

Connections Hui report

November 2023



Outcomes Connections! Hui 2023

Shama Ethnic Women's Trust (commonly known as Shama) is a charitable trust formed in 2002 after the identification of a gap in available services for ethnic women and children that are run by ethnic women. Shama aims to support the development of a truly multicultural Aotearoa New Zealand where all women from ethnic minorities are fully integrated, live lives of dignity and free from fear of violence and discrimination and are recognized as valuable contributors in their local communities.

In 2019, Shama hosted the first Connections! Hui that brought together nearly 100 ethnic community organizers and therapists. This hui aimed to discuss what was important when developing and responding to sexual violence. The outcome was the confirmation of something that Shama had already seen in the work with communities: that existing approaches to sexual violence fell short for ethnic communities, highlighting the urgent need for a nationally accessible and well-resourced sexual violence response service. To meet the needs of the ethnic communities, Shama embarked on the creation and establishment of a National Response to Sexual Harm service with three core areas: primary prevention, crisis support, and long-term therapy and healing. Through collaborative efforts with the government and key stakeholders, this service currently provides crucial support to diverse ethnic survivors and communities across the country in the three mentioned areas.

In 2022, Shama hosted the second Connections! Hui in a series of 3 online sessions. The purpose of these hui was to harness the knowledge, growth, and initiatives that had emerged within various ethnic communities and governmental organizations since 2019 to address family and sexual harm. The first online space was on mental health approaches when working with ethnic communities. The second session focused on the achievements, challenges, and opportunities in family and sexual violence prevention and included a reflection on the new strategy, Te Aorerekura. And the third space was on primary prevention in the ethnic communities. The insights gained from the different discussions hold immense value, offering a deeper understanding of the progress and the needs of ethnic communities. This knowledge is still helping the design of accountable responses to effectively combat the root causes of family and sexual violence within the ethnic communities of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In July 2023, Shama hosted the third connections hui. The purpose of this year was to discuss how we can keep developing culturally appropriate support services to effectively prevent and respond to family violence and sexual violence, with a particular focus on different populations within ethnic communities and areas of work.

This hui was an opportunity to gather with 67 people from approximately 40 different ethnic backgrounds and 12 different religious groups. In the audience, there were people representing diverse ethnic groups and intersectionalities, as well as grass-roots organizations and representatives from the government. This year, the conversations were divided into two main sessions. In the morning session, the groups were organized by population group: children, youth, rainbow, older people, women, and males. The afternoon session was organised by different streams of work done in the sector: prevention, crisis response, healing/ therapy, research, training, and advocacy. In the groups, we explored what works when working in this space and what we still need. The following pages outline the principal outcomes of the group work done at Connections! Hui 2023.



1. Community engagement and collaboration:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ There are ethnic-specific services offered in different regions by different ethnic organisations. At the Hui, participants identified the work done by Shakti, Diversity Council, Ghandi Nivas, Sahaayta, Chinese New Settlers Services Trust (CNSST), Aoteaora Latin American Communities (ALAC), the Multicultural Councils, Red Cross, Change Makers, and Shama. These organisations offer various services, from prevention to crisis support and healing.
- ◆ The new government strategy, Te Aorerekura, was co-designed with the participation of the ethnic communities and acknowledged the need to develop specific services for the ethnic communities.
- ◆ There are efforts to increase collaboration, coordination, and knowledge-sharing among practitioners and organizations involved in supporting ethnic communities with family and sexual violence. This year, Te Puna Aonui launched the ethnic network, a space that aims to support the collaboration of organisations and communities at national level. Connections! Hui is another space for ethnic communities to engage and collaborate to prevent and eradicate family violence and sexual violence.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Participants of the Hui identified the need to engage with different population groups and regions where there is a lack of services. The groups specifically highlighted the need to incorporate and support males, young people, people in rural and small-town communities, rainbow communities, people with disabilities, and older people from ethnic communities, as they are currently underserved. In addition, the groups emphasized the need to keep engaging with diverse community members in the design and implementation of support services to ensure they reflect each community's unique needs and values.
- ◆ Participants discussed the potential of having more ethnic liaisons that could serve as a link between different community spaces (such as schools, churches, sports clubs, etc.) and social services.
- ◆ The groups reflected on the need to keep sharing evidence about what works to prevent and eradicate family violence and sexual violence in the different ethnic communities.

These improvement opportunities link to Shift Two proposed in Te Aorerekura, “Towards Mobilising Communities through sustainable, trust-based relationships and commissioning decisions that are grounded in Te Tiriti, and sharing evidence on what works.”

2. Cultural competence and sensitivity:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ Since 2020, Shama has been delivering “Cultural Safety” training to mainstream services across Aotearoa so they can better engage with their ethnic clients.
- ◆ Government agencies (such as the Ministry of Justice for safety programmes and ACC for sensitive claims) have included Cultural Supervision hours built into their service. Organisations like Sahaayta and private ethnic practitioners are providing this service.
- ◆ In May 2022, Te Puna Aonui launched two family and sexual violence capability frameworks to build the capability of government and non-government organisations and workforces across Aotearoa New Zealand, to ensure safe, accessible and effective responses to family and sexual violence.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Participants of the Hui indicated the need to keep providing cultural competency training for mainstream service providers to enhance their understanding of diverse cultural and religious norms, beliefs, and practices around family and sexual violence and improve the provision of services for ethnic communities.
- ◆ There is still a lack of trust in ethnic communities regarding the provision of services. There is still a strong belief that mainstream services don't meet the community's needs due to a lack of cultural awareness, accessibility, cultural and religious knowledge and sensitivity, and resources to provide information in different languages.
- ◆ At the Hui, participants reflected on the need to consider specific elements in the workforce capability development: support for interpreters, as most of them lack the tools and skills to work with people in crisis, and more education for communities to identify different forms of abuse, for instance, child abuse, or elder abuse.
- ◆ The groups discussed the need to keep working on tailoring interventions to be linguistically and culturally sensitive, recognising the diversity within ethnic communities.
- ◆ Participants highlighted the need to establish culturally competent support services across all of Aotearoa; currently, the support is inconsistent across regions. Also, rural and isolated communities struggle to access services that meet their needs.

These improvement opportunities link to the Shift Three of Te Aorerekura: Towards skilled, culturally competent and sustainable workforces.

3. Expanding the work in prevention:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ There is more prevention work happening in ethnic communities. Participants identified the work done by Shama with the prevention of sexual violence program, the Let's Talk Campaign, and the prevention of child sexual abuse program. They also discussed the work Ghandi Nivas does in Auckland with ethnic men and the work done by the Red Cross and Change Makers. Participants also highlighted the mahi done in specific communities, for instance, the work ALAC and Mituakiri have done within the Latin American community.
- ◆ MSD is starting a co-design process with ethnic communities, in particular South Asian communities, in Auckland. Through a community-led co-design process, communities will have greater ownership of the responses and solutions, which are to be strengths and rights based, and evidenced by research.
- ◆ MSD Ethnic Communities Innovation Fund has opened to enable more family violence and sexual violence prevention work in ethnic communities across Aotearoa.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Most groups highlighted the need to expand the work in primary prevention so there are more spaces in the different ethnic communities for people to learn more about sexual and family violence and tools to prevent the violence. Those spaces could be but are not limited to male groups and conversation spaces in schools and different churches.
- ◆ Participants identified the urgent need for more prevention work, especially initiatives working with males, young people, older people, people with disabilities, and people from the LGBTIQ+ communities.
- ◆ Groups mentioned the need to develop customised prevention approaches and prevention programs that address cultural-specific factors contributing to family and sexual violence. Participants discussed the need to reflect on traditional gender roles, power dynamics, and specific cultural practices.
- ◆ Participants mentioned community-specific communication channels, such as ethnic media, community events, and social media, where prevention information can reach the communities more broadly.
- ◆ Additionally, participants mentioned the need to foster partnerships with community leaders, organisations, and influencers within ethnic communities to ensure that interventions are known and that knowledge is broadly shared in different communities.

These improvements are linked to shifts one and four of Te Aorerekura. Shift one envisions agencies integrating community-led responses and shift three proposes more

investment in primary prevention. It also links to action 23 shift 4 “Develop prevention programmes for ethnic communities”.

4. Accessible and inclusive services:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ Since 2019, new services have been created, for instance, the Shama National Crisis Support Service for Sexual Harm.
- ◆ Diversity Counselling has extended its services so more ethnic people can access culturally safe counselling in different languages.
- ◆ Many government agencies (such as the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and ACC) have actively sought ethnic providers to contract to deliver services for ethnic communities.
- ◆ Government and many community organisations have opened more online services to reach isolated communities or to enable support across regions.
- ◆ Adhikaar Aotearoa has released a report from their community consultation, that sought to understand the unique experiences that LGBT+ South Asians face in Aotearoa.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ At the Hui, the groups discussed the need to ensure that support services are geographically accessible to diverse ethnic communities, considering language barriers and transportation challenges.
- ◆ Participants highlighted the need to offer a range of services that consider the varying needs and preferences of different ethnic groups. This is especially relevant for some of the most vulnerable people within the ethnic communities: children, people with disabilities, older people, and people from the rainbow communities.
- ◆ The groups discussed the need to keep strengthening integrated responses across Aotearoa to offer holistic support that meets the needs of diverse members of the communities.

These improvements are linked to shift five “Towards safe, accessible, and integrated responses”.

5. Trauma-informed care:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ Different organisations can support people in crisis or on paths of healing; for instance, CNSST, Sahaayta, Shakti and Shama.

- ◆ There is a national network of ethnic therapists available to support sexual violence claims. Shama leads this initiative that includes spaces for sharing knowledge among the therapists.
- ◆ Diversity Counselling and other organisations are exploring and advocating to incorporate different healing methods for healing used in ethnic cultures.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Participants of the hui highlighted the need to improve accessibility in the healing space as they feel communities can't access services due to:
 - lack of knowledge in the community on the services available,
 - language barriers,
 - the fact that mental health is still a stigma in the communities,
 - the lack of trust in the services,
 - fear of disclosure of mental health issues as those can impact the visas,
 - and the feeling that Western models might not work for ethnic communities.
- ◆ Groups discussed the importance of exploring holistic therapies as they believe that healing goes beyond counselling and people can benefit from different things, for example, dance and creative therapies, ayurvedic treatments, spiritual support, etc. The ethnic communities are collectivists, and yet, there are no holistic services/therapies accessible to everyone in the ethnic communities.

These improvements are linked to Te Aorerekura's shift six "Towards increased capacity for healing".

6. Legal and policy development:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ The Ministry for Ethnic Communities was established in 2020.
- ◆ Former MP Jan Logie proposed a member's bill, Protecting Migrant Victims of Family Violence Bill, to provide stronger protections for people in migrant communities who experience family violence. The bill aims to prioritise children's needs, remove barriers to help-seeking for recent migrants, and recognise and remove opportunities for immigration law-related abuse and coercion as a dynamic of family violence. The [draft bill](#) is available online.
- ◆ The family violence work and resident visa has changed and now includes people on temporary visas.
- ◆ The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse has an ethnic community representative in the advisory group.

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Participants of the Hui shared the need to advocate for an increase in the prevention budget. With the UNiTE campaign, the United Nations has called on countries to increase their prevention of gender violence budgets as it will benefit not only women, girls and their communities, but will see a decrease in people accessing crisis and healing services, which is currently very costly. Participants are aware of the need for more prevention funding in Aotearoa and the opportunity that it would represent having more prevention interventions across all ethnic communities.
- ◆ The groups indicated that there is space to include more diverse voices when developing policies and regulations related to violence prevention and responses.
- ◆ Participants discussed the need to remove mental health as a condition to obtain visas in New Zealand. The mental health conditions are against human rights, and migrants who come to Aotearoa are at higher risk of experiencing mental health distress due to the migration.
- ◆ The need to review the Family Violence Visas was mentioned as a priority. Addressing the length of the FV work visa and the criteria to grant both is essential to give survivors a real path to stay in New Zealand.

7. Research and data collection:

Achievements and progress made in this area since 2019

- ◆ The Making Ethnic Count Pilot, funded by MSD, proved the need to collect data about ethnic communities better. Recording information about ethnicity (Asian and MEELA are not good categories), place of birth, visa and religion is essential to truly understand how family and sexual violence occur in ethnic communities.
- ◆ Legal researcher Sarah Croskery-Hewitt released the report of her research: [Fighting or Facilitating Family Violence? Immigration Policy and Family Violence in New Zealand](#)
- ◆ Shama's prevention of sexual violence program has been evaluated, showing excellent results in behavioural change in participants of the project. The evaluation recommendations are related to expanding the prevention work further in the communities.
- ◆ The Community Research was established. This organisation raises the mana of knowledge by providing digital resources and opportunities for the sector to connect and share. They have an extensive collection of ethnic research (communityresearch.org.nz)

Improvement opportunities

- ◆ Groups recognised the lack of an information system with specific information about family violence and sexual violence in ethnic communities. Participants talked about the importance of progressing in collecting quantitative and qualitative information and data to take accurate measures, inform the provision of services, and track progress.
- ◆ Participants talked about the importance of establishing mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and feedback from the communities served to ensure that support services remain effective and culturally relevant in every community. Organisations must be willing to adapt and modify interventions based on community input and changing needs.

These improvements are linked to Te Aorerekura's plan regarding learning and monitoring to measure progress towards achieving the shifts.

Overall, participants across the groups agreed that what works best to prevent and eliminate violence is culturally sensitive services that are designed by, for and about ethnic communities. These services must consider the diversity within communities, the needs of different religions and cultural values, and provide access to information in different languages.

It was clear at the hui that our communities still lack specialized services in many parts of Aotearoa. There is a huge gap in services for ethnic males, children, youth, LGBT+ rainbow communities and older people. There is also a severe inconsistency of services across Aotearoa; regions like Auckland and Waikato have several specialised services for ethnic communities, but in Hawkes Bay or the South Island, there is almost nothing, so many times, Multicultural Councils or community groups have to pick up on crisis work.

However, over the years, our communities have developed many services and resources to respond to violence that could be shared across the country. Making these initiatives widely known so people are aware of culturally safe support is essential to amplify the impact of these efforts.

Lack of financial resources is still considered the main barrier to developing, improving and expanding services. As previously said, there is an inconsistency of services geographically, and for specific groups. But also, in the prevention space, most of the work has to be done on a voluntary basis, as there is no permanent and consistent funding to sustain initiatives and projects.

Finally, at the hui, we understood that we need to keep meeting to guide the development of specialised services, models of response, and workforce capability, so they truly respond to ethnic communities and are grounded in Aotearoa.