



CALL FOR CONFERENCE SESSIONS, ABSTRACTS & PRESENTATIONS

Voices for Change Conference on Ending Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees and Newcomers 2026

From Vulnerability to Safety, Healing and Change: Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking Among Refugees and Newcomers

Conference Dates: November 27–28, 2026

Time: 9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. daily

Location: 163 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Format: Hybrid (In-person and Virtual)

Convened by: Hope for Refugees International (HRI)

Online Submission Link: [Here](#)

Call Opens: September 24, 2026 - Submission Deadline: October 16, 2026

Notification of Successful Submissions: By November 10, 2026

Your Voice. Your Knowledge. Your Experience. Your Solutions.

Hope for Refugees International (HRI) invites community members, people with lived and living experience, community organizations, frontline practitioners, researchers, academics, students, advocates, service providers, policymakers, artists, healthcare professionals, social workers, legal professionals, humanitarian practitioners and other partners to submit proposals to contribute to the **Voices for Change Conference on Ending Gender-Based Violence Among Refugees and Newcomers 2026**.

Taking place during the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**, Voices for Change will bring together communities and stakeholders from the Greater Toronto Area, across Ontario and Canada, as well as international participants, to exchange knowledge and strengthen collective action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking.

The conference will connect experiences in Canada with the wider global and humanitarian context of GBV, forced displacement and migration.

But we do not want this conference to be designed only *for* communities.

We want it to be shaped and led with communities.

That is why HRI is opening part of the conference program to proposals from people and organizations who have knowledge, experience, research, promising practices, programs, innovations, and stories that can strengthen our collective understanding of GBV and human trafficking.



What Can You Submit?

We welcome proposals in **seven presentation formats**.

1. Conference Session: Propose and facilitate a complete concurrent conference session addressing one or more conference themes. Sessions should be interactive wherever possible and may combine presentations, discussion, lived experience, practice examples and participant engagement.

Suggested duration: 45–60 minutes.

2. Research or Practice Abstract: Submit an abstract presenting research findings, program evaluations, community-based research, promising practices, policy analysis, case studies, program models, emerging initiatives, or lessons from frontline practice. Academic research is welcome, but you do not need to be affiliated with a university or academic institution to submit an abstract.

Selected abstracts may be incorporated into concurrent sessions or presented through the conference's oral abstract and poster presentation area.

3. Interactive Workshop: Propose a participatory session that helps participants develop knowledge, practical skills, tools, or approaches. Workshops could include activities, demonstrations, scenarios, facilitated exercises, practice tools, or other participatory methods.

Suggested duration: 45–60 minutes.

4. Panel Discussion: Propose a facilitated discussion involving multiple speakers bringing different perspectives to a common issue. Panels should ideally include diverse voices and are strongly encouraged to include community, lived-experience and/or frontline perspectives alongside professional, research or policy expertise.

Suggested duration: 45–60 minutes.

5. Poster Presentation: Submit a visual presentation showcasing research, a community initiative, program, intervention, promising practice, evaluation, campaign, service model, innovation or emerging finding. Selected posters will be displayed during the conference. Some poster presenters may also be invited to give a short oral presentation about their work in the conference's dedicated poster and abstract presentation area.

6. Community Conversation:

Not every important conversation fits into a traditional conference presentation. Community Conversations provide facilitated spaces for participants to explore an issue collectively, share lived and professional experiences, identify challenges and develop ideas or recommendations. These sessions may take the form of circles, facilitated dialogues, fireside conversations, roundtables or other culturally appropriate participatory approaches.



Suggested duration: 45–60 minutes.

7. Creative Presentation: We welcome creative and arts-based approaches to knowledge sharing. Submissions may include storytelling, spoken word, poetry, theatre, music, visual art, short film, photography, digital storytelling or other creative approaches relevant to GBV, displacement, healing, resilience, prevention, human rights and community transformation. Creative presentations must be appropriate for a trauma- and violence-informed conference environment.

Six Conference Themes

All submissions should connect meaningfully with **at least one** of the following conference themes.

Theme 1 — GBV, Human Trafficking and Forced Displacement

Gender-based violence across migration and displacement; intimate-partner and family violence; sexual violence; coercive control; human and sex trafficking; labour exploitation; technology-facilitated violence; migration journeys; humanitarian emergencies; refugee protection; barriers to disclosure and reporting.

Theme 2 — Housing, Poverty, Employment and Economic Security

Housing insecurity and homelessness; poverty; unemployment and underemployment; economic and financial abuse; employment barriers; income security; workplace exploitation; survivor economic empowerment; affordable housing; and the relationship between economic independence and safety.

Theme 3 — Survivor-Centred Support, Mental Health, Healing and Resilience

Trauma- and violence-informed practice; culturally responsive services; mental health; healthcare; community healing; peer support; safe spaces; survivor leadership; social connection; resilience; recovery; and culturally grounded approaches to healing.

Theme 4 — Intersectionality, Equity and Access to Justice

Race and anti-Black racism; gender; immigration and refugee status; sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE); disability; socioeconomic inequality; Black and racialized women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ communities; legal rights; policing; immigration systems; reporting barriers; victim services; and access to justice.

Theme 5 — Prevention, Positive Masculinity and Community Transformation

Primary prevention; healthy relationships; consent; community education; youth engagement; positive masculinity; engaging men and boys as allies; challenging harmful gender norms; bystander approaches; digital safety; and community-led prevention.

Theme 6 — From Local Action to Global Humanitarian Response: Systems, Policy and Collaboration



Policy and systems change; multisectoral partnerships; community-government collaboration; promising practices; research and knowledge mobilization; humanitarian GBV responses; forced displacement; international learning; service coordination; policy gaps; and translating community knowledge into action.

Whose Submissions Are We Looking For?

We particularly encourage submissions from:

Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and newcomers, students; people with lived and living experience of GBV and human trafficking; grassroots and refugee-led organizations; women's organizations; Black and racialized community organizations; 2SLGBTQI+ communities and organizations; Indigenous-led organizations and knowledge holders; youth; community and faith leaders; GBV and anti-trafficking organizations; settlement agencies; social workers and counsellors; healthcare and mental-health professionals; housing and homelessness organizations; employment and economic-empowerment organizations; lawyers and legal clinics; researchers and academics; students; labour organizations; government and policymakers; and international and humanitarian practitioners.

We strongly encourage collaborative and cross-sector submissions.

You do not need to be an academic, published researcher or professional conference presenter to submit a proposal.

Lived experience, community knowledge and frontline practice are valuable forms of expertise.

Community and Survivor Participation

Voices for Change is committed to meaningful community participation. We especially welcome submissions that meaningfully involve refugees, newcomers, survivors and people with lived and living experience in the design, leadership or delivery of sessions.

However, no person should be expected to disclose personal experiences of violence to participate. Submissions involving lived experience should demonstrate attention to safety, dignity, informed consent, confidentiality, choice and the prevention of retraumatization.

Presenters should avoid identifying survivors or sharing identifiable case information without appropriate informed consent.

How Will Proposals Be Selected?

Following the submission deadline, proposals will be reviewed by an Independent Conference Submissions Review Committee.

The review process will consider:

- relevance to the conference goal and one or more of the six themes;

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- relevance to refugees, newcomers and/or communities affected by displacement;
- clarity and quality of the proposed contribution;
- potential to contribute useful knowledge, promising practices, tools, innovations or learning;
- meaningful inclusion of community and/or lived-experience perspectives where appropriate;
- intersectional, culturally responsive and trauma- and violence-informed approaches;
- opportunities for participant engagement;
- diversity of perspectives, organizations, communities and geographical representation; and
- feasibility within the two-day conference program.

Building a Diverse Conference Program

We anticipate receiving more strong proposals than can be accommodated as individual sessions. Unfortunately, submission does not guarantee acceptance, and HRI may not be able to offer every successful proposal a stand-alone concurrent session.

To maximize participation and ensure broad representation, the Conference Planning Committee may recommend that proposals addressing similar or complementary subjects be combined into a shared session. For example, two or more organizations submitting proposals concerning similar issues may be invited to collaborate in designing and facilitating a joint panel, workshop, or community conversation.

A proposal submitted in one format may also be offered in another format. For example, an abstract that cannot be accommodated as a full session may be invited for an oral abstract presentation or poster presentation. Where this occurs, HRI will communicate with the selected presenters before finalizing the conference program.

Our objective is not simply to fit presentations into rooms. It is to create a **diverse, coherent and genuinely community-informed conference program** while maximizing opportunities for knowledge exchange.

Oral Abstract and Poster Presentation Area

Voices for Change 2026 will include a dedicated **Oral Abstract and Poster Presentation Area**.

This space will enable additional selected contributors to showcase: research findings, community programs, grassroots initiatives, emerging practices, service innovations, tools and resources, program evaluations, campaigns, community-based research, promising practices, and other initiatives relevant to the conference.

Selected presenters may be invited to provide brief oral presentations alongside their posters or abstracts. This format will enable the conference to showcase a larger number of initiatives and create opportunities for participants to connect directly with people doing innovative work on the ground.



Important Dates

Call Launches: September 24, 2026

Submission Deadline: October 16, 2026

Independent Review: October–November 2026

Successful Applicants Notified: By November 10, 2026

Conference: November 27–28, 2026

Successful applicants will receive further information regarding scheduling, presentation format, audiovisual requirements, accessibility, presenter responsibilities and conference logistics.

How to Submit

All proposals must be submitted through the official **Voices for Change 2026 online form here by October 16, 2026.**

Applicants should complete one submission form for each distinct proposal.

Where a submission has multiple presenters, one person should be designated as the Primary Contact/Lead Presenter.

Join Us in Shaping Voices for Change 2026

Some of the most important knowledge about gender-based violence does not exist only in academic journals or government reports.

It exists in communities. It exists in the experiences of survivors. It exists in refugee-led and grassroots organizations responding to crises every day.

It exists among frontline workers helping someone find housing, escape exploitation, navigate an immigration system, obtain healthcare, or rebuild their life.

It exists in researchers documenting what is happening, advocates challenging systems, practitioners developing new approaches, artists telling stories differently, and communities building solutions with limited resources.

Voices for Change 2026 is creating space for those forms of knowledge to meet. We invite you to bring your research, practice, experience, innovation, creativity and solutions to the conversation.

Together, we can move from **vulnerability to safety, from isolation to connection, from surviving to healing, and from knowledge to action.**