



STRENGTH

SISTERS TOGETHER REACHING EVERY NEW GOAL TOWARDS HEALING

A three-year community-based, participatory outreach pilot project with women living in the Downtown Eastside (DTES).

The STRENGTH approach was to build trust in one-to-one relationships, meeting women where they are at, build on their strengths and focus on needs they identified to support better access and receipt for services.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

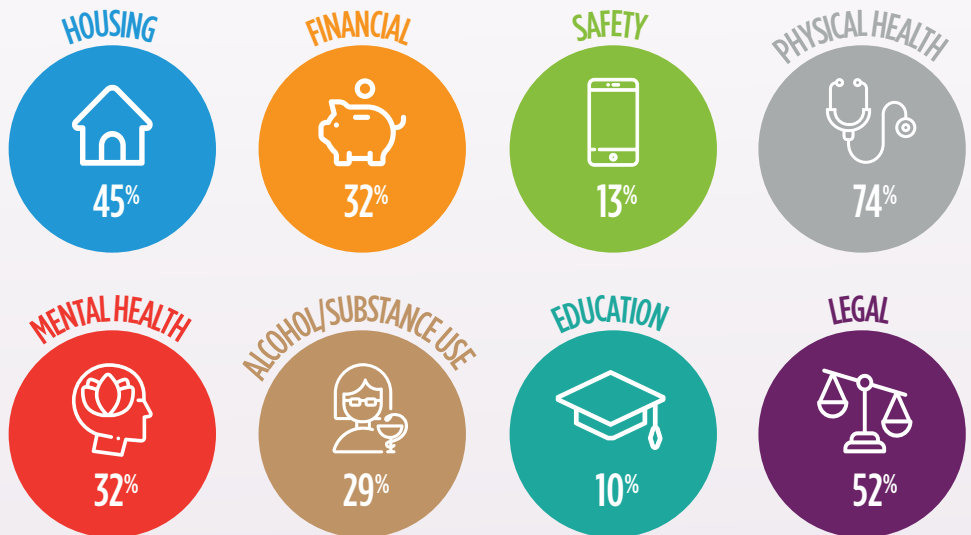
The STRENGTH project was built on the expertise of women in community.

The Inner-City Women's Initiatives Society was the lead community partner and together with women in community, they built a community advisory committee (CAC) to co-lead the project. The CAC met 44 times between 2017 and 2019 to:

- Shape all aspects of how outreach services were provided to women in the DTES
- Make research decisions about survey and interview questions
- Reassess activities and make changes to improve upon outreach activities

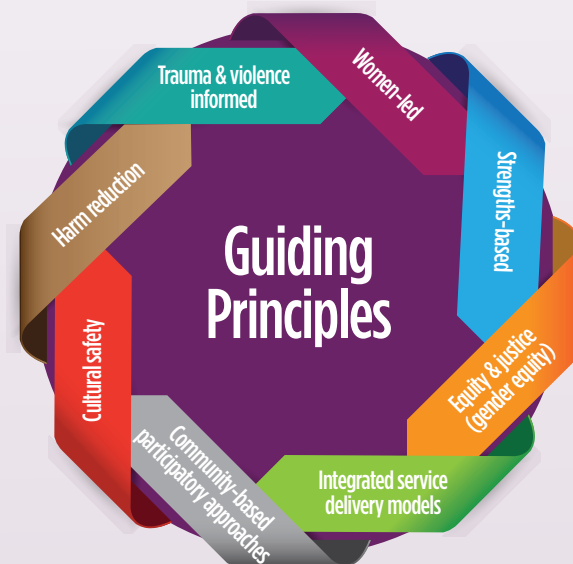
WHAT WOMEN IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT

84% (N=31) of the women identified priorities they wanted to work on with the outreach workers, and on average women worked on three priorities. These included:



PARTICIPANTS

37 women enrolled
They were between 25 – 79 years old
The outreach teams met with women 372 times

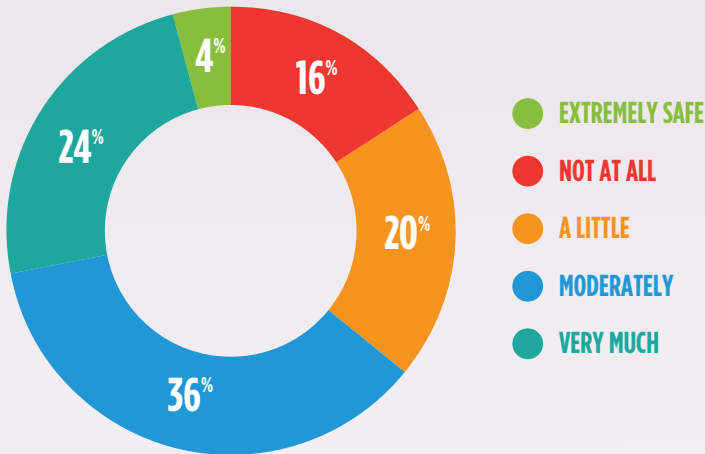


“When things would come to mind I would just bring them up. Like my IDs. [----] helped me get my ID, my glasses. And everything they just did it. We just did it.”

SAFETY

- Feeling safe was an issue for many women.
- 27% (n=10) of women did not have a regular, safe place to sleep

HOW SAFE WOMEN FELT IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD (n=25)



BENEFITS



[Having that person to help me with some of my barriers] makes me feel like I'm accomplishing things, not just sitting back and just letting other people do it for me, but I'm also doing it as well. She's not doing it for me, she's doing it with me.



It's that initial first step into the door that you just need someone to go with. [...] It helps with the anxiousness just to have somebody with you, allows me to feel safer, confident [...]. Feeling confident in doing something is really key, it builds your self-esteem.



[My favorite part was] just her coming to visit me when I was in the hospital and picking me up. I didn't have to walk out of there. [...] Because it was winter and I just had surgery, so that meant a lot to me, a lot.

LESSONS LEARNED

Consistency and reliability of outreach team is essential to build trust with women.

Ability to meet people where they are at means no judgment.

Success means "never giving up on a woman".

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CO-INVESTIGATORS: Adrian Guta, Kasari Govender, Wendy Bungay, Colleen Varcoe, Cecilia Benoit, and Greta Pauls

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COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Jade Cosa, Chase Engh, Mary Schoening, Sandra Walker

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