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EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF
INTERSECTING SITES OF VIOLENCE IN THE LIVES OF GIRLS:

A NATIONAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION PROJECT
WITH GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN
AND THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK WITH THEM

November 2005

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Violence conjugale :
Transformer et orienter par
l'intervention et la recherche

RÉSOVI
Les réponses sociales
à la violence envers
les femmes

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2004, the *Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence* was awarded funds from Status of Women Canada to implement Phase 1 of the research action project, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*. The *Alliance* is committed to building community and academic partnerships to carry out research in order to eliminate violence against women and family violence.

Since 1998, research centres that are affiliated with the *Alliance* have collaborated closely to undertake research associated with the *Girl Child Project* and, in doing so, have created important links with community organizations that work with girls. Research results of *The Girl Child Project* highlighted the necessity to further investigate how social factors such as class, race, sexual orientation and ability status intersect and influence the choices that girls make in their lives and contribute to their vulnerability to violence. The project also underlined how important it is to make findings of such research applicable to policy-makers and service providers¹. The present project, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls* sets out to achieve these objectives.

Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls is a three-phase participatory action research project that aims to improve the lives of girls and young women by 1) identifying various indicators of inequality that girls and young women experience; 2) identifying how institutions contribute to their victimization and vulnerability to victimization; 3) identifying the vulnerabilities and inequalities associated with girls and young women who are at a crossroad of intersecting forms of violence 4) sensitizing service providers and policy makers about what indicators to focus on in assessing the impact of their policies and practices and 5) identifying successful change strategies to dismantle barriers to equality and promote full participation.²

In this project, as in others, the *Alliance* research team is committed to building a constructive partnership with advocates, practitioners, policy makers, program developers and girls in order to improve the lives of girls and young women and have a direct impact on policy development, programming and front-line services. The success of this project is based on the *Alliance's*

¹ Alliance of Five Research Centres, Project proposal submitted to Status of Women Canada, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls* 2002.

² Ibid

capacity to build and consolidate this national partnership and therefore a considerable amount of time and energy must be invested in this process.

Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls is divided into three 18-month phases. As outlined in the project proposal, in Phase 1 the overall goal was to develop an intersectional analysis of violence in the lives of girls. The eighteen months of Phase 1 began in February 2004 and ended in August 2005.

Over the last 20 months, the *Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes* (CRI-VIFF) has collected data to document the implementation process of the intersecting sites project. The objective of this report is to provide an overview of these findings. It should be noted that most of the data for the evaluation that was collected in Phase 1 cannot be integrated into this report but will be presented to project stakeholders throughout Phase 2.

This report is divided into six sections. In Section 1, we will provide a brief overview of the project including a description of the objectives of Phase 1. In section 2, we will present the various types of methodologies that were used to collect data for this evaluation. Four sections will follow, each one examining the individual objectives of the project, the strategies that the *Alliance* used to achieve these objectives as well as the factors that enhanced and challenged the work that was done during Phase 1.

SECTION I – OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

1.1 Overview of the Project

In January 2004, the *Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence* was awarded funds from Status of Women Canada to implement Phase 1 of the research action project, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*. The focus of this phase was to develop a conceptual framework for an intersectional analysis of violence in the girls' lives that can be used to shape programs and policies; create equal partnerships with girls and local, regional and national organizations that will participate in the research; mentor girls and young women in the research process; and develop tools and strategies to identify ways in which race, ethnicity, economic status and sexual orientation impact and contribute to the victimization of girls.³ To achieve these goals, the following objectives were established:

1. To raise organizational awareness of the intersectional complexity of girls' lives.
2. To enhance collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team
3. To empower girls to engage in action research that will help result in change in the organizations that will work with them
4. To begin to undertake an analysis of relevant policies impacting upon the lived realities of girls from diverse backgrounds.⁴

The *Alliance* developed a plan of action that included the strategies that would be used to achieve these objectives. This plan of action is outlined in Table 1.

³ Alliance of Five Research Centres, Project proposal submitted to Status of Women Canada, , *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, 2002.

⁴ Ibid.

Table 1: Plan of action⁵

Objectives	Strategies
To raise organizational awareness of the intersectional complexity of girls' lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop background papers related to the social and historical context of violence and oppression among designated groups of girls and young women • Establish a mechanism for ongoing dialogue, exchange of information, input between and among Advisory Committee members and partner organizations (see below)
To enhance collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a national coordinator • Partner with organizations that work with girls and advocacy groups to share information and to engage in a dialogue • Create a national Advisory Committee and a network of partner organizations • Develop terms of reference regarding roles and responsibilities of Advisory committee members as well as formalized means of ongoing communication and exchange of information • Convene a national meetings of researchers and girls/young women
To empower girls to engage in action research that will result in change in organizations that work with them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out preparatory work and relationship-building that are needed to engage girls in collecting qualitative and quantitative data • Work with partner organizations to identify a core group of approximately 10-12 girls at the research centres that are participating in the direct research with girls • Begin a mentoring process to educate the core group of girls in the research program about procedures related to all phases of the research process such as gathering data, coding and analysis
To begin to undertake an analysis of relevant policies impacting upon the lived realities of girls from diverse backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure contacts with relevant policy makers • Develop interview protocols, • Conduct a preliminary analysis

The *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women* coordinated the project under the direction of Dr. Helene Berman who acted as principal investigator. To oversee the implementation of the project, two part-time National Coordinators were hired. These coordinators were instrumental in establishing formal mechanisms of communication such as conference calls, face-to-face meetings and facilitating communication among *Alliance* researchers, national and local partners and the core groups of girls and young women. They also played a key role in the establishment of the National Advisory Committee, which has a membership of national organizations and girls who are participating in the mentoring programs. The central role of this committee is to advise, inform and provide feedback to enhance the work of the research team. It is also anticipate that members of this committee will gain insights as to how they may incorporate an intersectional analysis

⁵ Ibid

into the work they are already engaged in with girls and young women across the country. Conference calls were held every four months.

In this project, as in others undertaken by the *Alliance*, each centre played a specific role. Three centres, including the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children*, the *RESOLVE* centre in Regina and the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research* in Fredericton, had a mandate to implement mentoring programs to educate a core group of girls and young women in procedures related to research such as gathering data, coding and analysis. Each of these centres chose to work with a specific population of girls based on the needs of their community, their links with particular community partners and their specific area of research expertise. The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (FVRC) focused on girls and young women living in rural communities while the *RESOLVE* centre reached out to Aboriginal girls and young women. The *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women* worked with girls and young women from various ethno cultural backgrounds. Although each centre is currently working with a specific group of girls reflecting the demographics of their respective communities, all the research sites are aiming to include girls of color, rural girls, aboriginal girls, lesbian/ transgendered/bisexual girls, and girls with disabilities.

Local advisory committees were also established at each of these research sites bringing together local girl-oriented organizations and advocacy groups, as well as girls and young women. The role of these committees is to provide feedback about the research and to identify girls and young women who would like to be mentored in participatory research. In Vancouver, the *FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children's* contribution to the project focused on policy analysis. In collaboration with an advisory committee of girls and young women, the *FREDA* Centre evaluated how existing policies in the areas of health, social services and the criminal justice system articulate and address the issues of intersectionality.

To facilitate communication among members of the national research team, regular conference calls were held on a monthly basis (to consult the list of members of the

research team, please refer to Annex 1). These meetings enabled the principal investigator to facilitate the decision-making process and to provide regular updates about the development of the project. Members of the research team used these conference calls to exchange information about the work being done with girls at each research site and to discuss evaluation and policy issues.

SECTION II - METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives of the Research

This evaluation conducted by *CRI-VIFF* had two purposes. Firstly, referring to the outcomes and indicators that were outlined in the grant proposal, it determined to what degree the project was able to meet its overall objectives. Secondly, the evaluation examined the implementation process of the project to identify strengths and unanticipated challenges associated with strategies that were used to achieve the intended objectives. The evaluation encompasses the period between February 2004 and August 2005. A detailed description of the objectives of the evaluation, as well as the information that was documented for evaluation purposes are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Specific objectives of evaluation and information documented

Objective 1: To raise organizational awareness of the intersectional complexity of the girls' lives. Objective 2: To enhance collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team.	
Objective	Information that was Documented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To document the number and variety of contact with national and regional contacts with organizations involved in the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and variety of national and regional contacts between the centres and community organizations, researchers, policy makers and program developers regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local networking • National networking • Advisory committee • Identification of a core group of girls • Background papers • Recruitment strategies • Narrative tools • Issues related to intersectionality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To describe the process of development of collaboration ▪ To Identify factors that facilitated or hindered collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Description of the implementation process of the National Advisory committee ▪ Description of Advisory members' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about violence and inequalities in the lives of diverse groups of girls who are located at the intersections of race, class, migration, disability and sexuality • Expectations with regards to their participation in the project • Preoccupations about programming in their organization • Future perspectives with regards to programming and policy development • Satisfaction with their participation in the project • Future perspectives about the impact of the project. • Recommendations about enhancing community participation in the project

Objective 3: To empower girls to engage in action research that will result in change in the organizations that work with them.	
Objectives	Information that was documented
<p>▪ Objectives</p> <p>To document socio-demographic information about the girls who participated in the mentoring programs</p> <p>To assess core group girls' satisfaction with regards to their participation in the mentoring programs</p> <p>To assess core group girls' report of skills and knowledge acquired, and their perceptions of themselves as agents of change</p>	<p>▪ Information that was documented</p> <p>Socio-demographic description of the participants</p> <p>Girls perceptions about their</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal goals related to their participation in the project ▪ Perceptions of the project and the research that will be done ▪ Understanding of violence in the lives of girls and the causes ▪ Perception of personal empowerment ▪ Understanding of inequality in the lives of girls and factors that render some girls more vulnerable to violence than other girls ▪ Personal satisfaction with the mentoring program ▪ Skills and knowledge of strategies and techniques associated with action research
<p>To assess strategies used by research mentors to develop collaborative relationship between core group girls</p> <p>To assess mentor's evaluation of the process of implementation of the mentoring program, the program's impact on girls and the collaboration between the research centre and community organizations that work with girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and variety of activities such as workshops, group and individual meetings between research staff and girls ▪ Identification of issues that were discussed during these activities with girls ▪ Description of the process of implementation of the mentoring program ▪ Identify mentors' perceptions about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ factors that facilitated or hindered the implementation of program and the recruitment of girls ▪ collaboration with community organizations in the recruitment of girls ▪ evolution of girls' perceptions of violence and inequality
Objective 4: To begin to undertake an analysis of relevant policies impacting upon the lived realities of girls from diverse backgrounds.	
Objectives	Information that was documented
<p>To document the number and variety of contacts undertaken between the <i>FREDA</i> site and policy makers</p> <p>To document and assess strategies used by research staff at <i>FREDA</i> to develop dialogue with policy makers and programmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and variety of national and regional contacts between the <i>FREDA</i> centre and policy makers and program developers regarding policy issues.

Consistent with the goals of participatory research, members of the national research team played a key role in making decisions about the design and purpose of the study.⁶ They were involved in the planning of the evaluation design as well as the elaboration of data collection instruments and interview guides. Researchers and staff at the various research sites were instrumental in soliciting girls and members of the National Advisory Committee to participate in the evaluation process. Information in this report and other feedback based on data collected throughout Phase 1 will be shared on a regular basis with the stakeholders involved in the project during Phase 2.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Checklists

To document the number and variety of contacts with national and regional organizations involved in the project, community contact checklists were developed.⁷ These checklists were used by the national coordinator and staff at each research site to document the number and variety of national and regional telephone calls, e-mail correspondence as well as individual and group meetings between the research sites and community organizations, policy makers and program developers. Topics addressed in the context of these contacts were also documented such as local and national networking, the advisory committee, recruitment of girls, background papers, development of research tools and issues related to intersectionality. Checklists were piloted at the research sites for a period of 30 days, revised and then finalized after feedback was received from research staff. The national coordinator and staff members at each individual research site who were responsible for liaising with community organizations completed these checklists every three months. These checklists were used for a period of fifteen months from April 2004 to June 2005. The content of the checklists was then tallied and analyzed for evaluation purposes.

⁶ To consult the list of members of the research team, please refer to annex 1.

⁷ An example of the checklist to document contact between the centres and the community can be found in annex 2.

2.2.2 Questionnaires

To examine the implementation process of the project, self-administered questionnaires of 12 items were developed and sent to members of the National Advisory Committee and local partner organizations at each of the research site. These questionnaires enabled us to acquire information about the organizations involved in the project including their mandate and services for girls and young women. Other questions focused on expectations with regards to their participation in the project as well as their insights about violence, inequality and critical issues in the lives of girls and young women.

In October 2004, the questionnaire was mailed to members of the National Advisory Committee along with a pre-stamped return envelope and a covering letter that contained general information about the purpose of the evaluation as well as instructions on how to complete and return the questionnaire. In January 2005, a follow-up letter and an additional copy of the questionnaire were e-mailed to members who had not completed the questionnaires. A final reminder was transmitted by the National coordinator in February. Seven of the 12 members responded to the questionnaire. Nine members completed the questionnaires including seven representatives of organizations and two girls.

In April 2005, an electronic questionnaire and a covering letter were sent to local partner organizations at the UNB FVRC, the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children* and *RESOLVE* research sites. Given the low response rate, we asked a professional from each research site to distribute the questionnaire and covering letter to members of their advisory committee during one of their regular meetings. This was done at one research site. During one of their meetings, a period of 20 minutes was put aside to permit participants to complete the questionnaire. The research professional later forwarded the completed questionnaires to *CRI-VIFF*. This same procedure will take place at the other research sites during the early period of Phase 2.

2.2.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone with members of the advisory committee, participants of the mentoring programs and research professionals at the research sites. The interviews with members of the advisory committee were done in the summer of 2005. The purpose of this interview was to solicit their feedback about their experience in participation on the advisory committee, as well as their expectations and recommendations for subsequent phases of the project. This interview lasted approximately 20 minutes.

In depth interviews were conducted with the National Coordinator and research professionals from the *FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children*, the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and FVRC* at UNB. The purpose of these interviews was to assess their evaluation of the implementation process of the mentoring program, the program's impact on girls and young women and the collaboration between the research centre, policy makers and community organizations. These interviews were also carried out by telephone and they ran from 30 to 90 minutes each.

Semi-structured interviews were also done with nine girls and young women who are participants in the mentoring programs in Fredericton and London. Five interviews were conducted by phone, while four interviews were done in person. Unfortunately, due to technical problems, we were unable to access the verbatim of these latter interviews. We therefore had to rely on notes taken during the interview by the interviewer and at a later date a research professional from *CRI-VIFF* contacted two of these respondents by phone to collect supplementary information. The goal of the interview with girls and young women was to gather information about: 1) their personal goals with regard to their participation in the project, 2) their perceptions about research that will be undertaken in subsequent phases; 3) their understanding about violence and inequality in the lives of girls and young women; 4) their perceptions about empowerment and resilience and 5) their feelings of personal satisfaction with the mentoring program.

Research professionals at each research site referred the girls and young women who participated in the evaluation to us. Prior to the telephone interviews, these professionals explained the purpose of the evaluation to the girls and read the introductory letter to them that described the research and the type of questions that would be asked. This letter also advised the girls that if over the course of the interview, they revealed personal experiences of abuse or if the interviewer felt that their security was at risk, the interviewer would be obliged to report this situation to child protection services. The girls and young women were also advised of the voluntary nature of the interview and were asked to sign a consent form. All interviews were taped and later transcribed.

2.2.4 Content Analysis

A content analysis of pertinent documents was conducted in order to document the development process of collaboration between the research centre, local and national partner organizations and the girls and young women who are participating in the mentoring program. These documents included minutes of meetings of the national advisory committee and of the national meeting held in Montreal in May 2005, as well as interim reports prepared by the individual research centres. These documents were also used to validate and complement information collected through the use of the checklist and interviews.

SECTION III – OBJECTIVE 1

OBJECTIVE 1: TO RAISE ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE INTERSECTIONAL COMPLEXITY OF GIRLS' LIVES

The first objective of the project as outlined in the grant proposal is to raise organizational awareness of the intersectional complexity in the lives of girls. Two strategies were envisioned to achieve this objective. First of all, background papers related to the historical context of violence and oppression among designated groups of girls and young women were to be produced. Secondly, dialogue, exchange and input between the advisory committee and partners were to be established. Ideally, by the end of Phase 1, local and national partners would want to continue to participate in subsequent phases of the research as a result of their awareness of the central role of intersectionality in relation to girls and violence. For this to happen, it was therefore important during Phase 1 that partners and members of the research team engage in a dialogue regarding the background papers and the issue of intersectionality and provide critical feedback on the development of narrative tools, recruitment strategies and findings in the background papers.⁸

3.1 Background Papers

With regards to the background papers, the *Alliance* identified academic experts from across Canada to write these papers. Six papers were completed, each one focusing on different aspects of intersectionality as it pertains to specific populations of girls and young women including: Aboriginal girls; Francophone girls; girls and young women with disabilities; racialized girls and young women of colour; girls from rural communities and lesbian and transsexual youth.⁹ During Phase 2, these papers will be circulated for discussion and critique among local, regional and national partners and will eventually be published in the form of an anthology. Dr. Yasmin Jiwani, professor at Concordia University in Literacy and Media studies was hired by the *Alliance* to act as a consultant to work with the Principal Investigator on the production of the background papers.

⁸ Alliance of Five Research Centres, Project proposal submitted to Status of Women Canada, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, 2002.

⁹ For a complete list of the titles and authors of background papers, please refer to Annex 3.

The production of the background papers was a central component of the project and solicited a great deal of interest, particularly from national partners. The issue of the background papers came up in discussions during the advisory committee on three separate occasions. Dr. Yasmin Jiwani attended a National Advisory Committee meeting held in April 2005, to discuss the background papers with members. It is also important to mention that several authors of the background papers solicited input from committee members, local service providers, elders of regional aboriginal communities, girls and young women who are participants in the mentoring programs.¹⁰

Interviews with members of the National Advisory Committee confirmed the importance of these background papers. Two members emphasized how the production of background papers reflects how the *Alliance* made it a priority to be inclusive by focusing on particular populations of girls and young women that have traditionally been excluded in research. All the members who talked about the background papers look forward to reading them. Some felt that the publication of the papers would be a turning point in the project, as it will ground the research by providing an opportunity for rich dialogue and exchange of expertise between members who work with diverse groups of girls and the research team. Members anticipate exploring the linkages between the findings in these papers and some of the work they are doing with young women, practitioners and policy makers.

3.2 Dialogue about the Issues of Intersectionality

Members of the National Advisory Committee discussed the issue of intersectionality on several occasions. For instance, during the first meeting in September 2004, the members had a dialogue about the actual title of the project, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*. It became apparent that most of the members of the advisory committee were familiar with the notion of intersectionality but many felt that its definition was too academic and that a more accessible definition was needed. This was also reflected in interviews that were done with members of the advisory committee in June 2005, in that some felt that the language around intersectionality was not accessible to a non-academic

¹⁰ Minutes of the National Advisory Committee Conference Call Minutes, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence, September 13st, 2004

community. Members mentioned that in some organizations, intersectionality is often referred to as Gender and Diversity Analysis or Integrated Feminist Analysis.¹¹

All the research professionals who were interviewed also shared concerns about the academic language of intersectionality. During interviews, they revealed their concerns about wanting to make sure that the conceptual framework of intersectionality is grounded and meaningful for practitioners. They spoke of their appreciation of being able to rely on partners to provide constructive feedback about whether their theoretical ideas about intersectionality are applicable to working with girls and to policy and program development. To facilitate discussion and reflection around the language of intersectionality, the national coordinator invited members to send their definition of intersectionality to the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children*. These definitions were then compiled and circulated amongst members.¹² It is also important to note that the *Alliance* produced two newsletters about the project that also contained articles about intersectionality.

There was also dialogue between the individual research sites and local community organizations about the issues of intersectionality. Dialogue and exchange took place in the context of different types of activities that were organized by the research sites, such as structured discussions during regular meetings with their local advisory committee, presentations at regional seminars for researchers and community practitioners, discussions during individual meetings with school guidance counsellors and representatives of community-based organizations.

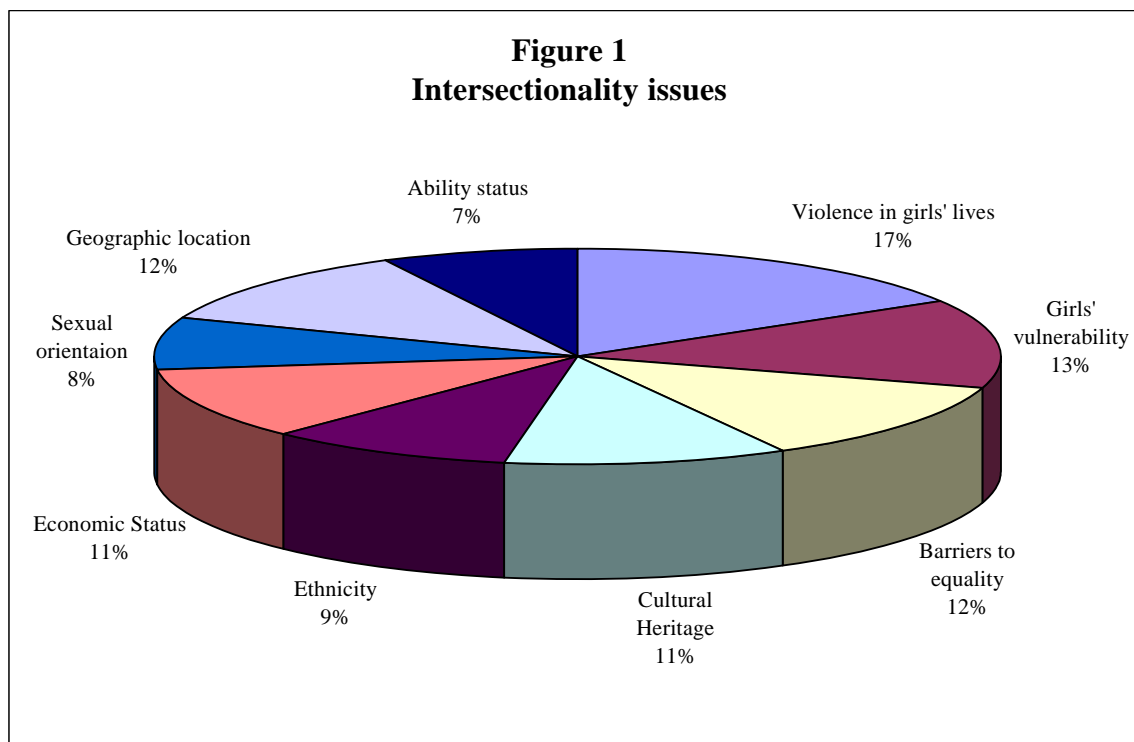
The level of dialogue between the research team, the advisory committee and partner organizations is reflected in the checklists. As mentioned, the purpose of these checklists was to document the number and variety of contacts such as telephone calls, e-mail correspondence as well as individual and group meetings between the research centres and national and regional partners involved in the project. Themes addressed in the context of these contacts were also recorded including issues related to intersectionality such as the

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

girl's vulnerability, barriers to equality, issues linked to Aboriginal girls, economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location, ability and violence in the lives of girls. At the end of Phase 1, the content of these checklists was tallied and analyzed for evaluation purposes.

The checklists revealed a national total of 1354 contacts between the research sites and local and national partners. Issues of intersectionality were addressed in the context of 76 % of these contacts (see Figure 1). Violence in the lives of girls was addressed during (17%) of these contacts, followed by girl's vulnerability (13 %), barriers to equality (12 %), economic status (11 %), geographic location (12%) and cultural heritage (11%). The issues that were least addressed were ethnicity (9%), sexual orientation (8%) and ability (7%). These statistics underline both the intensity and nature of dialogue about issues of violence and intersectionality between the research team and national and local partners. It draws attention to the links that are being made between violence, barriers to equality and girls' different social locations. It is also important to note that some issues such as ethnicity, ability and sexual orientation are receiving less attention.



3.3 Strengths and Challenges

The goals associated with Objective 1 were attained. The issue of intersectionality, otherwise known by practitioners as "diversity analysis" is at the core of the project and it is this issue that is bringing researchers and organizations around the same table. Interviews with members of the advisory committee attested to the importance of intersectionality for practice. The numerous contacts between the research sites and their community partners demonstrate that the issues around intersectionality were addressed although some populations of girls and young women received less attention than others. There was dialogue between the research team and national and local partners around issues concerning the background papers and intersectionality. Partners and the research team appear to be engaged in a genuine process to come to a common understanding about the definition of intersectionality and to develop a language around these issues that is accessible and reflect practice issues. Finally, partners are excited about the possibility of reading the background papers and sharing their practice expertise to enrich the contents of these manuscripts. It is important to note that the research team decided that, prior to publication of the papers, a process for dialogue and input regarding the content and its implication would be undertaken during Phase 2.

3.4 Recommendations

In order to ensure that there is an equal exchange of ideas and sharing of expertise between researchers and practitioners on issues related to the background papers, it may be important to take the time to plan and structure discussion forums that can take place during conference calls. The National Coordinators and a member of the National Advisory Committee can jointly develop the format of these discussions. For instance, they may decide to elaborate questions that can be forwarded to members of the advisory committee prior to the conference calls.

It may also be important to invite an advocacy organization representing women and girls with disabilities to sit on the National Advisory Committee so as to ensure that their concerns are openly addressed in the context of the project.

On a local level, it may be important to build partnerships with advocacy groups representing girls and young women who are: physically challenged: members of the lesbian, gay, transsexual and bisexual communities and members of ethno cultural communities.

The *Alliance* newsletter can also be used to provide a forum for addressing the concerns of these groups of girls and young women.

SECTION IV – OBJECTIVE 2

OBJECTIVE 2: TO ENHANCE COLLABORATION BETWEEN AND AMONG ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK WITH GIRLS AND THE RESEARCH TEAM

The second objective as outlined in the project proposal is to enhance collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team. To achieve this, the *Alliance* adopted the following strategies: 1) hire a national coordinator; 2) create a National Advisory Committee; 3) partner with girl-oriented organizations and advocacy groups to share information and to engage in a dialogue with the research team; 4) create a network of partner organizations that may be interested in the research but will assume a less central role; 5) develop terms of reference regarding the roles and responsibilities of advisory committee members, partner organizations and individuals throughout the research process; 6) convene a national meeting of researchers, girls and young women. If this objective was to be obtained, at the end of Phase I, a network of partner organizations and an advisory committee with terms of reference and communication strategies would be well established and partners involved in the project would share a similar understanding of intersectionality and violence in the lives of girls and young women.¹³

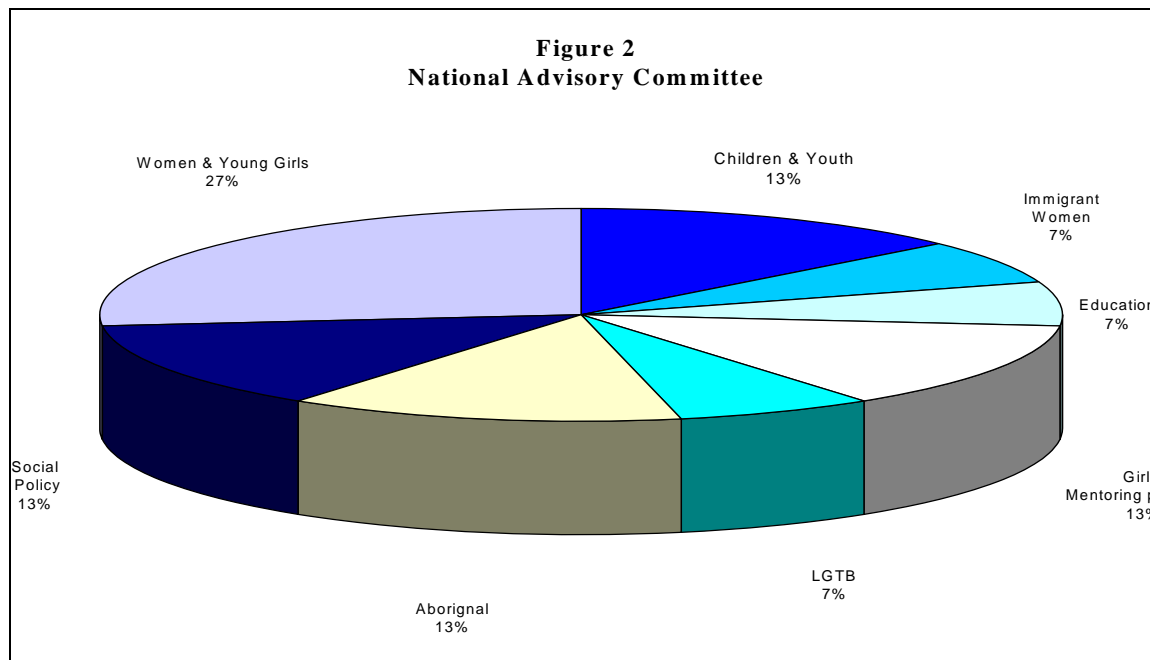
4.1 The National Advisory Committee

By early April 2004, letters of invitation had been sent to organizations that had been selected by the research team to participate in the National Advisory Committee. In the summer of 2004, the advisory committee had been established with a membership of 12 organizations that work with diverse groups of girls, organizations concerned with violence against women and two young women who are participants in the mentoring program.¹⁴ The diverse nature of the membership of the National Advisory Committee reflects the commitment of the Alliance to make sure that the concerns of diverse groups of girls and young women are addressed in the project. As noted in Figure 2, there is representation by organizations that have a mandate to work with vulnerable groups of women and girls, as well as organizations that work with the general population of children and youth and the general population of girls and young women. The

¹³ For discussion about intersectionality please refer to section III.

¹⁴ For the complete list of members of the National Advisory Committee, please refer to annex 4.

involvement of social policy organizations is also significant and it points to the commitment of the *Alliance* to reach policy makers.



The purpose of this committee is to offer expert advice and input in order to enhance the work of the research team, assist in the teams' decision-making and allow for the research to be conducted effectively. The role of the individual members is to: identify issues concerning girls and young women as they relate to intersectionality that might be addressed within the objectives of the study; facilitate general community awareness of the study within other organizations; identify girls and young women to participate in the study and take part in regularly scheduled communication with the National coordinator¹⁵. Terms of Reference were drawn up defining the purpose of the committee, guidelines for membership, structure of the committee, the role of individual members, and mechanisms for exchange of information. These terms of reference were presented to members during the first meeting and they were adopted.

One-hour conference calls were held every four months with the principal investigator, the National Coordinators and various members of the research team. Topics discussed

¹⁵ Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence, *Terms of Reference, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, Spetember 2004.

during these calls included the newsletter, background papers, the quantitative survey, the mentoring program, policy, qualitative research, and the girls' forum in Montreal.

A self-administered questionnaire of 12 items was sent to members of the National Advisory Committee. Seven of the 12 members sitting on the committee were able to complete it. The majority of respondents decided to participate in the project because it addressed violence and real issues facing disadvantaged young girls and women. Several of the members hoped that the project would: have an impact on government initiatives designed to address the most disadvantaged girls in the area of violence especially policy development (n=4) and prevention programs (n=4), raise public awareness about the issues facing girls (n=3), increase resources for vulnerable young women (n=3) and consolidate partnership with other women's organizations (n=1).

During interviews with the nine National Advisory Committee members who participated in the evaluation, a discussion regarding the positive benefits to their participation in the project took place. There was a consensus among all the members that the project gives them the opportunity to network with colleagues across the country who shares common concerns on gender specific issues and work. Various members also mentioned that they appreciated being able to collaborate with academics and community workers at the same time. The majority of respondents were pleased that the research targeted young girls and that girls were being trained to carry out research and to actively participate in the project. Several members stated that they enjoyed receiving the newsletter as well as information about the project. It was also mentioned that the meetings were well organized and always began on time.

Nearly all of the members have spoken about the Intersecting Sites project within their own organizations to colleagues, members of their Board of directors, donors or the general membership. Some have even discussed the project with other organizations. For the most part, the response to the project has been very positive. Many organizations believe that their participation in the project will be beneficial. Organizations seem to want to learn more about the project and there is keen interest in what will come out of the

research. However, two members of the National Advisory had not discussed the project within their respective organization because they needed more time to fully understand the scope of the research.

Although, for the most part, members of the Advisory Committee stated that they were satisfied with their experience of participation, they did bring up certain challenges. Time was thought to be the main obstacle. Nevertheless, members reported working against time and budget constraints and regretted that they had not been able to attend all the meetings. When members are absent, the newsletters from the *Alliance* are helpful in keeping them up to date about new developments in the project. Receiving more updates on a regular basis would also be helpful because as one member mentioned, often there are members who cannot be present on all the conference calls and everyone is simply too busy to remember the events that took place between conference calls.

A few members mentioned that they were uncertain about their role on the committee and wondered how they could contribute more to the project. They described the meetings as being extremely informative but they did not feel that the meeting agendas of the meeting provided enough space for members to bring to the table their knowledge and expertise regarding different groups of girls, as well as some of the issues that organizations face when working with girls and young women. It was suggested that it might be important to clarify the role of the members on the committee.

Three members also discussed the challenge that the project faces in assuring that the issues of all the diverse groups of girls receive equal attention in the context of the project. These members were concerned that even in a project that aims to be inclusive and to embrace diversity, it is important to be vigilant and maybe even to integrate mechanisms to assure that the concerns of certain groups of girls are not marginalized.

In the interviews, members were asked about what they would like to see happen during the next phase of the project. In general, members were eager to move on to Phase 2. Certain members were enthusiastic about having the girls and young women actively

involved in the research and they were looking forward to hearing directly from the girls about their experience and about what they are learning. One member spoke about grounding the research in real stories and using these pieces to sensitize the public, service providers and policy makers. Several members anticipate possibilities of using the ideas around intersectionality and the results of the background papers to inform practice with girls, advocacy work and policy development. As one member eagerly stated:

And I think for me, it's the connection between the service provision and the academic piece that is the most exciting. That if we can bridge those two, I think we have a very powerful advocacy tool. That's where it will make a break, sitting on a shelf or not. I think anyway, for both of us, we have to find ways of tying our work together and making those connections.

Finally, several members declared that they would like to have a face-to-face meeting at least once during the Phase 2.

4.2 Local networking

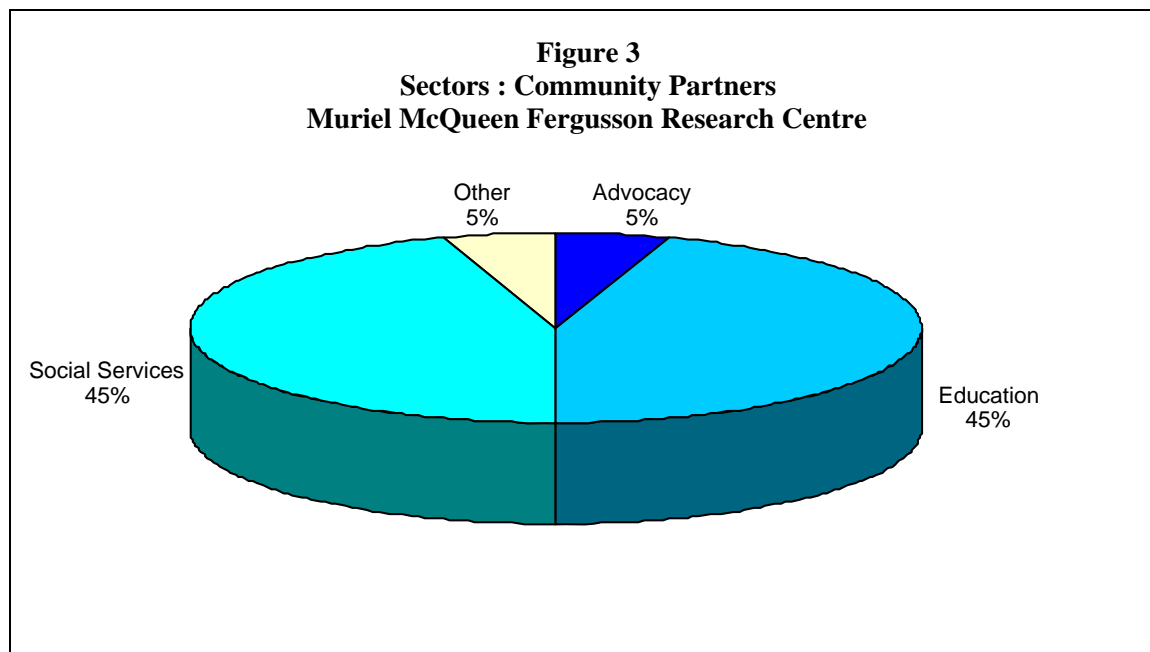
Local Advisory Committees were created at various research sites in Fredericton, London, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Similar to the National Advisory Committee, the local committees served to inform and enhance the research process and recruit girls and young women for the study. These committees were for the most part, made up of social service agencies, schools, as well as organizations that work with youth and girls from diverse backgrounds. One research site also chose to have girls on their advisory committee.

Several outreach strategies were put into place at all the research sites to solicit partner involvement. For instance, the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre* participated in regional meetings on violence against women, hosted a conference on the issue of abused women and girls living in rural areas as well as a meeting for representatives across the Atlantic Provinces to discuss issues faced by Francophone women and girls.¹⁶ These activities enabled the centre to promote the project and attract community interest. Letters were also sent out to schools and other organizations that have programs for youth to invite them to a first meeting that took place in June 2004. The centre has established an advisory committee composed of girls and 14 organizations. This committee collaborated with the

¹⁶ Alliance of Canadian Research centres on Violence, *Interim reports*, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*: March 2004, August 2004, January 2005.

research team to expand the local partner membership by identifying agencies and recruitment strategies to solicit their involvement. Three meetings were held during Phase 1.

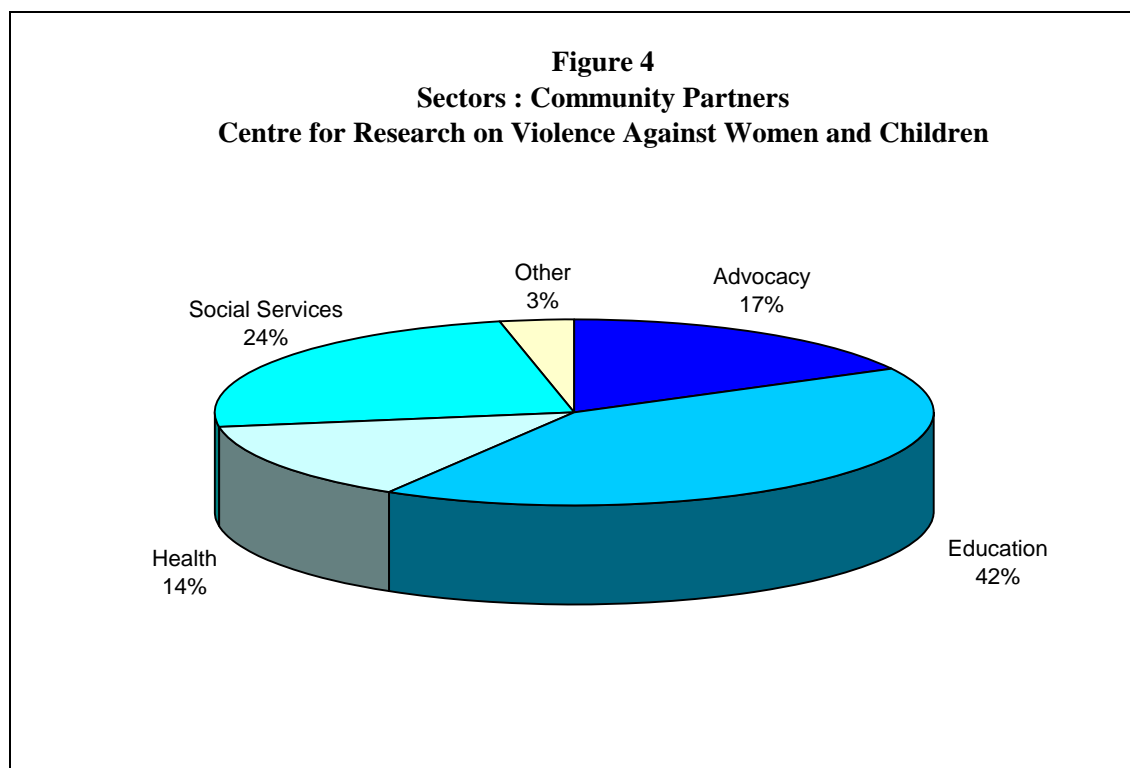
A total of 26 agencies were contacted through these various outreach strategies. Of these organizations, 21 are still involved in the projected. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the majority of these organizations are social services agencies or schools.



The checklist completed by the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson* research site underscores the efforts made to reach out to organizations in the community. Contacts between the centre and organizations in the community were established primarily by electronic correspondence and telephone. The issues of intersectionality that were addressed the most frequently in the context of these contacts were violence against girls and geographic location. It is important to note that the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Research Centre* has previously done research on abused girls and women living in rural communities.

In London, the *Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children* focused their outreach efforts on contacting certain individuals and organizations that participated with their centre during their previous research project on the Girl Child, as well as

schools and other agencies that work with girls from diverse backgrounds¹⁷. In the summer of 2004, a Local Advisory Committee was established composed of 16 members affiliated with health and social service agencies, community organizations and advocacy groups. This committee played a pivotal role in providing feedback to the research team on ethical issues associated with doing research with young girls, advertising the project in their organizations, contacting other agencies and schools and helping the research team to meet and recruit girls and young women to the core group. The centre was also able to make connections to other agencies and several schools in the community. Many of them have been helpful in referring girls and young women to participate in the core group and they have all indicated that they are interested in receiving ongoing up-dates on project developments. The *Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children* reached out to 34 organizations, of which 30 have remained involved in the project on an ongoing basis. As reflected in Figure 4, many are educational institutions while a significant number are social service agencies, health services and advocacy groups.



¹⁷ Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence, *Interim Report, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, August 2004.

The checklists from the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children* document the numerous contacts with community organizations initiated by the centre. With regard to intersectionality, violence and vulnerability in girl's lives were the issues that were most frequently addressed. Other issues of intersectionality, listed on the checklists such as economic status, geographic location, cultural heritage, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ability were also discussed, although less frequently but equally.

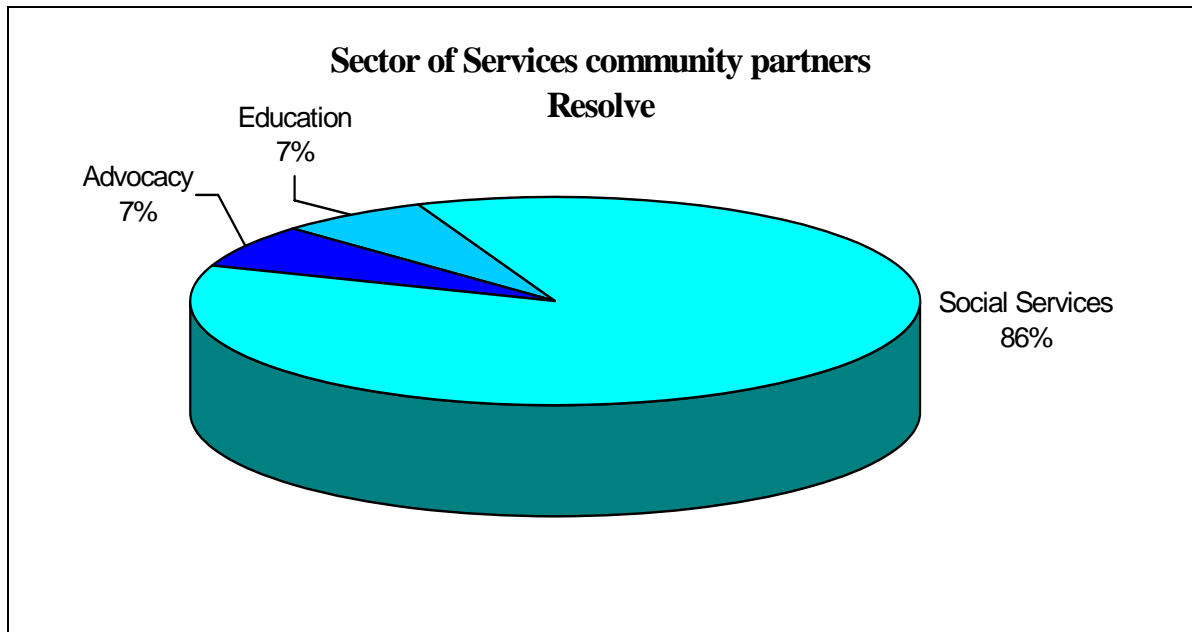
The *RESOLVE* centre in Saskatchewan began their outreach strategy by conducting meetings with several organizations, particularly agencies that work with Aboriginal communities. During the course of Phase 1, researchers from the centre, in collaboration with community organizations, did a research project that focused on how violence has influenced their lives of Aboriginal girls as well as the ways in which the intersecting forces of gender, cultural heritage, class and ability coalesced to ease or exacerbate those influences. Interviews were done with 14 young Aboriginal girls and five service providers.¹⁸

The *RESOLVE* centre in Manitoba became involved in the project in the latter part of 2004. The centre chose to focus on Aboriginal girls and young women. The centre solicited partner involvement by meeting with the provincial steering committee on violence and with various agencies that work with Aboriginal girls. The centre also published a newsletter that is circulating amongst individuals and organizations that they work with.¹⁹

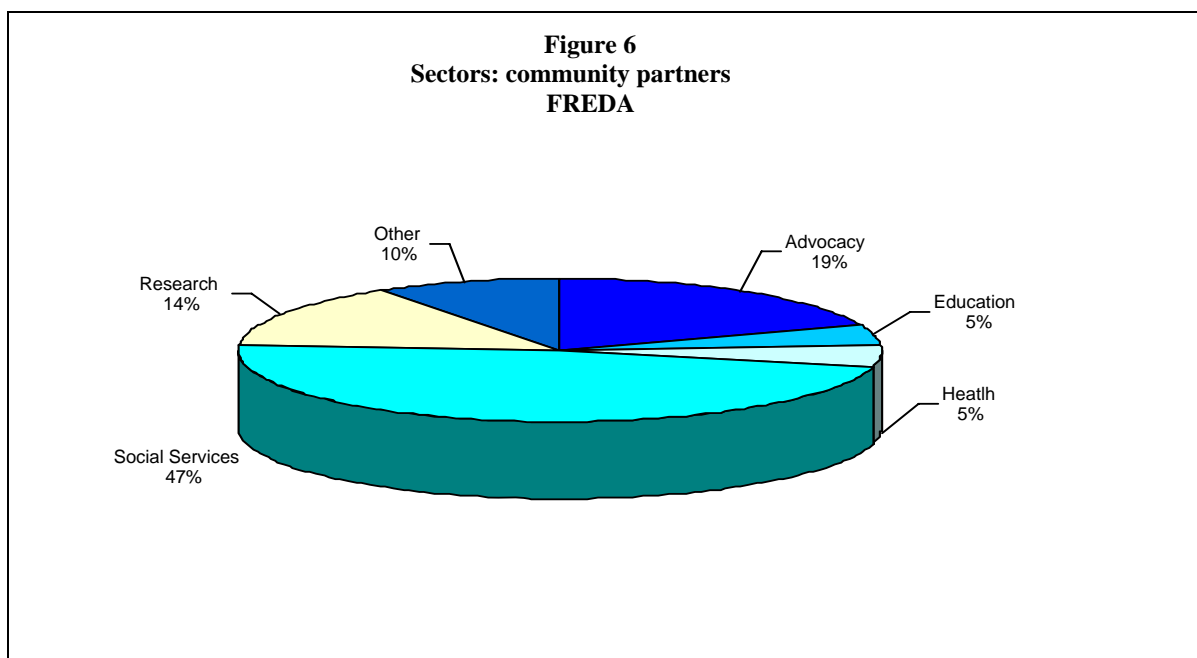
A total of 15 organizations are working with the Manitoba and Regina research centres. The checklists from *RESOLVE* document an equal distribution of incoming and outgoing contacts with community-based organizations, particularly social service agencies (see Figure 5). The issues that were most frequently addressed in the contexts of these contacts include violence in the lives of girls, barriers to equality, cultural heritage (Aboriginal issues) and girls' vulnerability.

¹⁸ *RESOLVE*, Saskatchewan, *Progress report, Intersectiong Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2005,

¹⁹ Alliance of Canadian Research centres on Violence, *Interim Report, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, January 2005.



The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children reached out to organizations in their community to inform them about the project and gather their input about the policy work that the centre was undertaking. The centre's Board of Directors played an advisory role for the project. According to checklists, overall, the centre maintained contact with 21 organizations in the community, primarily social and community services (see Figure 6).



4.3 National Forum for Girls

In May 2005, a two-day forum was held in Montreal bringing together nine girls and young women from the across Canada who are participating in the mentoring process, research professionals and members of the research team. The forum provided an opportunity for girls to share their perceptions of violence, become more familiar with the project and to dialogue about intersectionality. Girls also had the time to discuss what they were doing at their individual research sites and they were invited to articulate their ideas about what they would like to see happen during subsequent phases of the project. According to the evaluation that was filled out by all the participants, this forum was a success. The girls really appreciated meeting other young women from across the country and they were an inspiration for members of the research team.

4.4 Strengths and Challenges

The *Alliance* has been very successful in establishing its National Advisory Committee. The membership of this committee is diverse representing advocacy groups and organizations that work with vulnerable groups of girls, as well as organizations working with the general population of children and youth and the general population of girls and young women. The *Alliance* has also been strategic by involving organizations that work on policy issues. All the original members of the committee have remained active participants except for one organization that was forced to withdraw from the project because their organization was facing financial difficulties. Interviews with the members confirmed that they are committed to the project and willing to engage in ongoing collaboration in Phase 2. It is important to note that many members presented the project to colleagues and other people involved within their own organizations, as well as other organizations that they work with. The response to the project has been positive and organizations are keen about learning more about it. This may be an indication of the project's potential to have a positive impact on service provision, social policy and programming.

The National Advisory Committee is an essential component of the project. Already during Phase 1, four meetings have been held and terms of reference have been drawn up. Members feel that their participation is beneficial for their organization and they are pleased that the research targets young girls and that the project aims to empower girls and young women through the mentoring programs. Members also appreciate receiving the newsletter and information about the project. In general, members are satisfied with their experience of participation in the project. Some members mentioned certain challenges such as time constraints, uncertainty about their role on the committee and the need to be vigilant to assure that the concerns of all groups of girls are addressed in the context of the project. Notwithstanding, the members were quite forthcoming with viable solutions.

On a local level, the research sites in Fredericton, London, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have been successful in creating a network of partner organizations that are interested in collaborating with the project. At each site, some organizations are participating on the Local Advisory Committee while others are assuming a less central role. These organizations have offered other types of collaboration and want to be regularly informed about the project.

For certain localities, soliciting partner involvement was difficult. This is reflected in the checklists. At two research sites, a significantly higher number of outgoing contacts were recorded. This reflects the considerable efforts on the part of these research centres to reach out to community-based organizations. Community facilitators were hired by the centres to assist them with this work.

Research professionals identified factors that impeded community involvement in the project. They mentioned that many local organizations have limited financial and human resources and therefore were unable to make a commitment to a new project. For other organizations, time was the principal constraint. In the region of Fredericton, transportation was also identified as a problem particularly for organizations that are

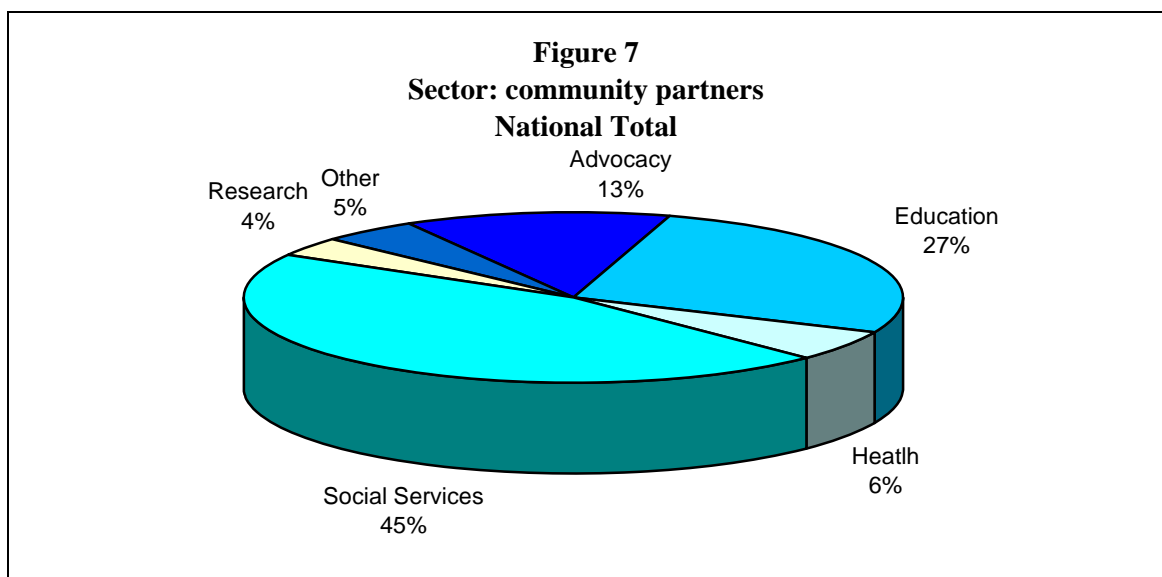
situated in rural communities. These organizations have to consider not only the time but also the costs involved in travelling to meetings.

Various factors were identified as facilitating community participations. According to research professionals, interest in helping girls and young women seemed to be a factor that motivated organizations to get involved and stay involved. Organizations were also inspired by the project because it created a space in their community where girls could be empowered and they applauded the efforts of the *Alliance* to involve the girls and young women in decision-making. Many organizations appreciated the regular correspondence between the research centres and the community organizations. For instance the *Muriel McQueen Research Centre* sends them research articles on girls. All the centres sent out the project newsletter, minutes of advisory committee meetings and invitations to activities run by their centre or other organizations in their community. Finally, according to one research professional, since the modalities for community participation were flexible, organizations were able to make a realistic commitment to the project and still receive information and regular updates.

Even though establishing a network of National and local partners was a challenge for the centres, the outreach strategies that were put into place were very effective. Mechanisms of communication have also been established, which is a critical component in sustaining community interest and involvement in the project.

Across Canada there are a total of 99 organizations involved in the project. As demonstrated in Figure 7, the project has attracted the attention of organizations from a diverse range of community and government services. First of all, nearly half of the partners are social and community social service agencies that work with specific groups of girls or with girls in the general population (45%). Educational institutions such as schools and a teachers' association are also well represented making up more than a quarter of the partners (27%). It is also important to note the representation of advocacy groups (13 %), as well as health services (6%). Thus, the intersecting sites project is an

intersectorial project and has successfully reached out to those organizations and systems that are involved in the lives of girls and young women.



4.5 Recommendations

It is important to facilitate the process of bridging the gap between academic-based knowledge and practice-based knowledge so as to enrich dialogue and exchange during National Advisory Committee meetings. To do so, a national coordinator or the lead investigator and a representative of partner organizations on the advisory committee can jointly plan the agendas of the meetings. Also, whenever it is convenient, meetings can be co-facilitated, or the role of facilitator can alternate between meetings.

It may also be important, at the beginning of each new phase, to clarify the role and functions of members of the National Advisory committee. To do so, a small working committee can assume the task of looking over the terms of reference and then report back to the National Advisory Committee. This committee could also propose amendments to the terms of reference.

It would be very interesting to invite girls and young women from across Canada to give presentations about their experience in the project during a meeting of the National Advisory Committee. This can also be done at the local research sites.

To keep the National Partners up to date on the project, it may be important to transmit one-page monthly bulletins. This is especially important because it is difficult for members to follow all the new developments in the project if they have not been able to attend a meeting.

It may be pertinent to develop a two-page promotional document about the project and its objectives that partners can refer to when they are discussing the project within their own organizations or other organizations that they collaborate with. This promotional tool can also be distributed in communities.

The project newsletter is an essential tool to sustain partner involvement in the project.

At the local research sites, it is important to consolidate all the strategies that are presently being used to sustain partner interest in the project.

Local and national partners are enthusiastic about the idea that the project's goal is to empower girls. Therefore, this goal should be kept in the forefront during subsequent phases of the project.

During Phase 2, at least one national face-to-face meeting should be held to bring together the girls and young women in the mentoring program and members of the National Advisory Committee.

SECTION V - OBJECTIVE 3

OBJECTIVE 3: TO EMPOWER GIRLS TO ENGAGE IN ACTION RESEARCH THAT WILL RESULT IN CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK WITH THEM

The third objective of the project as outlined in the grant proposal is to engage girls in action research that will result in change in the organizations that work with them. It was anticipated that each of the three research sites doing direct research with girls and young women, (*London Centre for Research on Violence against Women*, *RESOLVE* centre in Regina and *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research*) would work with partner organizations in their communities to identify a core group of approximately 10-12 girls aged 13-18 from diverse backgrounds to be mentored in the research process. The centres would provide opportunities for girls and young women to participate in forums and activities and teach them research skills including administering surveys, facilitating focus groups, gathering narrative-based stories related to violence and intersectionality in girls' lives and strategies for the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data²⁰. Each of these centres chose to work with a specific population of girls and young women based on the needs of their community, their links with particular community partners and their specific area of research expertise. The *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research* focused on girls and young women living in rural communities while the *RESOLVE* centre reached out to Aboriginal girls and young women. The *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women* worked with girls and young women from a diversity of socio-economic, cultural and racial backgrounds.

5.1 The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research

At the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research*, community organizations and schools that are involved in the project recruited girls and young women to the mentoring program. The centre asked each representative to select girls who would be able to obtain parental permission to participate and have access to transportation in order to attend the meetings. Representatives were asked to act as mentors to these girls and to bring them along to all meetings at the centre. According to

²⁰ Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence, Project proposal submitted to Status of Women Canada, *Intersecting sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2004.

the research professional at the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson* site, this strategy was extremely effective in recruiting girls and young women to the program.

This group of community and school representatives, as well as the girls attended bi-monthly meetings throughout the year²¹. At the beginning of the meetings, the girls would meet on their own without the presence of adults. This enabled them to have a safe space to talk amongst themselves and one person would be chosen to report back to the entire group. The girls and young women have named their group “Chillax.”

The mentoring process took the format of social gatherings around food thus creating a comfortable and safe environment where girls and young women were able to discuss topics related to the research. During these gatherings, there were discussions about specific research articles that they all had to read, violence at school and in the lives of rural girls and young women and perceptions of violence. The girls also received training on how to conduct focus groups. Subsequently, two girls along with mentors conducted a pilot study, in which they led two focus groups with high school girls. Throughout the mentoring process, the girls were invited to share their perspectives on how they would like to carry out the research and these discussions led to the development of a research methodology. During the beginning of Phase 2, the girls and their mentors will participate in a two day training retreat that will focus on how to apply this methodology such as focus group facilitation, data analysis and interpretation.

According to the research professional at the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre*, the mentoring program has had a positive impact on girls in that it has created a safe space for girls where they can talk about issues that they and their peers may be facing in school and in their community. The girls were motivated to get involved in the project because some of them have had first hand experience with violence and would like to do something about it. They also enjoy being a member of a group and being involved in a meaningful activity outside of school. They have also become more aware and concerned

²¹ Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, *Progress Report, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, August 2004. September 2005.

about violence in their community and how it affects certain groups of girls and young women.

5.1.1 The Participants

Seven girls and young women are active participants in this mentoring program. Most of these girls are from rural communities situated around Fredericton. One girl is from an immigrant family while two are young single mothers. To facilitate the girls' participation, the centre reimburses childcare expenses and on certain occasions transportation costs. The group is also taking steps to integrate Aboriginal and Francophone girls.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five of the seven girls who are participating in the mentoring program at the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Research Centre*. These telephone interviews were conducted by a research professional from *CRI-VIFF*. For purposes of the evaluation, the goal of the interview was to gather information about the girls' personal goals with regard to their participation in the project, their perceptions about the project and their feelings of personal satisfaction with the mentoring process. A member of the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson* research team recruited girls to participate in the evaluation. Prior to the telephone interview, the team member gave each girl an introductory letter that described the research and the type of questions that would be asked. She also took the time to clearly explain the purpose of the evaluation. They were also advised of the voluntary nature of the interview and were asked to sign a consent form. All interviews were taped and later transcribed. These interviews took place between February and April 2005. Most of these girls and young women had been participating in the mentoring process since September 2004.

The girls and young women who were interviewed were between the ages of 15-21, were born in Canada, spoke English at home and identified themselves as Catholic. The majority lived in rural communities around Fredericton. Four girls were full-time students (grades 10-12) while one young woman attended university full time. This young woman was also a mother of two young children. Two girls worked part-time while going to school. At the time of the interview, most of the girls were living with their families and one girl lived with her partner and two young children.

These girls and young women were very active in their communities and schools. One girl was a member of a highland dancing team while another girl was active in Girl Scouts. All the girls participated in various school-related activities including the student council, the yearbook committee and the Red Cross response team. Two girls participated in youth groups or other activities organized by their church.

When we asked the girls and young women about what motivated them to get involved in the project, two major reasons surfaced. Most of the girls talked about how they wanted to help others and to make a difference in other girls' lives. Some of these girls had experienced either violence or difficulties first-hand and they wanted to make sense of their experience and use it to help other girls. Some spoke of the difficulties and violence that their peers experience either in school or at home and how they wanted to make a difference in the lives of these girls and young women. Two girls mentioned that these issues were particular to rural girls. They also drew attention to how important it was to bring these issues out into the open and do something about them. Another reason that motivated girls to get involved was a desire to learn how to do research in order to better understand experiences of violence.

We also asked the girls if they had discussed the project with their family or friends and if so how they described the project to them. This strategy was used to collect information about the girls' perceptions of the project. The majority of girls had talked about the project to their family and some of them had even discussed it with their peers. In general the girls described the project as addressing issues around bullying and violence against women and girls. Three girls saw the project as addressing the particular concerns of rural girls and women. The majority of the girls mentioned that they were going to be doing research to learn about the origins violence, how violence is inflicted on women in different circumstances or what can be done to help girls and young women who find themselves in a violent situation.

Three girls from the "Chillax" group attended the national forum that was held in Montreal. During the second day of this forum, these young women had a chance to discuss what they are doing at their research site. They presented their original research

methodology called "Chillax", which they had developed in collaboration with their local research team and community mentors. They also discussed the "vernacular interview" format, which they describe as the framework that they will use to look at the particular words and the meanings behind the language that girls use to describe violence. On their return to Fredericton, members of "Chillax" were looking forward to piloting their methodology by doing two focus groups with high school students.

5.2 The London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children

At the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children*, direct work with girls and young women was delayed due to difficulties in obtaining ethics approval from the University of Western Ontario. It was granted in February 2005.²² Despite this delay, research staff from the centre invested a considerable amount of energy in building sustainable relationships with schools and social service agencies to identify a core group of girls and young women. The centre set up meetings with guidance counsellors in various schools and representatives of community agencies to discuss the project and identify strategies to recruit girls and young women to be mentored as peer facilitators.

To attract girls and young women to the project, two staff at the centre held three individual and 14 group meetings with students in high schools or other girls who were identified by social service agencies and members of the advisory committee. During group meetings, the facilitators from the *London Centre* shared information about the objectives of the project and led unstructured discussions about the role of media in girls' lives. This allowed the girls and young women to discuss other issues, such as problems in school, friendships, pressures girls confront in their lives and the differences between the experiences of males and females.²³ School guidance counsellors also attended these meetings.

²² Alliance of Canadian Research centres on Violence, *Interim Report*, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls, September 2005.

²³ Ibid.

According to a research professional from the *London Centre*, these discussions permitted the girls to have a safe space to talk and become familiar with the project. Between March and June 2005, the *London Centre* connected with 72 girls and young women either through individual or groups meetings and/or telephone contacts. 14 girls have had ongoing contact with the members of the research team and in June 2005, 12 of them attended a workshop on violence offered by METRAC, an organization from Toronto.²⁴ Three girls attended the national gathering in Montreal. Subsequently, two of these girls had the opportunity to co-facilitate discussion groups in their school with staff from the *London Centre*. The centre maintained its connections to many of the girls through emails to keep them up-to-date about new developments in the project.²⁵

In early autumn 2005, members of the research team will go back into the schools and agencies to meet with the girls to talk about the development of a group of 10 girls and young women to be mentored as peer facilitators. They will also be reaching out to girls and young women in the Francophone community. The centre has already developed criteria to guide their selection process in developing this core group. The centre aims to have a representation of girls and young women from diverse backgrounds, high schools and grade levels. To facilitate participation, the centre will be providing bus tickets and paying for childcare expenses.

As soon as the core of peer facilitators is established, the *London Centre* intends to work with the girls and young women to develop the mentoring process and involve them in the development of girl-centred methodologies and participatory strategies of research. It is important to note that various schools in London have expressed keen interest in the project and would like to maintain a continuing collaboration with the centre. Schools have invited the research centre to do additional workshops in the future with girls and they are excited about the possibility that some of their own students will be part of the group of girls trained to facilitate these workshops. According to a research professional

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid.

from the *London Centre*, this will enable the project to reach a wider number of girls than just those who are involved in the core group.

In preparation for the development of their core group, the centre has developed an agreement with the Family Services Family Services London. This agency will ensure that the centre has access to professional support for girls and young women who will be participating in the research.²⁶

5.2.1 The Participants

In May 2005, semi-structured interviews were done with four girls who were identified as potential participants of the mentoring program. These interviews were conducted in person by a research professional from the *London Centre* and four weeks later, a research professional from *CRI-VIFF* contacted the girls to collect some complementary information.

The girls and young women who were interviewed in London were between the ages of 14-19. Three of the girls were born outside of Canada. Countries of birth included Egypt, Somalia and Yemen. All of these girls reported that they spoke English at home, as well as Arabic or Somali. These three girls identified themselves as Muslims. The fourth girl was Aboriginal and spoke English at home. Three girls were fulltime high school students, two of whom had a part-time job. One girl was a mother of young children. At the time of the interview three girls were living with their parents while one young woman lived alone with her child. They all resided in London.

Similar to girls and young women at the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson* Research Site, the girls in London are also active in their community. One girl worked as a volunteer in a senior's home as well as in a community centre doing activities with young children. Another girl mentioned that she worked with young mothers and their children in a daycare centre. Three of the girls mentioned that they enjoyed playing basketball and tennis and some of them had participated on sports teams at their school. Two girls

²⁶ Ibid.

mentioned that they enjoyed helping out their mother by taking care of their younger siblings. The girls mentioned that they enjoyed writing, listening to music and spending time with their friends.

Concern for girls, particularly younger girls in high school, was a principal element that motivated these girls and young women to participate in the project. According to the majority of these girls, young girls are facing difficult situations both at home and at school. Many young girls are isolated in high school and need help and someone to talk to. It seems that schools do not provide a safe space for girls. Two girls mentioned that immigrant girls often experience racism. The project was thought to be a way of creating a safe space for young girls, where they can get help and support. Two girls talked about how they wanted to pass on what they have learned from their own experiences to younger girls and one girl spoke eagerly about how she looked forward to being a mentor. Two girls claimed that it was really important to capture girls' perspectives about what is going on in their lives and that girls and young women should be given the opportunity to do their own research.

All of the girls had talked about the project to their family and some of them had even discussed it with their friends. In contrast to the girls and young women in Fredericton, who had described the project as addressing issues around bullying and violence, the majority of the London girls had described it as a project to help girls address their problems and find solutions to them. One girl had presented it as a project that addressed violence in the lives of girls while another girl had mentioned that they were going to be doing research on violence. The girls received a favourable reaction from their parents.

During the forum in Montreal, the girls expressed their objectives for the project. They have a lot of ideas and they have even discussed them with other girls in their high school. Ideally, they want girls to be able to express themselves through art and dance. They are looking forward to facilitating discussions about the media and acting as mentors for younger students. They want to create a safe space for girls so that they can talk about violence and racism in their lives as well as other issues that are important to them.

5.3 *RESOLVE* Manitoba

RESOLVE Manitoba was a latecomer to the project, arriving in spring 2004. In early autumn, they hired two Aboriginal girls to assist in building a core group of girls and young women.²⁷

Staff from *RESOLVE* built a collaborative partnership with the Manitoba Multi-Jurisdictional Implementation Team that is mandated to implement the province's "Strategy for Responding to Children and Youth at Risk or Survivors of Sexual Exploitation" (SEY). *RESOLVE* assisted them by doing a small study on youth experiences in their special programs designed to help girls.²⁸ This partnership appears to have been beneficial for both parties. Through the course of the study, *RESOLVE* met with program developers and staff at several agencies. As a result, two girls were recruited to the project from the Winnipeg agency *New Directions*. These young women have sustained their interest and commitment to the project and are really looking forward to reaching out to peers in their communities.

During the early stage of Phase 2, the *RESOLVE* centre intends to work in collaboration with SEY and its affiliated agencies to identify other girls who want to be members of the core group or participate in the research. A Local Advisory Committee of girls will also be established. It is anticipated that this committee will play a key role in developing creative methodologies to capture the experiences of Aboriginal youth.²⁹

5.3.1 *The Participants*

As previously mentioned, two girls have been identified to participate in the core group. Both of these girls are 17, Aboriginal and were born in Winnipeg. They are attending school fulltime while working part time.

²⁷ *RESOLVE*, Manitoba, *Progress report, Intersection Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2005,

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

These two girls joined the project in April 2005. They were therefore able to attend the forum held in Montreal which enabled them to learn more about the project, as well as to meet other girls and young women from across Canada. During the two days in Montreal, they sensitized researchers and their peers about the different types of violence that girls in their community experience on the streets. They underlined the importance of bringing forward the experiences of these girls and young women that differ greatly from the mainstream experiences and the inclusion of a diversity of voices in research. They seemed quite excited about the possibility of doing research in their own community and to document the experiences of girls. They looked forward to going back to Winnipeg, to talk about the project to Aboriginal youth in their community and to get other girls and young women involved.

5.4 Strengths and Challenges

Across Canada, girls and young women are involved in the project primarily because they are motivated to help other girls. The project appears to have created a safe space for girls and young women, where they can talk about issues that they and their peers may be facing in school. The girls are very aware of the issues that are important to girls and young women in their communities. For instance, in interviews and during the national forum, the girls from Fredericton drew attention to the particular situations of violence and isolation that rural girls face. In London, girls are concerned about racism in their communities and schools, while in Manitoba girls are very preoccupied about the violence that Aboriginal youth experience on the streets. Girls are also motivated to do research, to develop girl-centered methodologies in order to capture the real experiences of girls in their own language. The girls believe that by participating in the project, they will make a difference in their communities and in the lives of other girls and young women.

Organizations and schools are also very involved in the mentoring component of the project. In Fredericton, representatives of organizations are acting as mentors for girls and along with the girls they are learning how to do action-research. In London, the advisory committee members facilitated contacts between the research team and the schools and community agencies that work with girls and young women. Several schools would like to

have a continuing collaboration with the centre and are very excited about the possibility that some of their own students will be part of the core group of peer facilitators. School guidance counsellors have also expressed a keen interest in the project. In Manitoba the centre created a partnership with SEY and its affiliated agencies that seems to be beneficial for both parties. *RESOLVE* assisted them in doing an evaluation of the experiences of youth who use their services. This type of collaboration is ideal in action research and it is vital to successful partnership.

At the end of Phase 1, it is evident that the members of the *Alliance* have been able to build, consolidate and sustain partnerships between their respective centres and community agencies and schools. More importantly, organizations that are involved in the project are bonded with girls and young women who are participants or potential participants in the mentoring process. With these key factors in place, it is quite likely that the project will result in organizational change in the organizations that work with girls.

The mentoring process seems successful in teaching research skills to girls and young women. This became quite apparent during the forum in Montreal when the "Chillax" group from Fredericton shared their elaborate girl-centered methodology with the other participants and it appeared that they had taken control of the research process. It is also worthy to note that during interviews with girls from Fredericton, they affirmed that they felt that their participation in the project would enable them to affect change in their community.

One important factor that facilitates contact between the research team and the girls is that the centres have hired older girls who are close to youth in the community. For instance, the *UNB FVRC* and the *London Centre* have both hired as research assistants, girls who were involved in the girl child project. Both of these young women are full time university students. They have been instrumental in bridging the generation gap between members of the research team and the girls. According to research professionals, they are close to the girls and play a pivotal role in helping the girls voice their concerns. They are also well placed to interpret what adults are saying

to youth but more importantly, what youth are saying to adults. These young women have various tasks including facilitating discussion groups in the community, arranging meetings and transcribing verbatim. In a unique and unforeseen way, they are acting as significant mentors for the girls and young women. Meanwhile, in Manitoba, the Director of *RESOLVE* is negotiating with *New Directions* so that the staff person who accompanied the girls to Montreal will act as the direct mentor for the girls. This arrangement will be a definite asset for the project.

According to research professionals, parents have been very supportive of their daughters' participation in the project. In fact, most parents are really proud of their daughters' involvement. This is very significant and seems to point to how the project may also be responding to some of the concerns that parents have for their daughters. In London, research professionals are in contact with parents when a girl requests this of them.

Unfortunately, unexpected delays have had an impact on the ability of centres ability to recruit girls and young women. At the *London Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children*, direct work with girls was delayed due to difficulties in obtaining ethics approval from the University of Western Ontario. Initially the university was requesting that the research team obtain parental consent for all girls under the age of 16. Fortunately, the lead researcher from the London Centre was able to successfully argue that girls 14 and over are capable of making their own decision about participation in research and should therefore be able to sign on their own behalf.³⁰ This was an important issue for the *London Centre* and their advisory committee since they wanted to include youth who may have difficulty obtaining parental consent such as girls living on their own or homeless girls. Ethics approval was granted in February 2005.

In the Prairie Provinces, there were also unexpected delays. Initially, *RESOLVE* Saskatchewan was to establish a core group of girls and young women but this plan had to be temporarily put aside due to a serious health problem in the family of the lead

³⁰ Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, *Progress Report,, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September, 2005.

researcher. *RESOLVE* Manitoba was only able to hire Aboriginal staff in October 2004.³¹ It is also important to take into consideration that it took some time to build partnerships between the centre and the various community organizations that work with the Aboriginal community. This partnership-building phase was crucial to developing a collaboration that can be sustained throughout the entire three phases of the project. Finally, the *RESOLVE* centre also experienced unexpected challenges in being able to maintain their staff. One staff member experienced a family tragedy while a second research professional was diagnosed with a severe health problem prior to assuming her position.³²

Time was also identified an important obstacle to the recruitment of girls. Research professionals mentioned that most of the participants of the mentoring program are full time students and some of these girls and young women are also single mothers. To facilitate participation and to ensure that the girls will not feel torn between their studies and their commitment to the project, the centres are looking at the possibility of making arrangements with schools so that girls can obtain academic credits for their participation in the project.

5.5 Recommendations

As outlined in the project proposal, it was anticipated that each of the three research sites doing direct research with girls and young women would work with partner organizations in their communities to identify a core group of approximately 10-12 girls from diverse backgrounds to be mentored in the research process. At the end of Phase 1, the centres are still working toward this objective. This is understandable since there were various unexpected setbacks such as delays in obtaining ethics approval from the universities, high staff turnover and the need to secure additional funding. It is also important to take into consideration the considerable time and energy that centres invested in building local advisory committees and developing equal partnerships with schools and community

³¹ ³¹ *RESOLVE*, Manitoba, *Progress report, Intersectiong Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2005.

³² *Ibid.*

agencies that provide services for girls. Despite these difficulties, the centres have succeeded in building and consolidating collaboration with organizations that seem committed not only to the project but also to supporting the girls and young women that are participants or potential participants. It is therefore important for the centres to continue their efforts in working with these organizations to further the process of identifying girls.

All the centres have identified girls and young women to participate in the mentoring process. Two centres have mentioned that they would also like to recruit disabled girls and francophone girls so as to ensure that the concerns of diverse groups of girls and young women are represented in the project. It is also important to note that there is a need to reach out to LGTB girls too.

RESOLVE Manitoba has established a significant partnership with *New Directions*. A staff member from this organization will act as a mentor for the Aboriginal young women. Given the enormous challenges that these young women face in their lives, it is important to design a mentoring process that is sensitive to and takes into consideration these challenges. A flexible timeline will be required to develop a girls-centred methodology that takes into account these realities as well as safety considerations.

As demonstrated by the work done with girls in Fredericton, it is important to continue efforts to empower girls and young women to engage in research activities that will result in change in the organizations that work with them.

SECTION VI – OBJECTIVE 4

OBJECTIVE 4: TO BEGIN TO UNDERTAKE AN ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT POLICIES IMPACTING UPON THE LIVED REALITIES OF GIRLS

The fourth objective as outlined in the project proposal is to undertake an analysis of relevant policies impacting upon the lived realities of girls. To achieve this, the *FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children* (FREDA) aimed to secure contacts with relevant policy makers, conduct a preliminary analysis of policy documents and develop an interview protocol.³³

FREDA has undertaken two major initiatives with regards to the social policy component of the *Intersecting Sites* project. First of all, the centre is identifying, examining and analyzing policies that touch the lives of marginalized girls to assess whether these policies address intersectional issues. A major question being addressed is: What disjuncture exists between the stated goals of social policies and actual outcomes for the girls? Key policy areas that are being explored include health, justice, social services, housing, childcare, employment, child welfare and immigration. The second initiative involves examining policymakers' perspectives and assessments of policy.³⁴ The centre has laid the groundwork to be able to interview key policymakers and program developers during Phase 2.

To oversee these policy initiatives, *FREDA* is working with a feminist social policy analyst who has previously done policy research for the centre and is presently completing her doctorate in law.³⁵ The centre consulted with various stakeholders including program developers and service providers in their community, provincial policy makers, the National Advisory Committee, a Local Advisory Committee of girls and an Aboriginal girls group.

³³ Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Violence, Project Proposal submitted to Status of Women Canada: *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls.*, 2002.

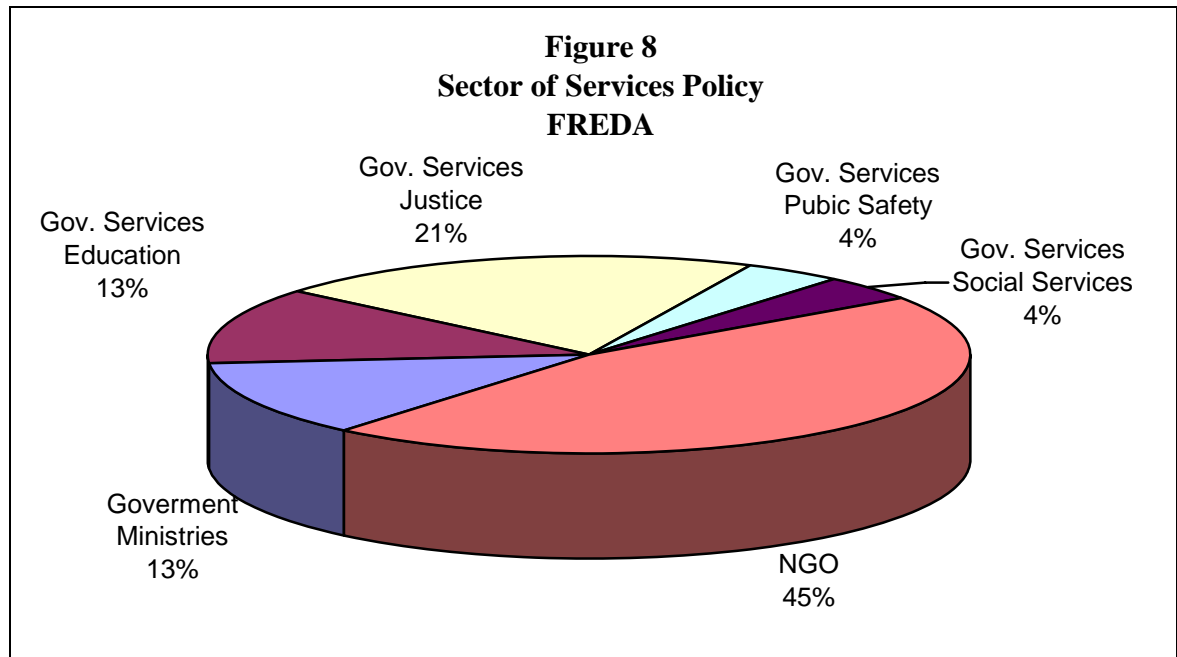
³⁴ FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, *Progress Report, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2005.

³⁵ Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, Interim Report, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, January 2004.

6.1 Consultation Process

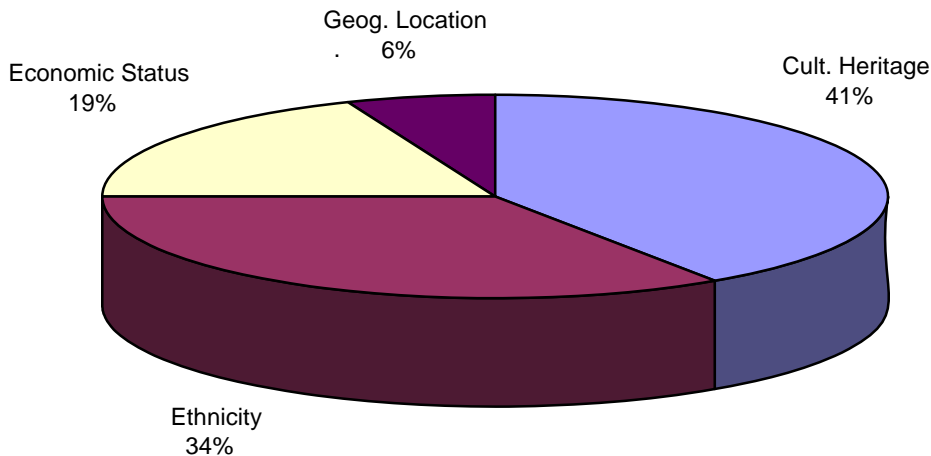
FREDA organized 14 group and individual meetings with non-governmental organizations, government service providers and program developers and provincial policy makers. According to a member of the research team who was interviewed for the evaluation, the purpose of meetings with service providers and program developers was to gather feedback about gaps in social policy and social services delivery, the needs of marginalized girls, and concerns about policy reform. During meetings with provincial policy makers, discussions centred on their perspectives with regards the needs of marginalized girls, whether there should be reforms in existing federal policies and the disjuncture between what gets stated in the policies, how they are implemented and the actual outcomes. Other contacts were made with service providers and provincial policy makers who provided the names of the most relevant policymakers in the federal government. As a result, informal connections have been made with a number of policy makers in Ottawa.

Checklists were used to document the interaction between the *FREDA* Centre and policymakers, service providers and program developers. According to these checklists, *FREDA* consulted 24 non-governmental organizations, policy makers and government-run services. As demonstrated in Figure 8, nearly half of the organizations that were consulted were non-governmental organizations such as organizations that provide services for girls and advocacy groups for immigrant women. Furthermore, various service providers from a diverse range government services were also consulted such as justice (21%), education (13%), social services (4%) and public safety (4%). Finally, 13% of the consultation involved civil servants working in the provincial government.



As noted in Figure 9, consultations with NGO representatives, government-run service providers and civil servants addressed issues of intersectionality. In the context of these consultations, according to the checklists completed by *FREDA*, issues around cultural heritage (41%) were addressed most frequently, followed by ethnicity (34%) and economic status (19%). Issues around geographic location were also explored but less frequently (6%). Similar to other findings in this evaluation, issues around sexual orientation and ability were not explored.

Figure 9
FREDA: Contacts NGO and Government
Themes of Intersectionality
Phase 1



Members of the research team from *FREDA* also participated in a teleconference with the National Advisory Committee in December 2004 to discuss the policy component of the project. During this meeting, advisory committee members were invited to identify problematic areas in relation to social policy. They also identified program developers from across the country that should be interviewed during subsequent phases of the research. Following this meeting, the *FREDA* centre contacted certain members of the committee for further consultation³⁶.

6.2 Consultation with Girls

The *FREDA* research team had two meetings with GoGirls, a local leadership group that is composed of 13 girls and young women between the ages of 14 and 19 from diverse backgrounds³⁷. Under the leadership of a young immigrant woman mentor who works at *FREDA* and at the Vancouver YWCA, these girls hold meetings twice a month to discuss issues such as race, gender, sexual identity and body image. According to a member of the

³⁶ FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, Checklist: Contacts between the centre and policy makers and program developers.

³⁷ FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, *Progress Report, Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*, September 2005

research team, during the meetings in which social policy was discussed, the girls and young women identified from their own experiences what they thought should be important in programming and services for marginalized girls. They spoke to the general lack of policies and programs directed towards young girls, particularly racialized girls. They also had concerns about how anti-violence policy is implemented in schools to address bullying and racism. Ideally, they would like to see special programming designed to help girls and young women in developing their skills, particularly leadership skills and the creation of more safe places in the community for youth to gather. During another meeting, they looked at the draft set of questions intended for the interviews with the policy markers and provided their feedback.

FREDA also has access to another group called Girlz Group, which is composed of 11 Aboriginal girls, mostly street youth. In collaboration with these girls, the centre developed a survey to investigate the needs and potential resources for marginalized inner city adolescent girls. Sixty-one youth completed this questionnaire³⁸. Results from this study will be used to inform policy work in Phase 2.

6.3 Interview Protocol

By means of an extensive literature on research in the area of policy and through consultations with program developers, service providers, the National Advisory Committee and local girls groups, the *FREDA* Centre was able to draft a preliminary interview guide that will be used during Phase 2. In individual interviews, policymakers (civil servant and politicians) will be invited to speak to the context of particular policies that affect the lives of girls and young women, their objectives of these policies, how they are implemented and their outcomes.

6.4 Strengths and Challenges

FREDA has completed a considerable amount of work with regard to the policy component of the project. It is important to draw attention to how *FREDA* is exploring a variety of policy areas that govern the lives of girls and young women including: health,

³⁸ Ibid

justice, education, social services, housing, childcare, employment, child welfare, immigration and violence prevention. Informed by various stakeholders involved in the project, the centre completed a preliminary analysis of pertinent social policies and developed strategies and methodologies on how to approach and interview federal policymakers during Phase 2.

FREDA put into place a consultation process that reached out to various stakeholders including non-governmental organizations in their community, government-run services, particularly in the areas of justice, education and social services as well as members of the National Advisory Committee and provincial policy makers. Contacts have also been made with federal policymakers in preparation for interviews in Phase 2.

Discussions with program developers, service providers and policy makers covered different facets of intersectionality in relation to social policy with a view towards identifying areas of reform and new policy initiatives. As noted previously, issues around intersectionality were discussed including issues around cultural heritage, ethnicity and economic status. Similar to other findings during the course of the evaluation, there was a tendency to give less attention to issues facing girls with disabilities and bisexual, lesbian, transgender girls. In spite of this, it is important to note that Aboriginal girls and youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds are informing the work done by *FREDA* and therefore it may very well be that the discussions during the consultation process focused on these girls' concerns.

The centre has worked closely with local groups of girls such as GoGirls that has a membership of girls and young women from various ethnic backgrounds and has access to the Girlz group, which is composed of inner-city Aboriginal youth. The policy work undertaken by *FREDA* is being informed by these girls' first-hand experiences and knowledge about how policies are being implemented and more importantly, about how they are helping or not helping them. As noted in *FREDA*'s interim report of September 2005, as a result of this consultation process with girls, throughout the subsequent phases of the project, researchers will be able to sensitize policymakers on how policies are

working or not working for marginalized girls. The policy component therefore plays a very important and unique role of bringing the voices of the girls and young women into the offices of the policy makers, program developers and service providers.

6.5 Recommendations

The GoGirls have played a key role in informing the research team about impact of policies on the lives of marginalized girls and young women. This collaboration will certainly be ongoing throughout the subsequent phases of the project. Under these circumstances, the GoGirls should be integrated into the project as a core group of policy consultants.

Whenever possible, issues of concern regarding policy for members of the lesbian, gay, transsexual and bisexual communities and disabled girls should be addressed.

It would be interesting for members of the research team at other research sites to conduct a focus group on policy issues with members of their core group as well as their local advisory committees. This material could also be used to inform the policy component of the project.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation conducted by *CRI-VIFF* had two purposes. Firstly, it determined to what degree *Alliance of Canadian Research Centres* was able to meet their overall objectives related to the *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls* project. Secondly it examined the implementation process of the project to identify strengths and unanticipated challenges associated with strategies that were used to achieve the intended objectives. Various types of methodologies were used including checklists to document contacts between the research centres and local and national partners, self administered questionnaires that were completed by National Advisory Committee members, individual interviews with research staff, girls and national partners as well as a content analysis of pertinent documents

The focus of this Phase 1 of the *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls* project was to develop a conceptual framework for an intersectional analysis of violence in the lives of girls and young women that can be used to shape programs and policies; create equal partnerships with girls and local and national organizations; mentor girls and young women in the research process; and develop tools and strategies to identify ways in which race, ethnicity, economic status and sexual orientation impact and contribute to the victimization of girls and young women. To achieve these goals, the *Alliance* attempted to raise organizational awareness of the intersectional complexity of girls' lives, enhance collaboration between and among organizations that work with girls and the research team, empower girls and young women to engage in action research and begin to undertake an analysis of relevant policies impacting upon the lived realities of girls and young women from diverse backgrounds.

During Phase 1, the *Alliance* research team built constructive national partnerships with a diverse range of advocacy groups, and community services that work with vulnerable groups of girls or with the general population of women, children and youth. On a local level, the centres have succeeded in building and consolidating collaboration with community and government services that are committed to the project. Some of these organizations are participating on local advisory committees while others are assuming a less central role but are interested in collaborating with the project. The Freda Centre has

also been strategic by reaching out to organizations that work on policy issues as well as program developers and policy makers.

As documented in the evaluation, this process of partner building took considerable time and energy but various factors facilitated community participation. Interest in helping girls and young women seemed to be a factor that motivated organizations to stay involved in the project and community partners were also inspired by the project because it created a safe space in their community where girls and young women could be empowered. Many organizations appreciated the regular correspondence between the research centres and the community and the project newsletter was an essential tool that sustained partner involvement

For all partners, issues linked to violence and inequality in the lives of girls and intersectionality are at the core of the project. Representatives of partner organizations, girls and members of the research team appear to be engaged in a genuine process to develop a common understanding of intersectionality. This dialogue will be continuing throughout Phase 2 as stakeholders will have the opportunity to discuss the background papers, which in turn will facilitate the process of bridging the gap between academic-based knowledge and practice-based knowledge that is so common in participatory action research projects.

It was anticipated that each of the three research sites doing direct research with girls and young women would identify a core group of approximately 10-12 girls from diverse backgrounds to be mentored in the research process. At the end of Phase 1, the centres are still working toward this objective. Notwithstanding, the project has reached out to close to 98 girls and young women from across Canada. Seven girls were mentored in Fredericton, 74 girls participated in workshops organized in London, 2 girls have actively engaged in the project in Manitoba while approximately 15 girls and young women in Vancouver participated in the consultations that were organized by Freda. Ten girls from the various research centres attended the national forum organized in Montreal. The girls are enthusiastic about the project as they believe that it will enable them to help their peers

as well as make a difference in their communities. As was demonstrated in Fredericton, the mentoring process was successful in teaching research skills to girls and these girls have actively taken control of the research process. This in itself is an act of empowerment.

It is important to note that community organizations and schools have been instrumental in identifying and supporting girls and young women to be mentored in the research process and they are very enthusiastic that the project aims to empower girls by teaching them research skills. During phase 2, the centres will continue this work with girls and young women. The centres will also recruit disabled girls, francophone girls and girls from the lesbian, transgendered and bisexual communities to the project in order to ensure that the concerns of diverse groups of girls and young women are represented in the project.

With regard to the research component of the project, the Freda research team has explored a variety of policy areas that govern the lives of girls and young women including health, justice, education, social services, housing, childcare, employment, child welfare, immigration and violence prevention. Informed by various stakeholders involved in the project including Aboriginal girls and youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The centre has also completed a preliminary analysis of pertinent social policies and developed strategies and methodologies on how to approach and interview federal policymakers during Phase 2.

In conclusion, throughout Phase 1, the Alliance has been able to implement successful strategies in order to work toward the achievement of goal of the *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls*. This work will be continued during the subsequent phases.

ANNEXES

Annex 1
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Annex 2
Background Papers

Elizabeth Blaney, Murie McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research,
University of New Brunswick
Situating Girls' and Young Women's Experiences of Violence in Rural Areas

Pamela J. Downe, Department of Women's & Gender Studies, University of
Saskatchewan
Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Aboriginal Girls in Canada

Marnina Gonick, *Intersecting Sites of Violence in the Lives of Girls: Background Paper
on Queer and Transsexual Girls and Young Women*

Maria Nengeh Mensah, PhD, Professeure-chercheure, École de travail social et IREF
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*Leux d'intersections de la violence dans la vie des filles : Enquête bibliographique sur les
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Michelle Owen, Department of Sociology, University of Winnipeg,
*Intersecting Sites of Violence Background Paper : Girls and Young Women with
Disabilities*

Consultant

Jasmin Jiwani, Concordia University,
Intersecting Violence(s) Racialized Girls and Young Women of Colour

Annex 3
Members of the National Advisory Committee

Stacia Stewart
Diversity Coordinator
Egale Canada

Beverley Wybrow
Executive Director
Canadian Women's Foundation

Jenny Robinson
Director of Advocacy and
National Initiatives
YWCA Canada

Pam Jolliffe
National Executive Director
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Anu Bose
Executive Director
National Organization of Immigrant and
Visible Minority Women of Canada

Dianne Bascombe
Executive Director
National Children's Alliance
331 Cooper Street, Suite 707

Tatiana Fraser
Executive Director
PowerCamp National

Kathryn Penwill / Lisa Weintraub
Provincial Co-director
le Centre ontarien de prévention
(COPA)

Terry Price
President
Canadian Teachers Federation

Suzanne Brooks
Youth Council Member
Native Women's Association of
Canada

Louise Moyer
Education, Awareness and Outreach Unit
Ontario Women's Directorate

Marlyn Bennett
Director of Research
First Nations Research Site,
CECW

Rian Lougheed-Smith
Mount Allison University
New Brunswick

Romy Poletti
Centre for Research on Violence
Against Women and Children
University of Western Ontario

Cathy Urquhart
Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada
London, ON

Annex 4
Intersecting Sites Of Violence In The Lives Of Girls
Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to offer ongoing expert advice in order to enhance the work of the Research Team and to allow for the study to be conducted more effectively. The Team will consult the Committee on such issues as organizational and governmental policy, procedural recommendations and participant referrals.

Duration

The Advisory Committee is a standing committee requiring an 18-month commitment from each member, with the possibility of continuing for the two subsequent 18-month phases of the research. The phases are as follows:

Phase I February 2004 – August 2005
Phase II September 2005 – March 2007
Phase III April 2007 – October 2008

Guidelines for Membership

The Advisory Committee is a Canadian group comprised of individuals who can bring unique knowledge and skill to the issue of intersectionality of violence in the lives of girls and young women.

Members must be directly employed in a front-line, or administrative capacity at a national, regional or local organization that works with/addresses:

- a) girls that are diverse in terms of cultural heritage, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, ability or geographic location.
- b) the issue of violence against women.

The Advisory Committee will also have three girls/young women present on the Committee; one selected from each Centre conducting front-line research.

Membership will be evaluated at the end of each phase to see if membership on the committee is satisfactory for both parties.

Structure

- 1) The Advisory Committee's role is to advise, inform and provide feedback to: enhance the work of the Research Team, to assist in the Teams' decision-making, and to allow for the study to be conducted effectively.
- 2) The National Coordinator of the Intersecting Sites study will be the liaison between the Advisory Committee and the Research Team. All correspondence such as letters, email and phone contact should be directed to the National Coordinator.

Functions

- 1) To **identify** local/regional/national issues concerning girls as they relate to diversity, intersectionality and violence, and to offer recommendations on how these issues might be addressed within the objectives of the study.
 - a) policy changes, community issues, noticeable trends.
- 2) To **facilitate** general community awareness of the study's role and function within other organizations at the local, regional and national levels.
 - a) assist in advertising publications, conferences, etc by disseminating information to agencies, organizations and professional contacts within your community.
 - b) identify girls to participate in the study.
- 3) To **participate** in regularly scheduled communication with the National Coordinator.
 - a) Conference calls will be held once every three months, be approximately one hour in length and will involve the Advisory Committee, the National Coordinator, and the Principal Investigator. Other Team Members can choose to participate in specific calls if they would like to discuss an agenda item.
 - b) Email discussions may also occur once each month between the National Coordinator and the Advisory Committee if issues need to be addressed in a more timely manner than allowed for by the quarterly conference calls.
 - c) Two telephone interviews (15-30 mins in length) will be conducted by CRI-VIFF over the course of 18 months as a part of the evaluation process.
- 4) To **provide** information and materials via the National Coordinator as they directly relate to the study.
 - a) offer knowledge on community events, conferences, etc related to girls, violence.
 - b) Recent research/resources/internet sites regarding diversity, girls, violence, intersectionality.

Exchange of Information

The National Coordinator will send the Advisory Committee information related to conferences, publications, resources and additional research that may be of interest to members regarding issues of violence, ethnicity, ability, cultural heritage, economic status, sexual orientation and geographic location as it relates to girls and young women in Canada. In addition, the Committee will share in the learning about participatory action research and have the opportunity to mentor girls and young women. Participation in the Advisory Committee would also enhance networking opportunities and collaboration among the member organizations.

