



Sustainable Livelihoods Canada Leads New Collaborative Project to Strengthen Wellbeing in Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Sector

December 6, 2024: Sustainable Livelihoods Canada (SLC) is excited to announce a new project that will help overcome existing capacity and funding related barriers that weigh down non-profit and women-serving organizations in the gender-based violence (GBV) sector. Working in collaboration with three dynamic GBV organizations in Ontario, SLC will co-design creative strengths-based solutions to build sectoral resilience and capacity to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Entitled "From Crisis to Collaboration: A Systems Change Blueprint for Gender-Based Violence Organizations," our new project is generously funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada.

SLC is among over 160 organizations across Canada receiving support from WAGE's Women's Economic and Leadership Opportunities Fund to address systemic barriers and improve economic and leadership opportunities for women across Canada. SLC will receive funding support of \$575,000 from WAGE over 33 months, including honoraria for our partner organizations to actively and meaningfully engage in project activities and co-design solutions for positive community impact.

SLC will engage our three partner organizations in systematic, strengths-based research on staff and organizational wellbeing. Learnings from the research will enable partner organizations to co-create pilot programs that help build their capacity to do sustainable and transformative work on responding to and preventing gender-based violence.

Our core partner organizations include:

- York Region Centre for Community Safety (YRCCS), a co-located and coordinated single access point hub for holistic and integrated services within York Region to meet the needs of those affected by intimate partner violence and sexual violence.
- Huronia Transition Homes (HTH), a multi-service agency serving women who experience gender-based violence that offers shelter and trauma-informed services in Simcoe County. HTH also operates a vertical farm that provides training and employment for women who have experienced gender-based violence.
- YWCA Muskoka, a multi-service organization that strives for positive change for girls, women and gender diverse people in Muskoka region through holistic support, education, leadership and advocacy. YWCA Muskoka offers youth and women's programs that aim to prevent and disrupt gender-based violence and human trafficking and supporting survivors.

The project will also engage skilled research students from the University of Guelph's Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) to support research, solution designing, and knowledge mobilization activities.

All partners engaged in this project have experience working with and are committed to the Sustainable Livelihoods framework, a holistic strengths-based approach that addresses social and economic exclusion by building assets, resilience and autonomy for individuals and organizations.

The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, says: “The work of on-the-ground organizations like Sustainable Livelihoods Canada (SLC) is vital in co-designing creative, strengths-based solutions to build resilience and capacity that help prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Gender-based violence creates devastating barriers, but support projects like this one address the capacity needs of the sector—helping to strengthen operations, dismantle barriers, and empower communities. The Government of Canada recognizes the immense strain front-line organizations face and remains committed to prioritizing their capacity needs, ensuring they can continue to change lives and support survivors effectively.”

Mary Ferguson, SLC founder and Senior Associate, says: “For over 20 years, the Sustainable Livelihoods framework has been supporting women in Canada to build holistic, sustainable wellbeing. SLC is deeply invested in improving the systems that hold people back. We are committed to ending gender-based violence and supporting systems change processes that help build safety and long-term security for survivors.”

Allison Prieur, SLC Associate and Project Convenor, says: “Working with diverse organizations across Canada, we recognize that many of the challenges non-profits face are systemic. Using systematic research to understand the impact on staff and communities will increase our capacity to find innovative solutions. We are grateful to WAGE for supporting this system change project.”

Highlighting the importance of an intersectional approach to impacting systems change in the GBV sector, Vibhuti Mehra, SLC’s Director of Operations & Programs, says: “We are deeply aware of how multiple systemic barriers such as racism, ability, housing and income insecurity and employment precarity impact the ability of GBV survivors to rebuild their lives. This project will help SLC add valuable knowledge and tools to our existing repository and widely share our learnings about effective strengths-based and community-centred practices for change.”

Sustainable Livelihoods Canada (SLC) is a national, not-for-profit social enterprise with demonstrated expertise and over two decades of experience in using the holistic strength-based Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) framework to develop innovative programs and measure their impact through robust monitoring and evaluation. We are a team of passionate practitioners with many years of combined expertise in developing and evaluating programs and policies to support women’s organizations, including those engaged in addressing gender-based violence.

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