



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES
Creating Safety, Justice & Equality

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TRAINING & RESOURCE CENTER

Collaboratives for Community Change
**Strengthening Partnerships Between Domestic Violence Advocates
and Faith Communities:**
Two Case Studies, June 2010

Introduction

Faith communities are sanctuaries of trust, safety, and guidance with the potential to impact the well-being of their members as well as the broader community. While faith and spiritual leaders are in an ideal position to support families experiencing or at risk of domestic violence (DV), many faith leaders lack information and training to appropriately respond. Moreover, faith traditions, beliefs, and practices are often at best complacent about the gender inequality that enables DV, and at worst, they perpetuate it.

For the past eight years, Transforming Communities: Technical Assistance, Training and Resource Center (TC-TAT) has been bringing together interfaith leaders and DV advocates from throughout California to build a faith-based community response to DV. During the first six years of the project, TC-TAT provided training and support to more than 950 faith and DV leaders; during the last two years, we have worked in-depth with 24 teams to implement long-term changes in policies and practices within faith institutions. TC-TAT's work to support these collaborations was funded by the California Department of Public Health, Violence Prevention Unit (CDPH/VPU) from 2003-2008 and the Blue Shield of California Foundation from 2008-2010. CDPH/VPU provided additional support through mini-grants from 2008-2010.

The results of this collaborative work are impressive:

- Teams have established “model” churches, synagogues and mosques that have adopted safe sanctuary statements and addressed DV prevention in sermons, pre-marital counseling, and youth programs.
- Many faith leaders have joined prevention collaboratives, increasing their knowledge of DV prevention and reaching out to their peers.
- Advocates have deepened their understanding of how to advance prevention within cultural and religious communities.

The following case studies highlight the history, successes, challenges, and vision of two teams of faith leaders and DV advocates who were participants in TC-TAT's *Collaboratives for Community Change* and other faith-related projects. The first team, Shimtuh, represents a “veteran” effort with whom TC-TAT has partnered for over seven years. The second team, Ministers of Light, is an emerging team that

has demonstrated enormous potential for creating lasting impact. Our hope is that others will learn from these case studies and be inspired to build similar partnerships in their own communities.

Shimtuh (“resting place” in Korean) has been working to address and prevent DV in Korean American immigrant communities in the San Francisco Bay Area since 2000. As a participant in TC-TAT’s *Domestic Violence Advocates and Faith Community Leaders (DVAFL)*, *Faith in Violence-Free Families (FVFF)*, and *Collaboratives for Community Change* projects (CCC) from 2003-2010, Shimtuh received training and support to strengthen its faith-community organizing. Shimtuh’s Community Capacity Coordinator, Ann Rhee Menzie, notes, “I have always appreciated the training and support from TC-TAT and learning about efforts in other faith communities.” Ann has been a leader in statewide and national learning communities, sharing her organizing experience with others through advising TC-TAT curriculum development, presenting at conferences, and providing technical assistance to other groups working in Korean American and other communities. TC-TAT interviewed Ann to talk about Shimtuh’s history, experiences, lessons learned, and future directions.

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Ministers of Light (MOL) is an emerging, grassroots ministry based in San Francisco, California, led by survivors of DV, that was started in March 2009. The ministry’s mission is to create institutional policies, structures, practices, and attitudinal changes in how the Archdiocese of San Francisco addresses DV. Ministers of Light partners with WOMAN, Inc., a local domestic violence organization, to train and equip volunteer lay ministers as well as formal faith leaders to provide support to DV survivors, increase community awareness and accountability, and, ultimately, to prevent domestic violence in Catholic communities. As a participant in TC-TAT’s *Collaboratives for Community Change* project from 2009-2010, MOL received leadership training, customized technical assistance, a mini-grant, and opportunities to participate in a statewide learning community. TC-TAT interviewed Marisela Sookraj, the founder of Ministers of Light, and Jill Zawisza, Director of Program Services for WOMAN Inc., to talk about the team’s history, experiences, lessons learned, and future directions.

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For additional information, including technical assistance support and resources, please contact Transforming Communities: Technical Assistance, Training and Resource Center (TC-TAT) at (415) 457-2421 or www.transformcommunities.org.

Shifting Norms in Korean Immigrant Faith Communities: A Case Study of Shimtuh

AT A GLANCE: SHIMTUH'S "HEALTHY FAMILY CAMPAIGN"

Shimtuh's Approach to Creating Long-Term Change in Korean-American Faith Communities

Train Korean American faith leaders

- ✓ Training retreats for Buddhist and Christian faith leaders
- ✓ Monthly Faith Leaders Advisory Group (FLAG)
- ✓ Trainings for seminary students and administrators
- ✓ Working with male faith leaders on men's issues (future)

Conduct media advocacy and community organizing events

- ✓ "Shimtuh Day" and other DV awareness raising activities in Korean faith communities
- ✓ Press conferences and media advocacy with local Korean media
- ✓ Increase Korean community-wide understanding of DV prevention and intervention and knowledge of DV resources

Develop culturally relevant, Korean-language materials

- ✓ "Faith Leaders For Healthy Families" Retreat Curriculum
- ✓ 10-session Bible Study Curriculum
- ✓ Bilingual Gender Equity and Anti-Violence Curriculum for Seminary Students
- ✓ Pre-Marital Counseling Curriculum (future)
- ✓ Men and Young Men's Curricula (future)

Share model and support other groups

- ✓ Create and share model of faith organizing and resources for other DV organizations or faith institutions, especially those working within immigrant communities
- ✓ Provide tailored support to other groups working on DV in Korean and other immigrant communities
- ✓ Participate in local, state and national initiatives

ANN RHEE MENZIE'S STORY

Ann Rhee Menzie has a “life calling” to work with faith leaders to change how Korean immigrant communities address and prevent domestic violence. Ann remembers, “I went through my first volunteer advocate training at the Asian Women’s Shelter (AWS) in 1998 and it really opened my eyes to all the issues that Korean immigrant women in the United States face. In my first marriage, I didn’t have any language to describe the domestic violence I experienced. By 1998, I was already an ordained minister. I realized that this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life – to tackle the position of Korean women in the family, society, and the church.”



Through volunteering at AWS, Ann met other Korean-American women and together they formed a group called Korean American Coalition to End Domestic Abuse (KACEDA) that met every month to strategize how to address the need for a service and advocacy program focused on Korean American women experiencing domestic violence (DV). In that group, Ann was the only voice from the church; the other members were primarily social workers, attorneys and activists. In 2000, they formed Shimtuh (literally, "resting place" in Korean), the first Korean domestic violence program in the San Francisco Bay Area. Shimtuh is a project of the Korean Community Center of the East Bay (KCCEB).

In 2000, KCCEB spearheaded a Korean community DV needs assessment to determine the seriousness of DV, assess the community’s awareness of resources, and explore community-based remedies. The needs assessment became a major community mobilization campaign with the participation of over 300 respondents; six focus groups; and participation by numerous survivors of violence and adult and child witnesses to violence who shared intimate details of their experiences as well as perceived needs. Local Korean media featured the campaign prominently on their front pages. Local churches also got involved by surveying their congregations. Significantly, over 97% of survey respondents supported the establishment of a DV program.

Shimtuh started by providing advocacy and counseling for DV survivors and quickly realized that the organization needed to do organizing in faith communities. Ann says, “For religious and social reasons, churches are at the center of Korean immigrant lives. We have some Buddhist temples that also play a role in sustaining social norms. Because I had studied theology and trained as a minister, it was natural for me and Shimtuh to reach out to churches.” In the San Francisco Bay Area alone, there are over 300 Korean Christian Churches. Korean churches offer instant support systems for many new immigrants and monolingual Korean speakers and can play an important role in changing beliefs and attitudes around DV.

At first, Shimtuh focused its efforts on helping Korean faith communities to understand that DV was happening in their community. As time went on, Shimtuh decided to focus more on educating and developing relationships with faith leaders along with building support among lay leaders. They made this decision because Korean faith leaders are in a powerful position where they can either actively

support DV survivors and advance prevention – or block these efforts. Ann says, “We have to approach this issue from both the leadership side and the congregation side, especially through women’s groups. The women’s groups understand this issue most immediately and deeply. The faith leaders are more resistant; they are often not willing to take this on as their ‘battle.’ But unless the leadership changes, we will not see the changes we are seeking. They have a lot of power in directing the congregation in terms of abuser accountability, support for survivors and families, and prevention. Right now, there’s no accountability.”

SHIMTUH’S APPROACH TO CREATING LONG-TERM CHANGE

Shimtuh has four intersecting strategies that work synergistically to achieve its goal of transforming knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors about DV in Korean faith communities:

- Train Korean American faith leaders
- Conduct media advocacy and community organizing events
- Develop culturally relevant, Korean-language materials
- Share Shimtuh model and support other groups

Train Korean American Faith Leaders

Ann remembers early challenges of organizing faith leaders. “In winter 1998, we sent 100 letters to faith leaders inviting them to a dialogue with us; 11 responded they would be there, and only two male ministers showed up. One came with a thick Bible. When we asked ‘What do you do as a pastor when a woman approaches you with a domestic problem,’ he said, ‘That’s simple – you just show her the Bible and say, ‘Do you believe in the Bible? Of course you do. Then let us pray. You do as the Bible says and that’s it.’”

Shimtuh conducted the first-ever training retreat for Korean faith leaders in the San Francisco Bay Area in San Anselmo, California, at the San Francisco Theological Seminary, August 23 – 24, 2004. This two-day retreat brought together 20 Korean faith leaders from different churches in the greater Bay Area to deepen their understanding of DV and explore Korean faith leaders’ roles in supporting survivors and families and speaking up about prevention. Results were mixed. While some faith leaders were responsive to the information and excited about becoming more involved, others were very resistant. This only deepened Shimtuh’s commitment to further develop its outreach, training, and organizing effort in the Korean faith community. As a result of this retreat, Shimtuh realized it needed to create multiple, ongoing ways to educate Korean faith leaders around issues of DV.

In 2007, Shimtuh began a peer learning group called FLAG (Faith Leaders Advisory Group) made up of men and women from both Buddhist and Christian Korean communities. This group continues to meet monthly to talk about domestic violence situations in their congregations and how they respond as faith leaders. They also plan community events to address DV, including inviting Shimtuh to preach at their temples and churches and making public announcements against DV.

FLAG has been an essential part of Shimtuh’s success, providing an ongoing way for trained pastors to stay involved and provide support to Shimtuh and each other around DV. The group’s mission is to be a resource for other faith leaders. Shimtuh provides FLAG with ongoing training and information to help them fulfill this mission.



For the last three years, FLAG members have led Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) events in October.

Building a Broad Support Base

In 2008-2009, as part of TC-TAT's *Collaboratives for Community Change* (CCC) project, Shimtuh received ongoing technical assistance and coaching as well as a mini-grant to develop educational events for faith leaders to deepen their understanding and commitment to end DV. As Ann notes, "There are still very few clergy who actively take a stand against domestic violence, let alone preach against domestic violence and sexual assault." A major success was that the Reverend Peter Kim participated in the CCC's 2.5-day Leadership Institute, where he came to understand the importance of DV awareness and prevention in faith communities and became a strong ally.

In March 2009, Shimtuh held a three-day "Faith Leaders for Healthy Families" training retreat. Shimtuh conducted extensive outreach and recruitment activities for the event, yielding 14 Buddhist and Christian Korean faith leader participants, including two participants from the Faith Leaders Advisory Group. Building on its earlier training retreat, Shimtuh revised the training curriculum and included a pre/post survey. As a result of this training retreat, 90% of participants committed to creating an action plan to prevent DV in their faith communities and many committed to speaking out against domestic violence in their congregations through sermons and other activities. Equally importantly, faith leader participants appreciated the opportunity to meet and learn of other community members' innovative efforts in DV prevention. While Reverend Kim needed to take a sabbatical and was not able to participate in the latter half of the CCC project, his credibility, contacts and prior networking were very useful to Shimtuh, especially in recruiting new participants for training events and continuing to build a broad support base among faith leaders.

Special Focus on Seminary Students

As part of its strategic approach to creating long-term change, for several years, Shimtuh has been building relationships with seminary administrators and beginning to train seminary students at San

Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) (Ann’s alma mater) and other seminaries. Ann joined the Korean Alumni Advisory Group at SFTS and continues to infuse DV into seminary discourse wherever possible. Ann says, “In my experience, pastors currently serving in churches have already been formed and are rather rigid in their understanding of what their ministry involves – they seem to think that DV or building healthy families is ‘extra’ work that I’m adding on to their already busy schedules. In my mind, it should be at the core of their ministry. So, we decided to focus on younger seminary students who are more open to learning different ideas and more open to a feminist approach. The other advantage to working with seminaries is that the students are already there. Do you know how difficult it is to organize faith leaders in the community?!” (laughter) In the Korean immigrant context, seminary students are usually the youth pastors. Our idea is to train the youth pastors and then they can train the youth.” Shimtuh does an annual forum at SFTS; this year, the focus will be on teen dating violence and will take place in October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Shimtuh also has a partnership with American Baptist Seminary West (ABSW) in Berkeley, California, participating in the seminary’s DV forums and inviting interns from ABSW to work at Shimtuh.



Training workshop for faith community leaders in 2009

Conduct Media Advocacy and Community Organizing Events

Shimtuh recognizes that an essential component of its work is to change broader public attitudes relating to DV in Korean American immigrant communities. One way it is reaching out to a larger public audience is through press conferences and working with Korean media to change the ways that DV is described in the media. For example, Shimtuh worked closely with Reverend Young II Kim and invited local Korean media representatives (including the *Korea Daily Newspaper*, *Korea Times*, and Han Mi Radio) to a press conference to announce the “Faith Leaders for Healthy Families” training retreat and to publicly proclaim the adopted mission of FLAG: to promote healthy families through the prevention of domestic violence.

Shimtuh is continuously writing articles and doing other media outreach so that community members will better understand and support Shimtuh’s mission. Ann and Program Director, Isabel Chang, often

provide television interviews for local Korean TV stations. Recently, a Buddhist association saw an interview and immediately brought in a check to support Shimtuh's work. In yet another example of building community awareness and support, a Buddhist nun who is a member of FLAG organized a garage sale among Buddhist temples and donated the proceeds to Shimtuh.

Shimtuh also uses local Korean media to let the community know about "Shimtuh Day" and other events that raise awareness about DV in Korean faith communities. Currently, there are two faith institutions actively participating in "Shimtuh Day," where a sermon on DV awareness and prevention is preached and proceeds from the offering are donated to Shimtuh. Shimtuh's goal over the next year is to increase the number of faith institutions participating in "Shimtuh Day".

Develop Culturally Relevant, Korean-language Materials

While Shimtuh had demonstrated that organizing within faith communities was working as a long-term strategy for social change, it realized that it needed to better articulate its goals, what it wanted to learn from other faith communities and DV organizations, and what it wanted to teach others. Shimtuh also recognized the importance of documenting its ideas in some concrete tools and trainings that Korean American faith leaders and DV advocates around the country could actually use. While it had developed an effective curriculum for training faith leaders in a retreat setting, Shimtuh wanted to create additional Korean-language curricula and tools that could be used in church settings and seminaries.

In response to these needs, Ann and a Korean clergywoman's group started to develop a new Bible Study curriculum that has the potential for national impact. Ann describes the impetus for this new, 10-lesson curriculum: "One of the biggest problems we face in Korean American faith communities is that churches do not promote egalitarian, equal partnerships for men and women or any partners in the home/family structure. Relationships between parents and children are also very authoritarian and patriarchal. The church as a whole has not fought for the powerless, has not given a voice to those without power. Rather, with certain Bible stories, churches and faith leaders have continued to reinforce and strengthen a patriarchal, authoritarian system. We need to really educate faith leaders to think critically about the Bible as it relates to these family relationships and provide them with resources to talk about these relationships differently with their congregants."

With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Shimtuh worked closely with a core group of ministers to further develop the Bible Study curriculum and make sure it is relevant to faith leaders' needs. Ann says, "We have to make it easy to use and attractive for church leaders, while still challenging enough to really look critically at ways that the Bible has been used to justify DV over the years and why that is wrong. I think back to that first minister we talked with who said that if you just believe in the Bible and do what it says, it's very simple. Ultimately, all Christians say we believe in the Bible, but we are raising the question: Did we even learn it correctly? We are offering options to look at the Bible differently."

Shimtuh identified four male pastors and three female pastors to meet every two weeks to discuss, review, and edit the Bible Study curriculum. One lesson the group has learned through this process is the power of language. "At the beginning, we called it a 'Bible Study to End DV.' Our advisors helped us to realize that we would reach many more faith leaders by calling it a 'Bible Study to Build Healthy Families.'" When the Bible Study curriculum is completed in summer 2010, Shimtuh plans to test the curriculum with church leaders, pastors, and lay ministry leaders; write a facilitator's guide; and train faith leaders to use the material so that the curriculum can be used by churches nationally.

Ann remarks, “If Shimtuh can help the church to really get into actively doing their ministry and seeing what the Bible offers through this Bible Study curriculum – if they can really use it and change how the church talks about healthy families, how a person who is saved sees his/her role in the family and others’ roles, and how we can keep the family as beautiful as God originally intended – that is the ultimate prevention. We won’t need to even talk about DV.”

In the near future, Shimtuh has plans to develop a bilingual Gender Equity and Anti-Violence Curriculum for seminary students, a pre-marital counseling curriculum, and a men and young men’s curriculum.

Share model and support other groups

Shimtuh has been a leader in advancing awareness and action around DV in Korean American faith communities. As such, it is often called upon to share its model with others working in Korean and other API communities. For example, it provided technical assistance and co-facilitated a retreat for faith leaders with DoWooRee, a volunteer group based in San Jose, California. It also participates in state and national collaboratives to increase understanding about the particular needs of Korean immigrant communities.



Ann Menzie at a training workshop organized by DoWooRee (a DV volunteer group in San Jose)

MULTI-LAYERED SUCCESSES

Over the past 12 years, Shimtuh has made steady progress towards its goal of shifting norms in Korean-American faith communities. After laying the groundwork in early years, Shimtuh started the “Healthy Family Campaign” in 2006 to train faith leaders and spread the idea of healthy families. Faith leaders have responded positively to the campaign, which they relate to their overall work of supporting their congregants. Moreover, the steady stream of information, workshops, sermons, and other events has created a small but solid base of Korean faith leaders who are supportive of Shimtuh’s work. For example, one pastor committed to invite Shimtuh at least annually to deliver sermons and other presentations related to DV prevention; his church has also committed to supporting Shimtuh financially (an unexpected surprise for Shimtuh).

Faith leaders who have participated in Shimtuh’s training retreats (and FLAG members who participate in monthly meetings) have significantly increased their:

- Knowledge of DV and its impact in Korean communities
- Understanding about community services related to DV
- Understanding of faith leaders’ roles in preventing DV and supporting healthy families in their faith communities, including the importance of integrating DV awareness into pre-marital counseling, preaching about DV from the pulpit, and creating institutional protocols to prevent DV
- Commitment to address and prevent DV over the long-term.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEEDS

Shimtuh recognizes that changing social norms is a long-term process requiring ongoing commitment from the core organizers, flexibility, and a broad base of supporters. When asked what she has learned about working with Korean faith leaders, Ann responded, “One thing we’ve learned is how difficult it is to gather faith leaders as participants for multi-day training. Everyone is so busy. We have to really coax the faith leaders to participate. They see this as something ‘extra’ – extra time they have to take off, extra energy they have to put into it. It’s mind-boggling to me that they don’t always see the connection between the training and support we are offering around DV and their role and duties as clergy leaders. Once we get them to commit to participating and they actually show up at the retreat center, the process is very strong. In the last retreat, we all drove to Tahoe, where everyone was away from their other obligations, and we were all able to concentrate on the retreat topics and discussions. We need to figure out diverse ways to get faith leaders excited about the topic of healthy families.”

Given faith leaders’ busy schedules, Shimtuh has learned the value of proposing concrete projects to faith leaders. When the effort is not specific enough, it is more difficult to recruit and more difficult for faith leaders to participate. Shimtuh is always searching for ways to keep the work “fresh” and energized. For example, FLAG members are seeking practical ways to care for their congregation members who approach them for advice related to DV. Different than a study curriculum, FLAG members are asking for more peer learning opportunities and supervision around specific cases of domestic violence during their monthly meetings. Shimtuh also has to pay attention to not overwhelming those faith leaders who are core leaders in the work. While FLAG members have

organized and implemented Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities over the past three years, Shimtuh is taking care to not over-burden this small group of leaders.

Additional Lessons Learned and Needs

Involve Local Pastors: “Building relationships with and gaining commitment from local pastors takes a lot of time and energy, but it is essential for long-term success. Participating in the CCC project and especially attending the TC-TAT leadership training with another pastor was an amazing instrument for organizing other pastors. At first, he wanted me to go alone but I was able to convince him to attend. This gave us much larger credibility and contacts while doing outreach and education with other community pastors. In the future, I will push for more community members to really participate in training events with other faith communities and DV advocates.”

The Importance of Framing and Language: “We learned we needed to be very intentional about how we talk about this issue. If I start out by framing it as a justice-oriented issue or agenda, they won’t come along. Framing it as ‘healthy families’ is really important. We need to help faith leaders understand that advocates and programs such as Shimtuh have the same goal in mind: to promote good relationships. Our goal is for people to be safe and not afraid to be who they are; advocates are not ‘home-breakers.’ We really need to build on personal relationships and present ourselves as a resource – that we are helping them to do their work better. This can also be difficult since some pastors have a different philosophy of pastoral care. The key is to understand what message will reach them without compromising your own vision.”

The Power of Personal Connections: “Personal connections are extremely important with Korean community faith leaders. My being an ordained minister has really helped in this case. It would be very difficult for Shimtuh to do this work and have this kind of impact if I weren’t an ordained minister. That’s tough for many community-based DV organizations. At the same time, we are seeing with DoWooRee (DWR), a volunteer group in San Jose, that even though they don’t have a minister in their group, because all the women are part of a church, they have been able to convince their pastors to come to trainings.”

Collaborating with Other Groups: “We had a great experience working with DWR (DoWooRee). They were able to organize a good group of faith leaders for their initial retreat. However, because we live so far away from each other, we weren’t able to prepare the curriculum together and that led to some rough spots in the training. It is necessary to work on the curriculum together at least for ½ day before the actual training as well as coordinating by email. Our hope is that we will be able to work with other groups nationally to keep this work moving forward. We would really like to share all of the great Korean-language materials that we have – and we may be able to translate these into English as well.”

Working with Christian and Buddhist Leaders: “FLAG is the only ecumenical group in the Korean community. Newspaper reporters get excited because they never see Buddhist and Christian leaders do work together. We have been very blessed that the Buddhist nun who participates is open, outgoing, and willing to help educate the Christian ministers. The Christian pastors in FLAG are also very open and willing to be seen with Buddhist nuns and monks. It’s been a very refreshing experience to work with this ecumenical group. At the first training we did, we had Catholic nuns and Protestant ministers and we all were on the same page because it’s all Christian. At the second training, we had Buddhist

nuns and lay leaders and Protestant leaders. Amazingly, we didn't have any big controversies because it was mostly focused on DV and questions such as 'How do you, as a faith leader, deal with this?' So much of it has to do with a Korean cultural context.



Workshop for FLAG members

Need for Financial Resources: “Another challenge – as for most nonprofits – is finding funds to support the enormous needs. One particular project Shimtuh is hoping to raise money for is more in-depth activities with male faith leaders around how to work with perpetrators, create accountability, and address prevention from a man’s perspective. We are also seeking funds to take our work to a national audience, holding trainings with faith leaders and distributing the curriculum and other resource materials. While it has been inspiring to see some churches and temples step up to provide us with financial support, we really need more funds to do this work.”

Transforming Catholic Parishes: A Case Study of Ministers of Light

AT A GLANCE: MINISTERS OF LIGHT

Creating Long-Term Change in Catholic Communities to Address and Prevent Domestic Violence

Ministers of Light (MOL) has created a formal institutional framework and support system within the Archdiocese of San Francisco to prevent and respond to domestic violence (DV) in its parish communities. MOL is a recognized, survivor-led, lay ministry focused on DV prevention, crisis intervention, and pastoral healing. Key components of the MOL approach include:

Strong Partnership between MOL and WOMAN, Inc., a Local DV Agency

- ✓ Formal partnership and agreements around shared values and roles.
- ✓ Ongoing training and support to steering committee and ministers of light regarding DV.

Survivors' Steering Committee (SSC)

- ✓ 12-member committee meets monthly to provide leadership and strategic direction for the project and receive ongoing education on DV as well as community organizing skills.

Community Education and Gaining Support from Church Leaders

- ✓ Ongoing meetings and strategic collaboration with Archdiocese leadership, Catholic San Francisco, Catholic Charities, and the Sisters of Mercy to ensure high level coverage and support of activities.
- ✓ Members of the survivors' steering committee conduct one-on-one and group meetings with pastors to gain commitment and support in recruiting and selecting potential ministers of light.
- ✓ Pastors receive training and information regarding DV, including ideas for addressing DV during sermons and how they can support the ministry.
- ✓ Annual workshop for clergy, parish staff, and other parish leaders in ten deaneries.
- ✓ Ongoing community education and organizing events.

Trained Ministers of Light in Each Deanery

- ✓ MOL is working towards having at least one trained lay minister in each of ten deaneries responsible for educating their local Catholic community about DV and healthy relationships and providing counseling and appropriate referrals to survivors. Because each parish is unique demographically and culturally, Ministers come from within the parish community they serve.
- ✓ Each Minister is first recruited and screened by the parish pastor and then nominated to participate in a 40-hour training conducted by WOMAN, Inc. to become a certified "Minister of Light." Ministers receive ongoing supervision and support.

National and International Outreach

- ✓ MOL presents its model at national and international conferences and provides support to others interested in creating similar ministries in their own communities.

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP: MINISTERS OF LIGHT AND WOMAN, INC.

Part of the success of Ministers of Light lies in its collaboration with Women Organized to Make Abuse Nonexistent, Inc. (WOMAN, Inc.), a community-based, multi-service agency serving battered women in San Francisco and the larger Bay Area since 1978. Following are reflections from both partners about the strengths and challenges of this type of partnership, as well as advice for others interested in partnering.

Perspectives from the Faith Partner: Marisela Sookraj, Lay Minister and Founder of MOL

In January 2008, about two months prior to my scheduled baptism as a Catholic, I became a survivor of DV. I was battered by my boyfriend at the time, who was a sponsor for another catechumen in my Catholic adult baptism class. It was a devastating experience for me. I never imagined I would ever be the victim of something like this. The entire experience greatly shook my faith, and I wasn't sure I would be able to proceed with the baptism. I received a lot of support from my parish community. The pastor and parochial vicar at Mission Dolores in San Francisco made it very clear to my ex-boyfriend that he was no longer welcome at Mission Dolores and that he must stay far away so that I could be safe. They arranged for people to pick me up at the BART (subway station) and take me to class so that I was always accompanied by someone. They also made it clear to my ex-boyfriend that, at some point in the future, they would be willing to meet with him *when and if he was willing to be accountable for his actions*.

During the process of healing, while I received a tremendous outpouring of support, I also recognized that there were a number of things missing. When you're a person of faith and a victim of any trauma, whether it's DV or a car accident – one of the first questions you ask is, "why did God let this happen to me?" I pondered this question over and over and still grapple with it today. I recognized there was a tremendous need for a faith-based support group, where survivors could move through the process of healing and empowerment within the context of their faith. When I mentioned this idea to my advocate at the DV organization where I was receiving services, she told me about a woman named Ruthie Kim who had completed the 40-hour training to become a DV advocate. Ruthie was also the Director of a faith-based organization called *Because Justice Matters* (www.becausejusticematters.org) that helps victims of DV, human trafficking and prostitution. Ruthie and I worked together for nine months to put together a manual and guidelines and then we started a faith-based support group for survivors of DV.

Prior to this project, there had been no emphasis on DV in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Our vision was to create a formal institutional framework and support system for preventing and responding to DV in parish communities. After doing some research, we learned there were only two parishes in the country that had a DV ministry, and we couldn't find any Archdiocese office that had officially recognized a DV ministry focused on DV prevention and intervention. Because the Catholic Church has a structure for lay ministries, we decided to propose a new ministry around DV primary prevention, crisis intervention, and pastoral healing that would be led by parish members who are survivors of DV, in close partnership with an established DV organization. We set up a meeting with a newly ordained auxiliary bishop, Bishop William Justice, who was active in immigration reform and local social justice work, along with some local Catholic agencies, and three DV organizations from our three-county area to present a proposal for a DV lay ministry and how we would go about doing it.

The bishop's response was that we should do more work at the grassroots level to gain support and commitment from parish members and clergy leaders. Once we had gained that initial broad support, he suggested we come back to him and he would lend his authority and write letters to various parishes. His feedback was very valuable. While the Catholic Church is hierarchical, the leadership is also open to ideas that come from the grassroots. We realized we needed to do some groundwork first.

We formed a steering committee made up of 10-12 women who are survivors of DV. While we want survivor allies to be involved, one of our core philosophical principles is that survivors should be at the forefront of this work. We continued to develop our partnership with the three DV agencies and received training from TC-TAT at its 2.5-day leadership institute for DV advocates and faith leaders.



Ministers of Light collectively lighting the Candle of Unity, symbolizing the unification of their faith community around domestic violence prevention, intervention and healing. This picture was taken at the inaugural domestic violence awareness mass, "Spirit of Empowerment," at Mission Dolores Basilica on October 2, 2009. Bishop Justice was the Principal Celebrant at this mass.

Along the way, we encountered some challenges with our DV agency partners and decided to part ways. Although we got along well on an individual level, there were some organizational barriers that proved too difficult to overcome. There are stereotypes and mistrust that need to be addressed in any partnership between a DV agency and faith organizations. For example, when Bishop Justice shared his opinion at that initial meeting, I was concerned that the DV advocates might have seen his response as "passing the buck" or a "typical response from a faith leader." While there may be some truth to that perspective given faith institutions' treatment of DV over a long history, I also sensed a reluctance on the part of our DV partners to see the value of what the bishop was really saying, that we also need to build our base of support among parishioners for this to be successful. We had some good conversations and were able to get really clear on the survivors' steering committee about our vision, values, and what we are looking for in a DV partner agency. With the help of TC-TAT staff Kimberly Peeren, and Christopher Martinez, a program director at Catholic Charities in San Francisco, we were able to find a new DV partner in San Francisco, WOMAN, Inc., and continue the work.

Perspectives from the DV Partner: Jill Zawisza, Director of Program Services, WOMAN, Inc.

I've been involved in DV work for fifteen years, but have very little experience working in faith communities. Marisela approached us and said she had talked with a couple of other DV agencies who had decided not to go forward with the partnership. We had a candid conversation about our concerns as an agency and what we saw as potential obstacles for working together. We were able to come to agreement on those things and meet half-way. I was excited to do this work in the Catholic community; a lot of our Latina clients identify as Catholic and their religion means a lot to them. As a DV agency, we need to learn more about the Catholic community and how we can work together to address DV. It's such a unique opportunity to collaborate with a "non-traditional" partner.

As DV advocates, we are particularly conscious of some of the concerns or obstacles that battered women may face from their faith institutions and faith leaders. When you work in a shelter or as part of a crisis intervention program, you get to talk with a lot of clients about their situation. What I heard again and again, from both Catholics and those from other faith traditions, was that their congregation and faith leaders weren't supportive of them leaving the abusive situation. The message that they hear consistently, especially if they are married, is that "you need to muddle through and make it work." While I knew that MOL didn't share the belief to stay in a marriage "no matter what," I was apprehensive to get involved with a system (faith-based communities) that hold this idea as a core belief. I realized that I had my own bias against faith-based communities that I needed to work through and a lot I needed to learn. For example, I didn't know terms, such as what a leader of the Catholic Church is called, or any of the structures or traditions.

At the same time, I was genuinely concerned about aligning with a system that has such a different philosophical alignment from our own. I recognized that there is great potential in programs like MOL creating very positive changes in how faith-based communities support survivors and their families. When I proposed this project to WOMAN, Inc. staff, we were concerned about the training that faith leaders and lay ministers would receive to be able to provide appropriate support to survivors – we take this work very seriously. We realized that having potential ministers go through our 40-hour training was a deal-breaker for us. If you are talking to survivors, you need to be trained or we can't take part in this partnership. That became the main element of our partnership – we would train them and offer continuing education and support. We also attend community-wide events such as the archdiocese-wide Domestic Violence Awareness Mass; help document the work and our impact; and make sure that issues such as confidentiality are addressed consistently. Similarly, MOL recognized that their "non-negotiable" for the partnership was that the survivors' steering committee needed to have ultimate decision-making authority for the project. Having these open conversations with each other has really contributed to a strong partnership.

We revised our usual 40-hour training to be more relevant for the potential ministers; for example, we added in a faith panel with representatives from different religions talking about their perspectives on DV. We also facilitated some discussions that were focused on the Catholic Church, including having a Catholic leader talk about how it's okay for DV survivors to leave the marriage and that they can get their marriage annulled. This was important information for the lay Ministers who would be counseling women in the church. We did a complete review of our manual and made changes so that it was coherent and relevant to everyone.

Having the Ministers of Light in our training enriched the training experience for everyone. The ministers were integrated with other volunteers and people from other community-based organizations. During one session, we did a presentation on safety planning and the ministers' perspective was very helpful. A few disclosed that they had survived DV and had spoken to their faith leaders about the DV. It was very useful for the people in the room to hear different opinions and experiences about how different systems reacted to the DV. From these stories, we all learn how important it is that we're prepared to do this work and that we don't bring our own agenda or stereotypes into the work.

Another valuable contribution from the MOL volunteers is that they were diverse in terms of age and experience. Typically, our volunteers are young, English-speaking women who are in college or recent college graduates – they often identify as young feminists who want to get involved in social justice. The ministers of light brought a different demographic into the room, including Spanish-speakers, older women, and men. It's wonderful to have these different perspectives and conversations than what we typically have during our trainings.

Creating a Strong Partnership between DV and Faith Organizations

- ✓ Create spaces to have deep conversations within the DV agency and the faith-based group. This is more than developing a one-page Memorandum of Understanding. Have up-front conversations about your philosophical perspectives around DV and your “non-negotiables.” Talk with potential partners about goals, services, and values, and how you can be resources to each other.
- ✓ Have candid conversations with DV staff about their stereotypes related to faith-based communities and with faith leaders about their stereotypes related to DV advocates. Be willing to take risks, ask questions, and learn from each other.
- ✓ Acknowledge that both DV advocates and faith leaders really care about this work and want to create safety for community members. Write down your shared values, agreements, and roles and revisit them regularly.
- ✓ Be aware of how much time it takes to develop a new partnership and how it can impact your overall organization.
- ✓ Recognize and appreciate the important role that faith can play in a survivor's healing.
- ✓ Recognize that people of faith may have complex feelings about how faith institutions are governed – for example, members of the Catholic community may not always agree with the Vatican, but can still appreciate liturgy, Catholic social thought, and the long history of Catholic involvement in social justice.

A GRASSROOTS, ORGANIZING APPROACH TO CREATING CHANGE IN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

Survivors' Steering Committee (SSC)

From the beginning, we were committed to having a Survivors' Steering Committee that would lead the project and work in partnership with the DV agency (WOMAN, Inc.) and other survivor allies to advance our work. The SSC is made up of 10-12 survivors of DV who are members of various parishes in the Archdiocese, are culturally diverse, and who range in age from young adult to their sixties. The SSC meets monthly to discuss our organizing strategy, receive additional training on DV and community organizing skills, and plan action steps and events.

After starting the meeting with a prayer, we talk about how we want to advance our ministry. For example, at our last meeting, we discussed the interfaith Taize service; spent some time developing a clergy training; and talked about scheduling an appointment with the superintendent of Catholic School education on how to inject meaningful healthy relationships themes into its curricula. Another member of the SSC is a pre-marital counseling trainer; she is helping us to figure out the best ways to integrate a strong DV prevention component in that curriculum. The SSC is also seeking to build relationships with seminaries including the Jesuit, Franciscan, and Dominican Schools of Theology and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley to train clergy members before they go out.

The SSC is the heart and soul of the Ministers of Light, providing support to other lay ministers as well as significant outreach and education to pastors. Members of the SSC conduct one-on-one meetings with pastors to build relationships with these critical gatekeepers; gain their commitment and support in recruiting and selecting potential ministers of light; and provide them with information and resources about DV, including ideas for addressing DV during sermons. The SSC provides an annual workshop for clergy, parish staff, and other parish leaders in ten deaneries.

All SSC members have completed a 40-hour DV advocate training and we occasionally invite our DV partner, WOMAN Inc., to come to SSC meetings and provide us with additional training and supervision related to DV. The SSC is also receiving quarterly trainings on organizing skills and strategy planning from an organizer who used to work with the San Francisco Organizing Project.

Community Education and Gaining Support from Church Leaders

After meeting with Bishop William Justice towards the beginning of our project, we realized that we needed to develop a comprehensive strategy that would have support from church leadership as well as the grassroots. The response to the project has been tremendous. We receive ongoing support from many individuals and organizations active in the Catholic community and are seeking ongoing ways to educate and organize the Catholic community and gain buy-in from leaders at different levels:

- Bishop Justice presented at our inaugural DV awareness mass in commemoration of Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2009, providing an enormous endorsement of our ministry.
- The Archdiocese of San Francisco, Office of Public Policy and Social Concerns, wrote a letter acknowledging MOL as a formal lay ministry in October 2009.
- Catholic San Francisco (with a circulation of over 200,000) published a front-page article about MOL in March 2009 (http://catholic-sf.org/news_select.php?newsid=23&id=1117). This was the first time that DV was featured in a cover story. That story brought together the women who are now part of our ministry throughout the archdiocese – many of these women said they had been

waiting for this type of ministry and that it is long overdue; many had been working for years with survivors at DV agencies. It's been amazing to see how this cover article helped to galvanize survivors and allies.

- Catholic Charities invited MOL to participate in an annual “Si Se Puede” event (planned in part by WOMAN, Inc.) whose target audience included Spanish-speaking DV survivors as well as service providers in San Francisco.
- The Sisters of Mercy co-sponsored and hosted the Ministers of Light at a special Taize meditative service dedicated to raising awareness of and healing the wounds of DV in our community.

The response from clergy members has also been encouraging. Every clergy member we've approached so far has not only agreed to support and nominate potential lay ministers, but has suggested new ways to get the word out about our ministry. In the next few months, we are planning a clergy training. The Dean of one deanery has already committed to having his staff from various parishes take time off to go to the training. After we evaluate the training, we will take it to the nine other deaneries in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. This will become an annual DV workshop for faith leaders, including clergy, parish staff, and other parish leaders.



Ministers of Light being commissioned by receiving an anointment of the hands by Bishop Justice and Pastor Albano; this is a special blessing typically reserved for ordained priests. This took place at MOL's inaugural domestic violence awareness mass, "Spirit of Empowerment," at Mission Dolores basilica on October 2, 2009. A statue of St. Rita, Patron Saint of abused women, is in the background.

Trained Ministers of Light Working in Every Deanery

MOL is working towards installing at least one trained lay Minister in each of ten deaneries in the San Francisco Archdiocese. Each deanery represents 5-6 parishes. These lay Ministers are responsible for educating their local Catholic community about DV and healthy relationships and providing counseling and appropriate referrals to survivors. Because each parish is unique culturally and linguistically, Ministers come from within the parish community they serve. Each Minister is first recruited and screened by the parish pastors, then nominated to participate in a 40-hour training conducted by WOMAN, Inc. to become a certified “Minister of Light.” WOMAN, Inc. has already trained 12 Ministers and will include lay Ministers in future 40-hour advocate trainings as well.

MULTI-LAYERED SUCCESSES

In less than two years, MOL has achieved multi-layered successes and has laid the groundwork for future efforts. When asked about the greatest impacts or outcomes of this project so far, MOL responded:

- We have a recognized and supported ministry specifically focused on domestic violence prevention, crisis intervention, and pastoral healing.
- We have forged a successful partnership with a reputable DV agency (WOMAN, Inc.) to ensure quality training and support for the project.
- We have 12 Ministers of Light who are trained domestic violence crisis counselors and who understand, for example, peer counseling, safety planning, and referrals, along with DV primary prevention.
- We have broad support from the Archdiocese, including Bishop William Justice, as well as other Catholic agencies.

The project yielded changes in knowledge and attitudes not just for those in the Catholic community, but for the DV agency as well. As Jill Zawisza notes, “This project has been very valuable for our agency as it catalyzed some good conversations among our staff about our stereotypes of faith communities and how we need to be aware of our own biases. We are very proud that WOMAN, Inc. was invited to be part of this project. We also benefited from the expert technical assistance provided by TC-TAT and the interesting webinars where we could learn about what other teams are doing in faith communities. It’s so easy for us to get wrapped up in our daily lives and not expose ourselves to different ways of thinking. Having people with different experiences and backgrounds in the room has led to great conversations and improved programming. We are also hopeful that this partnership will help our clients/survivors hear messages from a source (their faith community) that they value, that it’s not okay for them to be hurt. I’m excited and honored that this project is led by survivors – that’s very different than some of the professionalization that we’re seeing in the DV movement. We’ve been able to provide some tools to work with someone else without projecting, to have good boundaries and learn what to do when you get ‘triggered’ by someone else’s experience. Survivors teach us their story and then we all get a lot out of the peer learning that happens. We all create a space where survivors feel comfortable talking about what happened to them and people listen and they feel respected – it’s not always easy to disclose, but it can lead to powerful transformations.”

“I believe very strongly that people who are directly affected by the injustice of something like DV must be at the forefront of defining the agenda and strategies and leading the struggle for change in society and in their faith communities. Having survivors lead this work is our key governing principle. I’d also like to emphasize how enriching the collaboration with WOMAN, Inc. has been and how much we’ve learned. Collaborating with them has been powerful in terms of the growth of our ministry enhancing its credibility within the community and further developing our insights and skills.”

Marisela Sookraj

“I really encourage people to enter into a collaboration like the one we have with Ministers of Light. Having these conversations and partnering with the faith community has been a great opportunity for our DV agency staff to get in touch with our mission and why we are doing this work.”

Jill Zawisza

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

MOL is excited about fully implementing this project in throughout the San Francisco Archdiocese and beyond, including having trained Ministers of Light in all 10 deaneries. WOMAN, Inc. will continue to provide 40-hour training opportunities for new lay ministers and ongoing education and support, including inviting ministers of light to be part of faith panel discussions for future training cohorts.

MOL will continue to build strong relationships with clergy and lay leaders in all 89 parishes as well as with the archdiocese leadership and Catholic community agencies. In particular, MOL is working with the Archdiocese of San Francisco to incorporate a DV and healthy relationships component in both the pre-marital counseling and Catholic middle school curricula. MOL will work closely with WOMAN, Inc. to ensure that materials and educational events are of the highest quality and to evaluate and document its model.

In the next few years, MOL will share its model through presentations at national conferences so that other archdioceses around the United States and other countries with large Catholic populations can consider implementing it in their own communities. As Marisela says, “The concept of this grant is so wonderful. I don’t think faith communities or other communities have thought about the idea of truly partnering with a DV agency to address something like this. The key is that partnership and support from within both communities. Of course, there are DV agencies in every state and country who would be interested in doing this. We are showing that this is definitely doable in the Catholic community. This is a very strategic and sustained approach – we can make it very attractive as a proposal for other archdioceses to consider.”

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEEDS

Ministers of Light and WOMAN, Inc. are committed to addressing and preventing DV over the long-run. While proud of their successes, the road has not always been easy or smooth. We asked both Jill and Marisela what they have been learning through this process.

Jill Zawisza (WOMAN, Inc.) Lessons Learned

Going Beyond Our Comfort Zones: “To truly accomplish our mission – to end DV – we need to think outside of what we’re already doing and really question: why are we doing this? This project enabled us to work in an entirely new community and learn about ourselves and the work. Hopefully our agency will be less resistant to have conversations with potential partners that we might not understand right away.”

Ongoing Education of Ourselves as well as Clergy. “It’s been interesting. We’ve been working primarily with the lay ministers who will be working with survivors in the parishes. Staff and some of our clients attended the DV awareness mass where we distributed some of our literature. It was amazing that this event happened and Marisela and the SSC deserve a lot of credit for their hard work. At the same time, some aspects of it were difficult for us. We cringed at some of the things the bishop said, such as how we need to also pray for the abusers; in some ways he seemed to be taking away responsibility from the abuser. We understand that we can’t expect that everyone will share our exact viewpoint. Hopefully the lay ministers we are working with can help educate the community.”

Need for Open Communication: “We had a candid discussion later with our partners about our

perspectives on the bishop's sermon. It was uncomfortable but honest. I feel good that we had the conversation and what was said, both positively and negatively. Maybe next time we'll be able to offer the bishop some facts about DV and talking points for his sermon. Having those uncomfortable conversations can lead to real change."

Being Clear on Our Values: "The biggest thing for us was conveying how important it is that the MOL participate in our 40-hour training. We need to be clear on how we define DV and how we can see eye-to-eye with the Catholic Church. There is room for differences of opinions in this work, but we need to be willing to have difficult conversations with each other."

Gaining Buy-in from other DV Agency Staff: "Our organization is consensus-based. It was very important to get buy-in from other staff. Initially, some people were resistant to align with the Catholic Church. Part of what's really valuable about consensus is we can have open conversations. In the end, we realized that we are here to change systems and help clients change their lives. One way to do that is to align with systems where we see there are challenges, build relationships, and educate people in those systems about our perspectives. These were great conversations."



Ministers of Light participating in a DV training workshop conducted by WOMAN, Inc.

Personal Fulfillment: "It's been very fulfilling to truly collaborate with an outside organization and talk about prevention. Sometimes it's hard to get those collaborations going, especially with other DV providers who are all busy running our own agencies. It was really refreshing to sit down with someone who is like-minded and figure out how we can work together to prevent violence."

Improved Programming: "I loved going through our training manual and revising it chapter by chapter to meet this project's needs. It was so helpful to consider: what might our partner need from this chapter? Is this clear and concise and easily understood? Different people reading our manual might not know what peer counseling is. How do we present our information? A lot of work went into that."

Scheduling Challenges: "At WOMAN, Inc., this is our daily work. It was sometimes challenging working with an all-volunteer organization where they are juggling other full-time jobs. It made it difficult to have meetings or work on reports together. We gained a lot of patience and learned to celebrate all of the positive things that were happening. In the future, I will be more aware of what it means to work in partnership with volunteers and will take their perspective into consideration before we get frustrated on administrative levels."

Marisela Sookraj (Ministers of Light) Lessons Learned

Honoring the Value of the Survivors' Steering Committee (SSC): "SSC members have contributed countless hours, talent, expertise as survivors, and dedication to this ministry. This diverse, intergenerational, bilingual group of women has demonstrated the courage and vision needed to establish this ministry and take it to a national level. The SSC is really at the center of this work to effect change within the Archdiocese and bring healing and comfort to other survivors."

Organizing for Change: "The biggest challenge has been getting people to see this as a community organizing project. We need to have one-to-one relationships at the grassroots level with clergy and lay leaders and identify where our self interests intersect. We need to train our steering committee on the principles and practices of faith-based community organizing. We are now working with a former organizer from San Francisco Organizing Project and hope we can continue the trainings quarterly."

Scriptural Support: "It's important to frame our messages so that faith leaders and community members can understand and relate to what we're talking about. There are many powerful examples of scriptural support for work like this. For example, the conversation that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well – that was a one-to-one conversation that had tremendous results in terms of the church. It's a good example to make that connection."

Viewing Ourselves as Equal Partners: "I'm very happy about our partnership with WOMAN, Inc. We felt they viewed us as an equal partner and recognized the value of a survivor-empowered movement within the Catholic Church. They revised their curriculum to accommodate our needs and introduced an interfaith panel as part of their training, which is really great. They have been very gracious."

Need for Persistence and Cultivating Relationships: "When I think about our first meetings with the bishop and other agencies, I learned the value of cultivating a relationship and all the benefits that go along with that. It was important to take the time to find the right partner. We had to do our research, talk about values, and speak openly about trust issues between a faith community and DV group. Some people at DV agencies are atheist. It can be challenging for someone who has not personally experienced the value of a faith tradition to work honestly with a faith community. It's important to have open conversations about whatever presumptions we have – that's easier said than done."

Self-Care and Ongoing Training: "Because this is difficult work, we need to make sure that the steering committee members take care of each other and that we receive ongoing training and support. This is brand new territory for many of the women in our group."

Grant Requirements: "This was the first grant we received. I really enjoyed the webinars and presentations, but some of the reporting requirements were cumbersome, especially since we are all volunteers. The technical assistance we received from TC-TAT was very helpful."