - Community Activity Record 22.



Social change that is equitable requires practitioners to be open to learning together with communities and to be flexible in their approach to prevention programs and activities.

An equity approach that embeds intersectionality and lived experience enhances practice

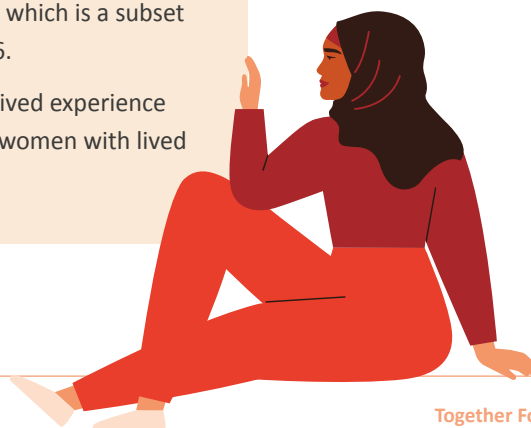
TFER partners recognise that ensuring women of different ages, cultures, abilities and levels of experience have access to programs and activities is critical to broad community reach and effective primary prevention practice. Starting where people are at and moving with them, honouring their knowledge and experience, learning from them while ensuring primary prevention principles are enacted is complex and iterative work. Social change that is equitable requires practitioners to be open to learning together with communities and to be flexible in their approach to prevention programs and activities.

“One of our women's health webinars had a focus on disability, with someone with lived experience delivering that session and attracting a very big audience (112 people)”. - Most Significant Change story 24.

“Specifically, with the gender walks, it was elevating the lived experience of women. They use the spaces, so they have the expertise and experience. They know the barriers and enablers for using public spaces. This approach recognises the experiences of local women and actually hears from the people who engage with the space about how it can be improved.” - Most Significant Change story 12.

“TFER is about social justice. A lot of community members who come from migrant and refugee communities have not had the experience of social justice in the places they have lived previously. The ability to speak out about this issue without naming and shaming is really important, both on family violence and elder abuse, which is a subset of family violence.” - Most Significant Change story 6.

The following project, Margins to the Mainstream, has lived experience at its core and is driven by the voices and leadership of women with lived experience of disability.



Margins to the Mainstream: Preventing Violence Against Women with Disabilities - Community Activity Record 26

The Margins to the Mainstream project was developed in recognition of the prevalence and seriousness of violence against women with disabilities and the importance of increasing a focus on preventing violence against women with disabilities in TFER's work. It was designed to both amplify the voices of women with disabilities and to build the capacity of TFER partners.

To centre the expertise of women with lived experience of disabilities in the project, an experts group was formed in November 2020 with 10 women with lived experience of disability, including neurodiversity, mental health and chronic health conditions. Initially the group participated in skills development sessions. In 2021, the group moved into co-design of key messages and resources to be used by the TFER partnership. These include video resources and a suite of messages for a regional campaign for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence focusing on the prevention of violence against women with disabilities in 2021.

The project is conducting training workshops and community of practice sessions on the prevention of violence against women with disability for staff from TFER organisations. Training and resources produced through the project contribute to TFER partners strengthening the engagement of women with disabilities in their ongoing work and increasing an explicit focus on addressing ableism, as well as gender inequality in their primary prevention work.

Another strategy to embed the prevention of violence against women with disabilities into mainstream prevention work is through seed funding provided to two TFER partners in 2021-2022 to encourage primary prevention work that addresses sexism and ableism as drivers of violence against women with disabilities.

The project is focusing on building the engagement of TFER partners to take forward work with women with lived experience of disability in co-design and other roles, and in preventing violence against women with disabilities beyond the end of the project. Examples of the co-designed campaign resources produced by the project experts for use during for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in 2021 are included below. The project experts report pride, enhanced confidence and a sense of achievement in seeing the messages and resources they co-designed being shared and used by TFER partners.

The Margins to the Mainstream project evaluation report will be published in late 2022 and will be available on the [TFER website](#).

Leadership

In a complex intervention like TFER that involves a diverse range of organisations and community groups, leadership takes many forms. TFER partners developed and delivered activities that cultivated leadership and champions with the knowledge and skills to create change.

Leadership in the context of preventing violence against women requires an understanding and preparedness to act on the drivers of violence against women and role model the essential actions for preventing violence. TFER partners' stories of leadership were closely connected to capacity building processes that were instrumental in enabling leaders to emerge and act effectively.

Leadership takes many forms and can be community led

Stories from the Most Significant Change process show diverse pathways to cultivating leadership for the prevention of violence against women. In many instances, this can be characterised as 'leadership from below' as community members gain the knowledge, skills, confidence and opportunities to lead and champion gender equality within their spheres of influence.

The Most Significant Change stories also show examples of leadership from above, when those in a formal leadership position within their organisation took action to champion change.

"Educators' capacity to role model respectful relationships has increased... They understand that link between gender equity and challenging stereotypes and that it will prevent violence against women." - Most Significant Change story 7.

"The moment for me, where I stopped and noticed the change, was when our Chief Financial Officer, a member of the executive management team, got up and spoke about the importance of this work. She clearly and unapologetically made the link between family violence and gender inequality and the role we can play in our work. I was really proud in this moment, as we were now embracing this conversation. We had 80 people attend this event, including engineers, analysts, workers in high vis and advocates for this work. This change didn't happen overnight. This happened over multiple activities... trainings, events, campaigns. Which has been informed by many of the things TFER have run." - Most Significant Change story 5.



A common understanding enables effective leadership and action

The TFER partnership has a common understanding and shared language for violence prevention. Partner organisations identified that TFER is a significant enabler for supporting those tasked with primary prevention to effectively advocate for, organise and direct action for gender equality within their organisations and communities. The evaluation shows that leadership is enabled by a supportive environment for prevention work and a deeper understanding of it, which has been established through the collaborative work of the partnership.

“The value that TFER offers is huge.... The leaders' breakfasts about 16 days, some pretty important people in a room got up early to be part of it because they clearly see the value in the work.” - Most Significant Change story 13.

“When we first started doing family violence work, we were less confident to talk about the gendered nature of family violence. This conversation was really uncomfortable for a lot of people. We can put our time, energy and resources into carrying out this type of work, rather than trying to convince people to come along for the ride, as we know they are now along for the ride. We aren't having to put as much of our energy into worrying about or responding to the backlash.” - Most Significant Change story 5.

“Well, it has brought all of these people together, got them working in an uniform way, and been enabled by policy, the Royal Commission. This gave a base for policy shift and further funding to work from the base level of organisational commitment and understanding and a platform for action to occur from.” - Most Significant Change story 13.

“There has also been a maturing of the language from prevention of violence against women to gender equity which focuses on the underlying drivers. This shift in the community, bringing everyone along the journey, along with the Royal Commission, gave a base for policy shift and a platform for action to occur from.” - Most Significant Change Story 17.

The following story explores the impact of TFER through the lens of different forms of leadership.

**“The value that
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The leaders’
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- Most Significant Change story 13.

Through Community Leadership, TFER lives on... - Most Significant Change story 2

I feel like a huge change [has been in] the number of community leaders who are leaders in a whole lot of ways in a very local sense who are now championing gender equality as an essential action to prevent violence against women. To me, that is so exciting and I feel that has been one of the outcomes from TFER.

The other thing is that there have been shifts in the councils. Previously there were little pockets of work going on and staff were limited by what they could do, but now having a whole lot of sectors involved and capacity to advocate, this is changing. There has been a big impact at the councillor level and I think we should find ways to claim what has happened in councils in the east. Through TFER and the expanding of the conversation and community voice and leadership, we've seen a change in councils that wasn't there before.

For me, the change is about leadership. So the story I want to tell is [that] in the beginning... of TFER and maybe even before, there was a lot of push back and councils were using their voices to say how they weren't in support of [gender equality] work. There was a lot around family violence response and interest to respond but not a lot happening in the primary prevention space.

So there was an evaluation working group and the workers were going and supporting councils and supporting their staff and Women's Health East staff were going to council meetings and making sure the municipal public health and well-being planning was aligning with TFER and there was a state government commitment and the Our Watch framework and all this was happening.

And in our little patch, we had the Knox Accord and this had been going for some time before and had some partners including Knox Council and had community members signed up to take a stand against violence against women. But because of TFER, we decided to reshape the focus to primary prevention and the drivers of violence against women.

So in discussing [this change], I went around to a few different places and met a community leader – she was based at a community house. She just wanted to do stuff and to do it together and so she joined the Knox Accord and we had some great conversations... The TFER Manager was there and she was so great at connecting with everyone. We had conversations that built people's confidence and over time we were building our knowledge of each other and sharing our lives.

So, the community leader took her passion and great leadership skills and presented to the Community House committee about the links between family violence and gender inequality. One of the committee members was a musician and she developed a music activity which engaged hundreds of people in enjoying and discussing music she and her band performed to really become conscious of gender bias in many of the songs we've grown up listening to. This was very effective in raising consciousness of gender bias. She used the consciousness building as a tool. The community leader continued to champion gender equality and prevention of violence against women in her role at the community house. One day we were attending a council meeting focused on prevention of violence against women. One of the chairing councillors interrupted the flow to use his powerful position to [impose] his view and to say over 20 minutes that we should be focusing on men and their health. It was an inappropriate way to use his power.

The community leader later had a coffee with him and they had a robust conversation and she was able to challenge him in a safe and respectful way and I noticed a change in him from there. What I saw was that he was making comments that were a little bit aligned to gender equality. I was a little bit surprised. I could hear a shift in his conversation. And I feel like that had a lot to do with someone who was local. That's my story of community leadership. My story of change is significant because it's about local change. It shows the mutual reinforcement concept – we would never have got to the community leader if we hadn't had TFER involved. And it demonstrates how relationships with individuals are so important to structural change.

Summary of findings and recommendations

The interim and final evaluations of the 2017-2021 strategy demonstrate that TFER is an established and robust partnership achieving results. TFER partners have delivered a range of sophisticated violence prevention projects in their workplaces and with local communities. The partnership's activities have had significant reach, which are supported by a sustained commitment to collaborative action to prevent violence against women in Melbourne's eastern region.

The interim evaluation report found that 'TFER capital' had been built through working together in partnership over many years with a shared focus on gender equity and preventing violence against women and that this had resulted in a growth in confidence, networks and skills that support collaboration and partnership. What has emerged from this evaluation, is that through a shared understanding of the problem, sustained collective action, and a commitment to listening, adapting and learning, the partnership has created a range of impacts in the community and the region.

The stories told by partners demonstrate that TFER provides regional primary prevention infrastructure that supports evidence-based practice. Partners identify the importance of a shared language for the issue of violence against women and its impacts, the collaborative relationships between organisations and across sectors, and the capacity building activities and shared learnings that TFER has created. The data demonstrates that TFER has enabled a capable, trained and expert workforce and a mechanism for coordinated and collective action in partner organisations and across multiple settings.

TFER partners spoke of how gender equity is becoming more established practice within their organisations and there is less resistance and backlash. Partners spoke of changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among their colleagues and participants in prevention programs and initiatives. Such change indicates the emergence of regional systems-level change – which are modifications that collectively and over time indicate a pattern of cumulative and emergent larger scale change within a system.

TFER is a long-term, complex intervention that provides the infrastructure for effective primary prevention change. There is much for the TFER partnership to be proud of, and to build upon, as work commences under its 2021-2025 strategy.



Recommendations

This report makes a series of recommendations to strengthen the TFER partnership and its approach to shared evaluation, as informed by the evaluation data and its limitations.

Recommendation one: Develop a new evaluation framework with a focus on shared measurement

The new TFER four-year strategy provides an opportunity to develop a new or revised evaluation framework that is co-designed with partners to determine what success looks like and how to make the approach meaningful, practical and achievable. Developing a shared measurement system allows the partnership to strengthen how it measures its impact and the effectiveness of activities delivered under the TFER strategy.

Recommendation two: Ensure monitoring and evaluation has dedicated resourcing

Dedicated and consistent resourcing for the development and implementation of the partnership's new monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary to evaluate the impact of TFER and ensure action learning cycles are embedded in the partnership's collective primary prevention efforts. This is likely to require additional resources in the form of funding and additional time from partners, which could be enhanced by a formal commitment or agreement among TFER partners.

Recommendation three: Ensure action planning, monitoring and evaluation processes are tailored to organisations that have a range of resources and capacity

It is important that TFER designs and provides ongoing opportunities for partners to participate in monitoring, evaluation and learning that is responsive to organisations' varying resources, capabilities and preparedness. Ensuring that collective action is underpinned by a focus on equity within the partnership may assist in increasing participation in action planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendation four: Simplify and streamline evaluation tools and processes

Standardised evaluation tools and simplified evaluation methods need to be developed, disseminated and supported by capacity building activities to ensure shared measurement and evaluation is accessible to all TFER partners and able to deliver valuable data and findings to the partnership. Understanding what measures and indicators are being used already by partners will streamline processes, identifying ways to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort, and will strengthen TFER partners' engagement.

Recommendation five: Sustain a commitment to participatory learning and evaluation processes

Participatory methods in evaluation can lead to "better data, better understanding of the data, more appropriate recommendations, [and] better uptake of findings". TFER has been committed to participatory evaluation from the outset and this has continued with the use of the Most Significant Change methodology. The Most Significant Change process showed that the partnership benefited from engaging in the data collection process and learning a new evaluation method. It is recommended that a targeted use of participatory evaluation methods continue in order to maximise the effectiveness of the evaluation approach.

Recommendation six: Continue to innovate and trial new monitoring and evaluation approaches

The positive response to the Most Significant Change approach shows the partnership's appetite for continued innovation in monitoring and evaluation. The challenges of an unpredictable and changing environment also necessitate the review and adaptation of the partnership's evaluation framework. It is important for the partnership to be adaptable and explore and trial effective ways to understand the region's collective work to prevent violence against women.

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