



# RECOMMENDATION


## REPORT 2024

IN UNISON

Culturally and linguistically integrated family  
violence service provision for Indian and other  
South Asian communities in Victoria.



IndianCare



**IndianCare acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional and ongoing custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded.**





We recognise the strength and resilience within the large Indian and wider South Asian diaspora in Victoria, Australia, and for the contribution of its people to this country.

We acknowledge the women and other individuals who bravely called out actions that jeopardised their safety and wellbeing, as well as the safety and wellbeing of their children and other family members. We also honour the many who did not live to see the legacy of their strength and advocacy in building a life free from violence.

We express our gratitude to Family Safety Victoria (within the Victorian government) for their support and funding to IndianCare's Project Maitri (Pg 26) which has resulted in this Recommendations Report. We look forward to continuing our work together.

We sincerely appreciate the support and efforts of the Community of Practice members and participants of Workshop Unite who extended unwavering support throughout Project Maitri and we attribute the progress of this project to their solidarity and camaraderie.

We acknowledge the support provided by Anu Krishnan, inTouch and Nisha Gull-e-Nishat, GenWest to Project Maitri.



# Excerpts from the Report

Strengthening collaboration is key to understanding and addressing the needs of South Asian communities effectively. Pg 23

They contact the police due to physical abuse but often do not recognise economic abuse as a form of abuse. Pg 13

I VO means it is all over, we are heading for separation or divorce. Pg 10

Developing specific legal frameworks or fast-track procedures for cases involving individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who are facing family violence is crucial. Pg 22

Culturally responsive family violence service provision can help the client feel heard and supported. Pg 3

This report is mainly concerned with intimate family violence affecting women, however we recognise that family violence in South Asian communities affects different cohorts of the family including children, seniors, men, those with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ people. We welcome all cohorts to participate in the journey of ending family violence.



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# Foreward

Namaste 🙏

IndianCare presents this report, In UNISON, aiming to build effective collaborations and cultural capacity across the family violence prevention and response sector, in addition to working more closely with governments and other agencies across Victoria. We believe that it is only through a stronger and more integrated sector that we have any hope of addressing the difficult problem of family violence in South Asian communities in an impactful way.

In UNISON was borne out of IndianCare's Project Maitri (meaning 'Friendship') which was a year- long project during 2023-2024. The project was funded by the Victorian government through the Working Together grant program that aims to strengthen the links between multicultural organisations and specialist family violence services.

To that end, IndianCare was supported generously by GenWest and InTouch to develop and implement a plan of action for Project Maitri. Deep conversations were had with both these organisations and we thank them very much for their support. Throughout the year, Project Maitri included a series of conversations through six Community of Practice (CoP) sessions, where many agency representatives and other people participated. During these CoPs, case studies were presented as a method for unpacking issues and discussing ways in which cultural and language sensitivities could be embedded into the service system. It generated meaningful and thoughtful conversations. We are grateful to the brave victim survivors who participated in these dialogues and provided us with suggestions based on their lived experiences. Following on from the CoPs, a one-day forum (Forum Unite) was held in August 2024. Ideas were discussed in more detail and the participants were provided education sessions about understanding cultural and language nuances in South Asian communities as well as ways of supporting women on temporary migrant visas.

Information gathered through Project Maitri is captured in detail in this report, ending with some key recommendations. While we know that family violence affects all genders; all age groups (including children and seniors); and people of different abilities and sexualities, this report does have a particular focus on the impact of family violence on South Asian women, because of the unfortunate number of cases of women being killed by the hands of men in this country and back in our homelands. Having said that, we invite men to come along on the



journey with us to end family violence. We hope this report does some justice to all those who have lost their lives due to family violence.

Finally, I would like to thank two cultural advisors, Professor Supriya Singh and Nayana Bhandari, who read this report and provided feedback. My ultimate thanks are to the staff at IndianCare for their hard work in preparing this report, particularly Manjinder Hundal (Project Maitri Lead) and Dr Vasundhara Kandpal (Manager, IndianCare).

Please take some time to read this report carefully, particularly the recommendations, and we welcome feedback, suggestions, collaborations and partnerships.

Thank you.

**JAYA MACHIKANTI**

PRESIDENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

# Executive Summary

Family violence is a global issue, and within South Asian communities in Australia, it presents unique and complex challenges. Women from these communities, in particular, face increased vulnerability to intimate partner violence (IPV) and other forms of family violence. Cultural pressures to maintain family honour, fear of social isolation and economic and legal dependency—especially post-migration—exacerbate their difficulties in seeking help or escaping abusive relationships (InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 2021; Kaur, 2020). The need for multilingual and culturally competent services is critical to ensuring that South Asian women can access the support they need (Segrave et al., 2021). A culturally sensitive approach to family violence is essential for addressing the specific challenges these communities face in Australia.

IN UNISON- Culturally and linguistically integrated family violence service provision for Indian and other South Asian communities in Victoria is developed by IndianCare in partnership with GenWest and directions from inTouch, and funding from Family Safety Victoria.

## Key Findings

- It is crucial to address the deeply rooted patriarchy within South Asian communities. While many cultures may have patriarchal elements, patriarchy in the South Asian context, patriarchy is more widely accepted as a means to reinforce male dominance and the subordination of women.
- Victim-survivors from CALD backgrounds face challenges in accessing early support and crisis intervention due to systemic, social, cultural, and financial barriers. These include language barriers, shame, cultural stigma, financial dependence, fear of deportation, lack of housing, and distrust or reluctance to approach mainstream services, including the police and legal system.
- Often, the lack of accessible or affordable legal support, combined with language barriers and the threat to visa status, affects the decision-making ability of victim-survivors and hinders their recovery from abuse. This may lead to them returning to the person using violence.



- There is a lack of awareness of economic and financial abuse within the community and there is a need to sensitise how patriarchal structures and cultural expectations around money and gender roles often enable and perpetuate economic abuse.
- It is essential to acknowledge the internal diversity and cultural nuances within South Asian cultures.

### Key recommendations

- Establishing multidisciplinary teams comprising legal professionals, social workers, and community advocates is essential for delivering a comprehensive response to family violence. These teams can provide legal advice, social support, and referrals to additional services, ensuring a well-rounded approach to addressing the needs of those affected.



- Make attendance at information sessions mandatory for visa requirements. These sessions will clarify what constitutes family violence and outline the available support services.
- Frontline workers, police officers, health professionals, and practitioners need ongoing education and training to identify and address biases related to South Asian communities. Ensuring high standards of professional practice requires providing adequate, culturally sensitive training to deliver respectful and effective support.
- Mediation services should be highly accessible and integrated into primary support models. Affordable and readily available relationship counselling can benefit couples who may not recognise signs of violence, helping to clarify relationship issues and promote safer, more respectful choices.

# Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCS	Child Care Subsidy
CoP	Community of Practice
ECLC	Eastern Community Legal Centre
FV	Family Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IVO	Intervention Order
MBCP	Men's Behaviour Change Program
NCLC	Northern Community Legal Centre
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
SA	South Asian



# Introduction

Cultural pressure to preserve family honour, fear of social isolation, and the economic and legal dependence many women face after migrating, make it harder for them to seek help or leave abusive relationships (InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 2021; Kaur, 2020).

Family violence is a global issue that affects South Asian communities in Australia in unique and complex ways. Individuals, particularly women from South Asian communities face multifaceted challenges that increase their vulnerability to intimate partner violence (IPV) and other forms of family violence. Cultural pressure to preserve family honour, fear of social isolation, and the economic and legal dependence many women face after migrating, make it harder for them to seek help or leave abusive relationships (InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 2021; Kaur, 2020).

Studies suggest that migrant women from South Asian countries are more vulnerable to abuse due to intersecting factors such as social isolation, visa insecurity, and limited access to culturally appropriate support services (Kaur, 2020; Maher and Segrave, 2018). According to a 2020 national survey of migrant and refugee women, temporary migrants in Australia reported substantially greater levels of family violence compared to the wider group of migrant women (Segrave et al., 2021). Studies concentrating on the relationship between family violence and temporary non-citizen status have shown how migration systems interact with situations that continue to provide perpetrators more control and influence over their victims (Segrave, 2021; Segrave et al., 2020).

Segrave et al, 2021 underscore the need for multilingual and culturally competent services to improve women's access to support. A culturally sensitive response to family violence is crucial for addressing the specific needs of South Asian communities, particularly women, in Australia.

IndianCare is committed to addressing the challenges faced within the South Asian community in relation to family violence. To foster a safer and more supportive community, we present *In Unison- Culturally and linguistically integrated family violence service provision for Indian and other South Asian communities in Victoria*, a guide outlining the vision, mission and strategies behind Project Maitri that includes a roadmap for creating culturally and linguistically integrated services through collaborations, partnerships and a data driven approach.

We are grateful for the guidance provided by GenWest and inTouch for Project Maitri.

# Family Violence in CALD communities



## Underreporting

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are less likely to report violence against them compared to women born in Australia (De Silva et al., 2024).



## Inconsistency

There is a significant inconsistency in the data collection practices related to family violence within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities (ANROWS, 2021).



Violence is predominantly perpetrated against women by men (WHO, 2024).

In Australia, one woman loses her life nearly each week as a result of family violence (Bricknell & Doherty, 2021).

Women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from a current or former partner (AIHW, 2022) (Safe and Equal, 2024). The number of sexual assault cases recorded by police increased by 11% from 2022 to 36,318 victims in 2023 (ABS, 2024).

# Defining cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness in family violence service provision



Cultural responsiveness in family violence services is essential for providing effective and respectful support. Prioritising a client-centred approach allows practitioners to understand and address the unique cultural contexts of victim-survivors, fostering trust and facilitating recovery.

Victim-survivors from Indian and other South Asian backgrounds, particularly those with limited English proficiency, require culturally responsive family violence (FV) services. Without this, they may feel uncertain, afraid, and overwhelmed. A lack of understanding of FV services and their roles can undermine their confidence and trust, potentially leading them to return to their abusers.

## 01. Cultural responsiveness

is a culturally informed and culturally sensitive response to a client who is engaging to receive support from a system, a service or an individual.

## 03. Culturally responsive family violence service

can help the client feel heard and supported. It can help the client regain confidence in herself or himself, and their decision-making ability. It can support the client get access to appropriate support and services, and can promote recovery from abuse.

## 02. Culturally informed practice

is one which is open to understanding the intersecting identities and cultural context of victim-survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to prevent further marginalisation, oppression and social injustice.

## 04. Client Centered approach

is where the client's cultural background and personal experiences are at the core of the service delivery process, and practitioners are encouraged to build trust and rapport by demonstrating respect and understanding of the client's cultural context. (Lum, 2010)

# KEY THEMES

Deep  
Patriarchy

Services  
Accessibility

Legal  
Complexity

FV  
Knowledge  
Deficit

Diversity  
within  
community

Key themes were reached through discussions in Community of Practice (CoP) sessions. Representatives from various FV organisations, local governments and legal services participated in the discussions as well as counsellors and people with lived experience.



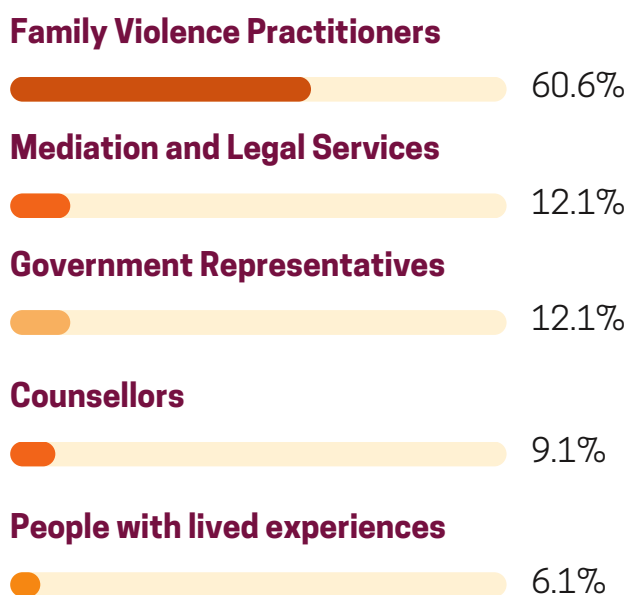
**30+**

CoP members were involved to discuss the gaps and challenges in service delivery to Indian and broader SA communities.

Participation - Orange Door, Multicultural Women's Alliance, Oorja Foundation, Westjustice, Kulturbrille, ECLC, NCLC, Western Bulldogs, Good Shepherd, Councils-Melbourne, Brimbank, and Wyndham; Safe and Equal, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, inTouch, Bapcare, GenWest, Mackillop Family Services, Counsellors working with South Asian clients and Victoria Police.

## 6 Community of Practice in 2023 - 24

### Participation in Community of Practice (CoPs)





# DEEP PATRIARCHY

Address deep-rooted patriarchy.

Participants in the CoP network unanimously emphasised the importance of addressing deeply rooted patriarchy. While many cultures may be patriarchal, in the South Asian cultural context, there is a stronger acceptance of patriarchy as a tool to reinforce male dominance and the subordination of women.

- **Male Authority:** Men are seen as primary authorities, often leading and making decisions in both public and private spheres.
- **Gender Roles:** Men are typically breadwinners, while women are assigned caregiver and homemaker roles (Satyen, 2021).
- **Sexual Control:** Women's sexuality is controlled, while men's behavior is more permissive.
- **Economic Disparity:** Men often receive preference in employment and wages, causing economic gender disparities.
- **Limited Mobility:** Women's mobility restrictions limit their education and career opportunities.
- **Violence and Intimidation:** Violence or its threat maintains male dominance over women.
- **Cultural Narratives:** Cultural stories and media often glorify male roles and diminish women's.
- **Reproductive Control:** Men often have control over women's reproductive rights and decisions.
- **Socialisation:** Children are socialised from a young age to accept these norms through family, broader society and media.



# CASE STUDY

(Deidentified Data- Retrieved from IndianCare’s helpline)

A male client sought support to enroll in the Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP), admitting to physically assaulting his wife. He justified his actions by claiming she did not cook well, care for their child properly, or invest enough time in the child's education.

He also asked the practitioner from IndianCare to reflect on her own experiences as a woman, implying that, as someone who is from the same culture, she would understand his desire for a "good wife."

The practitioner emphasized that violence against women is unacceptable in any form. The client is now enrolled and actively participating in the MBCP program

**Women are more likely to face abuse and controlling behavior by partners who endorse patriarchal values and beliefs (Satyen et al., 2024).**



## *Reflections*

A common pattern that we have observed while offering support to clients from South Asian communities on our helpline is that men who use violence against women find it difficult to understand that their behavior needs to be addressed. In their understanding, it is normal to expect from the wife to prioritize serving the husband, children and elders; and the women who do that are “good wives” and “good mothers”.

It is important that there are culturally relevant programs that focus on changing the narrative by inviting men in small talks to begin with and gradually allowing opportunities to reflect on how controlling and abusive behavior does more harm than good to relationships within the family.

# ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORT

It is difficult for victim-survivors from CALD backgrounds to access early support and crisis intervention

Participants in one of the CoP sessions reflected on the challenges faced by family violence (FV) survivors from South Asian communities in accessing early support and crisis intervention. They emphasised the importance of coordinating efforts to enhance these critical services and to break down the many barriers that hinder access to necessary support.

These barriers include, but are not limited to:

- Language barriers.
- Shame and cultural stigma associated with disclosing personal information.
- Financial dependence.
- Fear of deportation.
- Distrust and reluctance to seek help from police and government agencies.
- Lack of awareness about available support services.





# CASE STUDY

(Deidentified Data- Retrieved from IndianCare's helpline)

The client reached out to seek support for cyber bullying. Upon further assessment, the client revealed that they have been referred to seek legal advice. However, the appointment was not until a couple of weeks time and the client felt scared by her husband's intimidating behavior. He was also posting content on the internet without consent.

The client was supported by IndianCare to connect with court network assistance and a link to the online IVO application was also shared. With the help of court network, an IVO was in place. IndianCare made a warm referral to CASA, as the client reported sexual abuse in the past.

The client is currently feeling supported, however there was not much support that the client received when reporting cyber bullying as the content did not meet the criteria for serious cyber harassment (the images did not have any nude content, however the client felt intimidated by the husband using an online platform to spread rumors and bring shame to her and her children, who now live separately from him. Pictures were posted without their consent).

The client asked questions such as whether her permanent resident status and not citizen status (however, her husband has citizen status) was the reason that her case was not taken seriously. The client cannot speak English and is not eligible for case management support from services due to absence of imminent family violence concerns.



**The cultural and structural barriers such as language barrier, lack of culturally appropriate services, fear of deportation prevent migrant women from accessing support services and face systemic invisibility in Australian policy (Ghafournia, 2011).**

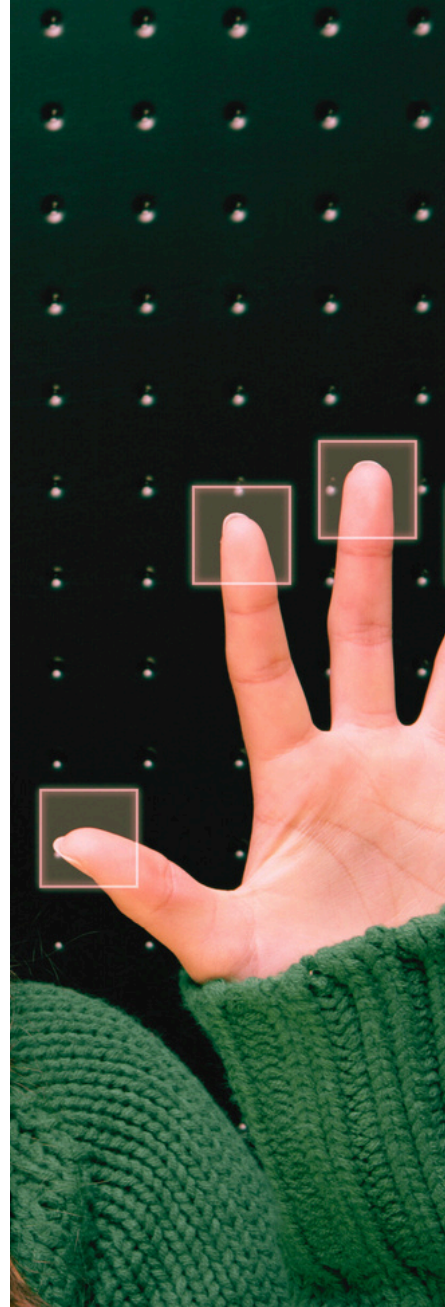
**Misidentification of the person using violence has been identified as a significant issue which can have devastating impacts on the victim survivor (FV Monitor)**

# CASE STUDY

(Deidentified Data- Retrieved from IndianCare's helpline)

The client contacted IndianCare's helpline to explore home-based care options for her 3-year-old daughter, who is being assessed for delayed development. She shared that her family, including her husband, was unsupportive. Upon further discussion, she disclosed ongoing family violence by her husband and revealed that the police had misidentified her as the perpetrator in a previous incident, making her fearful of approaching the police again. The client expressed concerns about her declining physical and mental health due to the abuse. She also shared that her husband threatens to deport her and take their children away. The client expressed a desire to explore options to live separately with her children and sought support for family violence, mental health, child care services, and NDIS assistance for her daughter.

With her consent, a warm referral was made to The Orange Door, but the client did not engage with the service. Follow-up calls were made, but the client did not respond.



## Reflections

It is important to offer interpreter support to people who are not able to communicate effectively in English as it can support victim survivors to share their side of the story to police in family violence incidents.

Individuals from migrant communities with low English language proficiency may not be able to articulate what they have been enduring and it can be an opportunity for them to access right support when police attend a family violence incident. However, if the victim survivor is misidentified and listed as respondent in the IVO, they may lose trust in services, and suffer in silence. In the case study mentioned above, the client stated that she was too scared to approach the police again as she was misidentified the first time as the respondent, and when a warm referral was made to The Orange Door, the client did not engage.



# COMPLEXITY OF LEGAL SYSTEM

Legal system is one of the most complex systems to navigate as perceived and experienced by the community members.

CoP Network members collectively expressed that South Asian communities often do not understand how the Australian legal system works or how individuals experiencing family violence can receive support.

One of the CoP members, Judgebir Singh, a lawyer and social activist, shared from his experience with CALD clients that these communities often think, “IVO means it is all over—we are heading for separation or divorce.” Other perceived and experienced hindrances include:

- Legal jargon and inadequate translation services (Hulley et al., 2023; Yoshihama et al., 2014).
- Unfamiliarity with legal rights (The Centre for Women’s Safety and Well-being, 2021).
- Complex legal procedures.
- Differences from legal systems in home countries.
- Migration experience, conditional residency, and fear of deportation (Segrave, 2017).
- Distrust in legal institutions.
- Limited access to free legal aid and high legal costs.
- Community pressure.



# CASE STUDY

(Deidentified Data- Retrieved from IndianCare’s helpline)

We encountered this case when the victim survivor’s friend reached out for support through our helpline. The victim survivor, who was outside her home with her child, called the police to seek help for family violence she had endured for years. The police advised her to go to a safe place, such as with relatives or friends, and issued an Intervention Order (IVO).

The victim survivor reported that after she complained about the perpetrator and the IVO was issued, her family severed ties with her. She felt penalised for reporting the violence and lost her home, leading her to regret her decision. The woman and her child stayed with family and friends for a time but eventually returned to the perpetrator due to homelessness. The woman retracted her complaint during the IVO hearings.

**There are studies that support the finding that migrant women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence in their destination countries (Amanor-Boadu et al., 2012; Segrave, 2017; Segrave, 2021) with a specialized focus on non-citizens whose temporary status places them at a greater risk of experiencing abuse and violence (Vasil, 2023) .**



## *Reflections*

It is important to consider that if women, who are leaving abusive relationships, are not adequately supported by services which also include affordable, sustainable housing support, the likelihood of the victim survivor returning back to the abuser increases.

However, if there is adequate recovery support which follows crisis intervention support, women may be able to recover from family violence, feel empowered to support themselves and their children, and begin a life free from violence.

# FV KNOWLEDGE DEFICIT

Lack of awareness of economic and financial abuse within the community.

Economic abuse, a pervasive but often overlooked aspect of domestic violence, severely impacts victims' financial autonomy and their ability to leave abusive situations. Economic abuse is a form of control that is as damaging as physical violence, but often remains invisible and less understood (Singh, 2021).

Money, intended as a medium of care, can become a tool of abuse when used without morality (Professor Supriya Singh, CoP 5 guest speaker). For example, the practice of favouring sons in inheritance in India is a form of abuse. Although women legally have the right to equal inheritance, they are often discouraged from claiming their share to avoid family conflict, with some mothers supporting this pattern to maintain harmony among siblings.

For many women, especially those from South Asian communities, this results in continued economic abuse and a lack of agency in financial decision-making.

Women who suffer from economic abuse and lack voice in financial decision making encounter issues such as -

- Restricted access to money or allowance limitations.
- Prohibition from working.
- Unrecognised qualifications in a new country (Block et al., 2022).
- Social isolation (often accompanying economic abuse).
- Financial dependence on the abuser.
- Inability to recognise economic abuse.
- Fear and uncertainty (Sharp and Callister, 2019).
- Limited access to financial and housing support services (Postmus et al., 2012).





# CASE STUDY

(Deidentified Data- Retrieved from IndianCare's helpline)

We have observed that many of our clients, primarily women, who contact our helpline do not recognise they are experiencing economic abuse. These women often lack access to their own bank accounts or salaries and cannot access Centrelink support for their children. As a result, their husbands receive the Family Tax Benefit while the women cover the child's expenses. If the husband refuses to send the children to childcare, the wife cannot apply for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) due to lack of access to the account and unfamiliarity with the application process.

Many women report financial control alongside other forms of family violence. They contact the police due to physical abuse but often do not recognise economic abuse as a form of abuse.

**Distinct from financial abuse, economic abuse encompasses a broader range of controlling behaviors, not just those related to money but also those impacting access to housing, food, clothing, and transportation (Adams et al., 2008).**

**The term "economic abuse" is preferred in Victorian family violence legislation, defined as behaviour that is coercive, deceptive, or unreasonably controlling and that restricts a partner's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Kutin, Russell, & Reid, 2017).**

**In CALD communities, traditional and patriarchal norms can obscure and perpetuate economic abuse, making it challenging to identify and address (Kutin et al., 2017).**



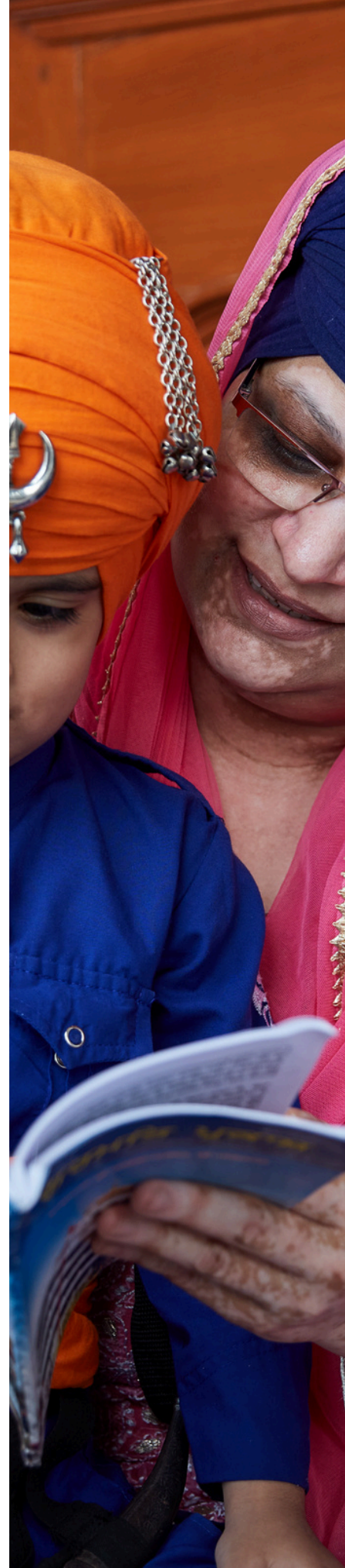
# DIVERSITY WITHIN SOUTH ASIANS

Need to recognise internal diversity within South Asian cultures.

It is essential to acknowledge the internal diversity and cultural nuances within South Asian cultures. The region's complexity and depth is seen in every aspect of the culture - from food to festivals, languages and dialects spoken, and religion. In order to extend support to family violence victim-survivors, we need to recognise similar cultural values as well as diverse social customs and traditions.

A small example

- Within the Indian diaspora, some may adhere very strictly to the vegetarian diet and others may not.
- Within the Punjabi Sikh community some people (both men and women) may tie turban while for others only men tie turban and women may not.
- Within the Indian community, some may be very open and dynamic to the changing social norms and may accept differences coming from the younger generation. However, others maybe rigid and saving family honour at any cost may still be the priority.
- Family killings in the name of family honour is not something unheard of within the same community.





# **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**



To tackle family violence in South Asian communities, we recommend a comprehensive approach that targets deep-rooted cultural beliefs, improves legal understanding and provides culturally sensitive support services.

Our recommendations emphasise targeted education, expanding access to legal services, and fostering cultural competence among professionals. We propose strengthening collaborations between ethno-specific organisations and mainstream services to provide a culturally-responsive and supportive environment for individuals affected by family violence.

 **01**

**Targeted Education**

Culturally tailored efforts to address deep-rooted social conditioning and patriarchal beliefs that perpetuate family violence.

 **02**

**Enhance accessibility**

Implement targeted legal education and awareness programs for South Asian communities on family violence, family law, intervention orders, visa abuse, mediation support, and co-parenting after divorce.

 **03**

**Cultural Competence**

Invest in education and training of frontline staff to enhance their cultural competence and responsiveness to build a more culturally informed and inclusive family violence service provision.

 **04**

**Collaboration**

Strengthen partnerships and collaboration among ethno-specific organisations, community services, and mainstream family violence support services.



# 01 Targeted education

Effective education and targeted interventions are crucial for addressing family violence, closing knowledge gaps and empowering communities.

There is a pressing need to improve understanding of different forms of abuse, enhance community awareness and engage diverse groups in prevention efforts. By leveraging creative methods and providing accessible resources, we can address gaps in knowledge and support systems, ultimately fostering a more informed and proactive approach to combating family violence.

## Challenges

- Lack of understanding regarding what constitutes different forms of family violence
- Acceptance of gender-based violence.
- Influence of and expectations from extended family members, most often in-laws.
- Lack of understanding of pathways to report sexual abuse and elderly abuse.
- Economic abuse is another crucial issue where men traditionally control finances and women are used to this dynamic.

## Gaps

- Need to engage men in discussions on preventing violence in familial relationships.
- Limited awareness in the community about available services
- Limited plain-language resources on support access points.
- Lack of familiarity with financial and broader economic abuse and its long-term impacts.



# 01 Targeted education

## Actions to be taken

Develop culturally tailored, easy-to-read resources in various languages to address deep-rooted social conditioning and patriarchy within South Asian communities.

Since community members often avoid events specifically focused on family violence, we recommend utilising softer entry points, such as cultural events (theater, music, dance), for disseminating information during religious or festive gatherings. This approach can enhance grassroots awareness of family violence within the community.

Support men in the community by creating systemic opportunities, such as establishing a men's support group. This group should invite men to actively participate in conversations about preventing violence against women and improving familial relationships.

Make attendance at information sessions mandatory for visa requirements. These sessions will clarify what constitutes family violence and outline the available support services.

Conduct group sessions for domestic violence survivors that focus on developing assertive communication skills. These sessions should aim to restore confidence, enable self-advocacy, boost self-esteem, and foster resilience.

Raising awareness and educating South Asian communities about the Australian legal system, particularly Intervention Orders (IVOs), is crucial. This knowledge helps individuals understand how IVOs can ensure their safety and protect them from violence and intimidation, thereby fostering a safer environment.



# 01 Targeted education

## Actions to be taken

- Educating new immigrants about their immigration status, guiding them in accessing support services, and assisting them in setting up their own individual bank accounts and immigration logins are crucial steps to empower them and prevent any form of control.
- There is a need for integrated services that cater to both the immediate safety concerns and long-term financial stability of victims, emphasising the importance of economic empowerment in helping survivors rebuild their lives (Singh, 2021).
- Develop easy-to-understand resources in multiple languages on financial and economic abuse.
- Emphasise financial literacy for women by providing information on how banks and financial counselling services can offer support.
- Implement targeted awareness-building initiatives on consent for all genders.





## 02 Enhance accessibility

### South Asian communities face barriers in reporting family violence due to cultural, linguistic and legal challenges.

South Asian communities face challenges such as language barriers, cultural stigma, fear of deportation and limited understanding of the legal system. These challenges can be addressed through trained interpreters, multidisciplinary teams, specific legal frameworks, accessible mediation services and culturally appropriate resources.

#### Challenges

- In South Asian communities, particularly within the Indian community, approaching the police or court is often viewed as a drastic measure.
- People often feel reluctant and ashamed to approach the police and legal system.
- In CALD communities, Intervention Orders (IVOs) are often mis- interpreted as a signal of imminent separation or divorce.
- Individuals on temporary visas experiencing family violence often fear that engaging with police or legal services may result in visa cancellation, deportation, or withdrawal of their visa application.

#### Gaps

- Language barriers, limited understanding of the legal system, and biases among first responders can lead to delayed justice, particularly when the perpetrator is misidentified by the police.
- Although the police are working to reduce misidentification, it remains a persistent issue.
- Victims may agree with the police out of fear of deportation or losing their children, avoiding further conflict.
- There is limited information on Intervention Orders and support people can access through court networks within the South Asian diaspora.



## 02 Enhance accessibility

### Actions to be taken

- Provide easy-to-understand, multilingual resources that outline how victims of family violence can access support services, including those offered by the police, legal system, and ethnic and specialist family violence services in Australia.
- Offer access to career counseling services to assist women in navigating paid work opportunities. This support should include Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and acknowledgment of previous studies and qualifications as essential components.
- Provide post-care support for survivors of family violence by helping women regain their self-esteem through the provision of essential tools and resources. This support should enable them to set realistic goals, develop effective career plans, and identify appropriate education or training programs as needed, allowing them to move forward with dignity.
- Mediation services should be highly accessible and integrated into primary support models. Affordable and readily available relationship counselling can benefit couples who may not recognise signs of violence, helping to clarify relationship issues and promote safer, more respectful choices.
- It is essential to ensure that individuals from South Asian communities have access to clear, comprehensible resources in their native languages detailing how police, the legal system, and ethnic and specialist family violence services in Australia can support family violence victims .



## 03 Cultural Competence

Improving cultural competence involves tackling biases, enhancing training and diversifying the workforce for better support.

To enhance cultural competence, it is essential to address biases, define responsibilities, and provide opportunities for reflection. The shortage of bilingual practitioners and limited understanding of South Asian experiences affect service delivery. Solutions include systemic training, integrating cultural advisors, recognising internal diversity and diversifying the workforce.

### Challenges

- Mainstream service providers face cultural and structural challenges in working with South Asian communities. For example, practitioners not being able to distinguish between arranged and forced marriages.
- Service providers may have personal biases towards communities that need addressing of issues like dowry, rigid gender roles, language barrier and notions about what constitutes family violence.
- Practitioners who grew up locally in Australia may not relate to or understand the migrant journey of people from South Asian communities.
- A limited number of bilingual practitioners within the service sector may lead to practitioners feeling unequipped to support the community members who present unique challenges.
- High staff turnover in the sector requires frequent training of new staff.

### Gaps

- CoP participants have raised concerns about biases and misinterpretation of information by interpreters.
- It is unclear whether strengthening cultural responsiveness is the responsibility of individual practitioners, the system, or both, and how this should be achieved.
- Limited time and opportunities for practitioners and front-line responders to reflect on their personal assumptions, prejudices, and biases.



## 03 Cultural Competence

### Actions to be taken

- To improve communication with victim survivors and accurately identify the person using violence, it is essential to engage trained interpreters from the very first point of contact with the services.
- Developing specific legal frameworks or fast-track procedures for cases involving individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who are facing family violence is crucial. This approach ensures they receive prompt and effective legal intervention, safeguarding them from further harm.
- Frontline workers, police officers, health professionals, and practitioners need ongoing education and training to identify and address biases related to South Asian communities. Ensuring high standards of professional practice requires providing adequate, culturally sensitive training to deliver respectful and effective support.
- Recognising the internal diversity within South Asian cultures is essential. This can be achieved through internal service support, engagement with cultural advisors, secondary consultations, and relevant cross-cultural collaboration opportunities.
- Practitioners may need training to support people on temporary visas.
- Diversify the sector workforce by including bilingual practitioners and individuals with lived experiences.



## 04 Collaboration

Strengthening collaboration is key to understanding and addressing the needs of South Asian communities effectively.

Enhancing collaboration is vital for developing a shared understanding of issues and goals. Partnering with community leaders, ethno-specific organisations and local stakeholders helps address unique needs and trends. Building local trust and investing in partnerships are key to effective outreach and improve service delivery.

### Challenges

- Family violence service providers may lack sufficient cultural competency to fully grasp the needs, and nuances of South Asian communities. This gap can cause misunderstanding and mistrust between mainstream providers and ethnic community organisations, which possess deeper cultural knowledge but have limited experience with family violence protocols.
- Many ethnic community organisations have limited resources for providing translation services or hiring multilingual staff, hindering effective communication with mainstream service providers. This can result in delays in service delivery and an uncoordinated response to victims' needs.
- Mainstream family violence services typically prioritise legal and safety frameworks, while ethnic community organisations may focus on community cohesion, cultural sensitivity, and preventing isolation. These differing priorities can create conflicts in service delivery, as ethnic organisations may feel that mainstream services overlook cultural and social needs. Both mainstream and ethnic community organisations often face limited funding and resources, which puts a strain on their ability to collaborate effectively. Financial pressures force them to prioritise their immediate operational needs over long-term partnerships and joint initiatives.
- Smaller ethnic community organisations often feel marginalised, as larger, well-funded family violence providers may lead decision-making without properly consulting or involving them in creating culturally appropriate interventions.





## 04 Collaboration

### Challenges

- Referral pathways between family violence services and ethnic community organisations are often inconsistent, due to unclear roles, responsibilities, and each organisation's capacity to meet client needs. This can result in victims not receiving timely or appropriate referrals to the necessary services.

### Gaps

- Shared resources are often inaccessible or unfairly distributed, leaving smaller ethnic organisations underfunded and unable to meet the needs of their communities effectively.
- Partnerships between mainstream family violence services and ethnic community organisations are often informal or underdeveloped. Without structured collaboration agreements and protocols, service provision becomes inconsistent, affecting long-term sustainability.



## 04 Collaboration

### Actions to be taken

- Organise sessions in collaboration with local councils, workplaces, and universities to provide critical information on what constitutes family violence and how to seek relevant support.
- Establishing multidisciplinary teams comprising legal professionals, social workers, and community advocates is essential for delivering a comprehensive response to family violence. These teams can provide legal advice, social support, and referrals to additional services, ensuring a well-rounded approach to addressing the needs of those affected.
- Collaborate with community leaders and ethno-specific organisations to better understand and address the unique needs and trends within the community. Hill and Salter (2024) emphasise that partnerships between public health professionals, policymakers, and community organisations are crucial for developing effective, culturally sensitive prevention strategies.
- Fostering trust within communities and their networks through transparency, consistent relationship building, respect for cultural differences, and encouraging community participation.
- Investing in local partnerships to enhance grassroots outreach and support.

# About Project Maitri

July 2023 - Aug 2024

Use a systems based and intersectional approach to better prevent, reduce and respond to family violence in South Asian communities.

## Project goals

To strengthen primary prevention and early intervention services and better integrate these services with response and recovery services, to have greater impact in addressing family violence (FV) in South Asian communities in Victoria.



### Community of Practice

We instituted the Community of Practice (CoP) network- to foster peer support and collaboration amongst representatives of organisations to address family violence in South Asian communities.



### Stakeholder capacity building

Organised a one-day Workshop- to facilitate collaborative learning, ideas exchange, and skills-building between ethno-specific, multicultural and mainstream FV service providers.



### Recommendations for improving services

Collaboratively produced the Findings and Recommendation Report- In Unison to assist mainstream service providers to offer culturally inclusive family violence service provision for South Asian Communities.

## 6 CoPs

CoP 1 - Addressing FV issues among South Asian (SA) community.

CoP 2 - Strategies for community engagement within South Asian communities.

CoP 3 - Role of frontline practitioners in supporting people from CALD communities to access FV support services.

CoP 4 - FV intersection with visa status with focus on primary prevention strategies and solutions.

CoP 5 - Multifaceted financial abuse within Indian community - nuanced economic coercion in intimate relationships

CoP 6 - Challenges faced by mainstream service providers with CALD communities in service delivery.

# Workshop UNITE

## Strengthening Family Violence Support for Multicultural Communities



### Group Discussion Case Studies

- Identify gaps and challenges.
- Use a strengths-based approach to address these barriers.



### Interaction and Problem solving

- Collaboration and knowledge exchange between ethno-specific, multicultural and mainstream service providers.



### Education sessions provided by inTouch

- Unpacking the language of family violence used by people from CALD communities reporting FV.
- Women working on temporary visas.

*"Enjoyed the interactive components at the beginning of the day and the presentations after lunch. Thanks for very insightful topics and discussion"*

**(Response from Workshop UNITE participant survey)**

# About IndianCare

Established in 2013



IndianCare is an ethno-specific community development and welfare organisation, addressing the needs of Indian-origin people in Victoria, Australia. IndianCare is mainly a primary prevention and early intervention agency.

## Our vision:

A Victoria where the Indian community is valued and well supported

## Our mission:

- Facilitating community access to service providers
- Collaborate with other organisations to support those in our community who are facing hardship
- Support and inform other organisations about meeting the needs of our community
- Advocate for our community to all levels of government.

## Our values:

**Cultural sensitivity** - Understanding our community's issues in a culturally informed way.

**Compassion** - Listening, caring, and supporting those in need.

**Respect** - Being accountable, professional, and acting in regard to the rights of others.

**Truth** - Acting with integrity, honouring our beliefs, embracing reality, and educating others.

**Peace** - Creating organisational partnerships, societal friendships, connection, and harmony.

**Confidence** - Believing in our community, our abilities, and using strengths-based approach.

**Courage** - Embracing empowerment and self-determination, and not being afraid to address hard issues.

## What we do:



Helpline



Prevention programs



Collaborate



Advocacy





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**We truly appreciate your support.**

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**IndianCare**

**Ross House, U 2.9, 247/251 Flinders Ln,  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
1300 005 040**

[www.indiancare.org.au](http://www.indiancare.org.au) 

[help@indiancare.org.au](mailto:help@indiancare.org.au) 

[@indiancare.au](https://www.facebook.com/indiancare.au) 