

Lessons on **Transformative Resilience** from **Migrant-Led Collective Action** in Toronto



Written by Tenzin Chime and Rupaleem Bhuyan
with support from Alisha Alam and Andrea Bobadilla
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Building Migrant Resilience in Cities/
Immigration et résilience en milieu urbain



Community leaders from East Danforth facilitate discussions on labor rights and compensation.
Credit: SAWRO

Let us work together. If we put our hands together, we can be the gluemakers connecting all of the solutions so that everyone can benefit.

South Asian Woman Community Leader

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Community Advisory Committee

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Introduction

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is home to migrants from around the world, many of whom arrive in Canada seeking work, safety, and to build lives for themselves and their families. While immigrants are vital to Canada's economy and bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and financial resources, recent immigrants disproportionately face the worst outcomes in every socio-economic indicator including chronic low income, precarious work, precarious housing, isolation, and poor health and mental health after settling in Canada. A growing number of migrants in Canada are also living with a precarious status, as temporary workers, international students, or refugee claimants and as a result face barriers to accessing social and health services to support their settlement along with barriers to becoming permanent residents or citizens.

This research took place in 2019 and was inspired by collective actions led by migrant communities in Toronto, Ontario who resist social and economic exclusion after settling in Canada. Since that time, the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic, social, and humanitarian crises have magnified multiple layers of marginalization and inequality in Canada, especially for Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Racialized immigrants disproportionately work in essential jobs where they earn low-wages and face increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 but are also less likely to have access to health care or have pre-existing health conditions that increase the health risks associated with COVID-19.

As governments have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic through public health measures and economic aid, there has been renewed attention to the role of civil society to work together to foster **resilient societies** that are capable of maintaining health and well-being when faced with economic, social, and environmental adversities (*Rippon, et al, 2020*).

In this report, we share lessons we learned from community leaders from two case studies migrant communities in the Greater Toronto Area—Tibetans in Parkdale and South Asian immigrant women in East Danforth. While we spoke to Tibetan community leaders who were involved in different groups and organizing, most of the South Asian women leaders were from SAWRO who were also affiliated with other groups in the community.

Our study aimed to understand:

1. How and why migrant communities organize collective actions?
2. What are the effective strategies for organizing within migrant communities?
3. How migrant collective action promotes individual, community, and transformative resilience?

Goals for this community report

We write this community report for migrant communities across Canada and the globe who are looking for ways to address the hardships associated with systemic inequalities through community-building and organizing. This report highlights how migrant communities tap into place-based and cultural knowledge to support each other and advocate for systemic change. Through documenting migrants' capacity for individual, community and transformative resilience, we illustrate the often-unrecognized strength that migrants contribute to the countries where they settle.

Through these case studies, we illustrate how migrant organizers link their personal struggles to broader social and political inequalities in this region. We also discuss how collective action promotes what one participant called "resilience, responsibility, and respect."

We hope that the lessons shared by migrant community leaders in this report will contribute to better understanding of the challenges migrant communities face. Through recognizing migrant's contributions, we aim to foster greater appreciation for different forms of civic engagement that migrants bring through their critical understanding of social and economic inequalities they face in Canada and transnationally, and migrants' capacity to bring about positive social change.

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What is Transformative Migrant Resilience?



We define transformative migrant resilience as the capacity within migrant communities to resist inequality by working together to support each other's immediate needs and to envision and bring about structural changes in Canada and transnationally.

Through working together, individual migrants develop capacity to adapt to and overcome challenges they face. Migrant communities develop collective capacity through tapping into their community's cultural knowledge and strengths to address individual and collective challenges related to systemic inequities associated with social isolation and economic hardship.

Through organizing collective actions, migrant communities work together to envision and bring about transformative changes in their communities and the broader society.

Key Concepts

Individual Resilience

Individual capacity to cope with, adapt to and recover from adversities towards improving well-being.

Community Resilience

A community's capacity to draw on individual and collective resources to respond to and recover from adversities towards improving individual and community well-being.

Transformative Resilience

Capacity within communities to resist systemic inequality and envision and bring about changes in social, economic, and political systems towards increasing inclusion, equity, and well-being for all members of society



Tibetan kids perform at Tibetan New Year celebration at the cultural centre.

Credit: TCCC

I always grew up with community saying, like there's a big R on our forehead and this R is like a stamp that we got when we were born and that R is refugee. So many times we try to do something ambitious...

I was very talkative as a child as you can tell, and I'd be out there giving my own training with school friends and people would remind me to calm down, "you're just a refugee, there's nothing to do so."

People try to put us in our place and it's happened for so long. Now, I go around reclaiming that narrative of that R.

R doesn't mean only refugee, it stands for resilience, responsibilities, respect.

Tibetan Youth Organizer

CASE STUDY – Social and Cultural Context



South Asian Immigrant Women in East Danforth

Immigrants from South Asia make up a sizable portion of people living across the Greater Toronto Area and include people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, in addition to people from Africa and the Caribbean whose ancestors originated in colonial British India. For our study, we focus on collective actions organized by South Asian immigrant women living in the East Danforth neighbourhoods including Oakridge and Taylor Massey, the majority of whom originate from Bangladesh.

South Asian immigrant women in the East Danforth primarily organize for equitable access to employment and the labour market. Despite holding advanced degrees, many South Asian immigrant women face barriers to accessing professional employment due to the devaluing of internationally educated immigrants and lack of “Canadian Experience.” As a result, women in the community take “survival level jobs,” which often pay low-wages with no benefits or job security.

In the face of complex intersecting oppressions, South Asian Women’s Rights Organization takes a lead role in the East Danforth community in grassroots organizing, while working with other groups including the East Danforth chapter of UNIFOR, and the Bangladesh Centre and Community Services.

Shared concerns identified by community leaders include rising housing costs, access to education or job training, access to childcare subsidies and employment insurance, and developing language and computer skills. Youth leaders also identify isolation, poverty, and Islamophobia faced in schools as key concerns. Though South Asian women leaders who organize to create awareness about precarious work express frustration of “not being listened to” by some stakeholders and policymakers, they build community resilience through collective action and working in solidarity with migrant rights and women’s rights movements.

Since I was young, I've been hearing "oh when you come to [Canada], when you're an immigrant, it's harder to get a job", but now I'm realizing it's not just that. There are levels of problems like, your skills are not being recognized.

And there are so many other barriers, like language barriers. Childcare is a main barrier for immigrant women. It's those things that bring immigrant women down, away from achieving.

South Asian Community Organizer

Tibetan Community in Parkdale

The Tibetan community in Canada is a part of the larger diaspora of an estimated 150,000 Tibetans living in exile around the world (Central Tibetan Administration n.d.) The majority of the 8,040 Tibetans living in Canada arrived within the past 10-15 years (Raska, 2016). The South-Parkdale is home to a large concentration of Tibetans in Canada who make up a vibrant community known as 'Little Tibet,' with many Tibetan businesses and restaurants.

The Tibetan community in Parkdale places their freedom movement against the ongoing Chinese occupation and the violation of human rights inside Tibet at the core of their organizing work. They also organize to support community members in Nepal and India who face barriers to accessing rights and services.

In the Canadian context, Tibetan community leaders are concerned with the loss of Tibetan culture and language in exile due to the strong influence of foreign culture as well as the passing away of elder Tibetans, many of whom were born in Tibet.

Some key concerns shared by community leaders are:

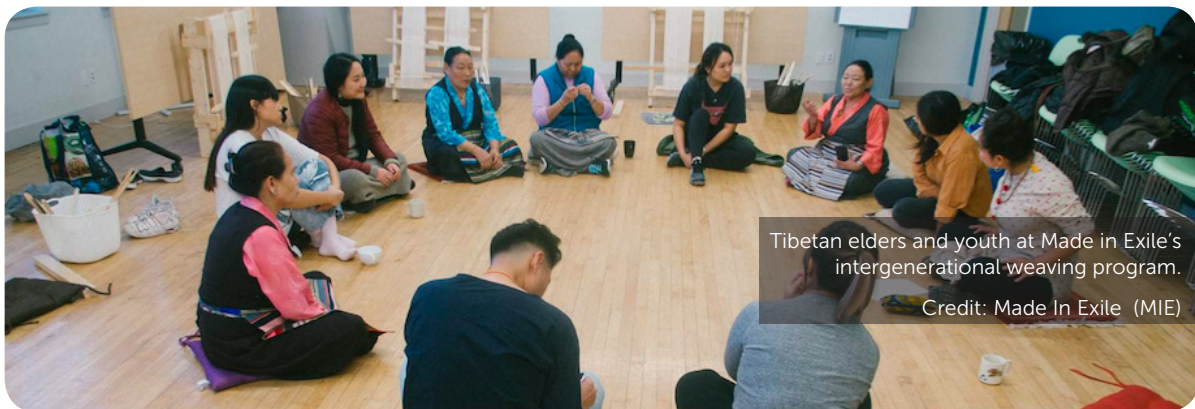
Sustaining the Tibetan Canadian Community Centre: The Tibetan community in the GTA mobilize and raise funds to protect and sustain their cultural centre. The centre serves as the representative body for the community in Ontario, and as a hub for preserving Tibetan culture and language.

(Key concerns continued)

Unfair wages and Unaffordable Housing: Tibetan organizers raise the issues of unfair wages at the workplace and unaffordable housing in Parkdale. They also express concern that the rising cost of housing threatens the vibrant Tibetan community in Parkdale as a result of gentrification.

Precarious immigration: Tibetans whose refugee claims are rejected experience unique precarity in Canada due to their statelessness. In most cases, they cannot be deported back to any country and are compelled to live in a state of 'limbo' in Canada with no legal status.

The Chinese occupation and statelessness have taken a toll on the members of the Tibetan community as they experience collective trauma, inferiority complex and identity crisis among youth, with limited avenues and tools to address those issues.



Tibetan elders and youth at Made in Exile's intergenerational weaving program.
Credit: Made In Exile (MIE)

As an immigrant group and, also a very unique one, we come as refugees with an on-going issue rather than from a country that already has its own space. So, there is a lot of anxiety about the loss of culture, loss of language, dispersion, you know. What will happen to the Tibetans who live in the West, who are outside of Tibet right? So, a lot of this leads to people being energized towards cultural preservation, language preservation.

Tibetan Community Leader

Lessons from Migrant Collective Action

* A. The way people come together matters

How do people get involved and stay engaged in community organizing?

Lived Experiences

Migrant organizers draw upon their lived experience with and resistance to adversity, both pre- and post-migration to Canada. Migrant organizers from both the South Asian and Tibetan communities reflect on adversities they face living in low-income marginalized immigrant communities in Canada along with the historic challenges of colonialism and imperialism in their home communities.

Many [immigrants] come from very complex political structures and environments...so I think the first thing is to acknowledge the strength many of these communities bring, not just their lived experience and knowledge, but also [their understanding of] the structures that exist.

Migrant Community Organizer

Identity, Family and Community

Migrant organizers tap into existing community networks as a pathway for the members to become involved in collective action. These social networks foster belonging and strengthen social cohesion.

- In the South Asian immigrant women community, they use a range of outreach activities to connect with women and girls in their community including: door-to-door organizing, gathering in parks and public spaces, organizing workshops in the apartment buildings where women live.
- Community leaders build social networks that address people's immediate needs through mutual aid and recreate extended family and sisterly connections that are common back in Bangladesh.
- Community leaders work with women and girls to organize collective actions that connect community members' personal struggles to broader social and political concerns. This includes creating and performing short dramatic skits that illustrate the challenges that women face when seeking employment and struggling in precarious jobs.
- In the Tibetan community, a strong sense of shared identity as Tibetans fosters social cohesion. The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre serves as the hub that bring people together for various cultural, religious and political events and social programming.

(Identity, family and community continued)

- Local organizations Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario, Students for a Free Tibet Canada mobilize people for the Tibetan freedom movement. Social networks like 'kyidug' practice mutual aid and cultural activities to foster connection among their members in Canada.

As a Tibetan, I should do something for Tibet...

Tibetan Community Leader

Responsibility towards the Community and Future Generation

People's identities as a diasporic person or migrant are influential in engaging people as they evoke a sense of kinship and responsibility towards their community members in Canada and the diaspora. Both Tibetan and South Asian immigrant women organizers link the preservation of cultural knowledge and practices as integral to community building. They also organize collective actions with a shared vision to secure equitable society for their future generations.



East Danforth women leaders organize mela for the community to showcase talents and provide settlement and legal information.

Credit: SAWRO

When I was in grade 5, my mom would bring us kids along. There were childcare services. We grew up; we were all these youth, I've known them a long time. We bonded and decided, let's do something constructive, 'let's create, let's do'!

South Asian Woman Youth Leader

✳ B. Address people's immediate needs while working towards systemic change

Migrant collective action involves a combination of mutual aid and supporting people to address immediate needs. Collective action also links personal struggles to systemic inequalities by working together to build a vision for a better future.

Some of the cross-cutting issues migrant communities face include:

- Economic insecurity that results from low-wages, precarious work and unaffordable housing
- Precarious immigration status and systemic racism in Canada
- Barriers in accessing resources and services that are linguistically and culturally relevant
- Psychological toll related to forced displacement and living in exile



Tibetan workers at Ontario Food Terminal picket for fair wages in 2016.

Credit: Torontoist, Photo by Joel Duff of Ontario Federation of Labour

Examples of mutual aid and direct supports that link with collective action for systemic change:

- Tibetan community in Parkdale organizes social events to be together and engages in various activities aimed at preserving Tibetan language and culture, while organizing with Tibetans across the diaspora to free Tibet from ongoing Chinese occupation.
- South Asian immigrant women in East Danforth provide childcare and help women find employment and access to education, while organizing for labour protections, access to childcare subsidies, and a living wage.
- Tibetan community members in Parkdale took part in collective actions including the Parkdale rent strike in 2017 and striking workers at Ontario's Food Terminal in 2016. These actions address the threat of gentrification of Parkdale and economic insecurity among Tibetans who created a sense of community and belonging in "Little Tibet" in the Parkdale neighborhood.
- Migrants lobby Members of Parliament to advocate for family reunification, precarious immigration status and economic insecurity faced by members of their community.
- Both communities use arts-based methods (i.e. dance, theatre, textile weaving) to create a sense of belonging, raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and open intergenerational dialogue between youth and elders.
- Both Tibetan and South Asian immigrant women organizers develop collective capacity to address systemic issues by organizing community-building activities, leadership workshops and networking with other organizations and groups.

When we work with the women and help them get job, we slowly see their voice going inside the family and we also help them be a leader in the community to raise and advocate for their own issue.

South Asian Woman Leader

When we had the community meeting about the rent strike... I spoke about kind of the long-term trends in Parkdale and I said 'you know, isn't it great that it's little Tibet now and we can't afford to lose it and so if we don't do something, it's not going to stay. Things are just going to get worse and rent is just going to increase.

Tibetan Community Leader

C. Organizing Strategies & Goals that foster individual and community resilience



Migrant leaders engage activities that build capacity within their communities to address individual and collective problems and work towards systemic change. They work together to identify short- and long-term goals that provide a vision for change, clarify what steps people can take to work towards this change, while also attending to the immediate needs of community leaders who are struggling with social and economic marginalization.

The following images show the linkage of organizing goals, strategies and actions in their organizing work shared by South Asian women leaders from South Asian Women's Rights Organization, and by Tibetan community leaders from different groups.

Linking Organizing Goals and Strategies

South Asian Immigrant Women in East Danforth

GENDER EQUITY

Strategies:

- Empowering women leaders
- Affordable childcare
- Financial Independence for women
- Creating a safe space for LGBTQ people to belong
- Creating opportunities for women and young girls to develop and use leadership skills

Activities:

- Mentoring and training local leaders
- Campaigning for full-day kindergarten
- Taking part in International Women's Day March
- Offering STEM workshops for girls
- Youth producing "I am a Muslim Girl" and "I am not a zombie" videos

ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Strategies:

- Living wage
- Affordable housing
- Labour protections (e.g. sick leave; minimum hours for temp positions)
- Recognition for international education/experience
- Solidarity with other communities

Activities:

- Conducting needs assessment surveys and presenting recommendations to stakeholders, policymakers.
- Helping women find jobs & childcare
- Offering informal/mutual aid, childcare
- Workshops and forums on labour, immigration rights
- Performing skits on precarious work as part of public education
- Campaigning for \$15 minimum wage
- Organizing with Unifor (union)
- Supporting businesses of community members in cultural events
- Service delivery (legal aid support, skills and language training, career counselling)

Linking Organizing Goals and Strategies

South Asian Immigrant Women in East Danforth

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ STRONG COMMUNITIES

Strategies:

- Breaking isolation
- Fostering a sense of belonging in Canada
- Bridging intergenerational gap
- Practicing cultural heritage
- Teaching youth the history of political struggle from fighting colonization

Activities:

- Door to door organizing
- Women's circles
- Debriefing with women before and after attending a rally or other actions; "why are we doing this?"
- Community gardening
- Intergenerational groups
- Social and cultural events/festivals

BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY

Strategies:

- Solidarity with anti-racist and immigrant rights movements and grassroots networks
- Mutual aid
- Collaboration

Activities:

- Deputations on child care and precarious work to local and federal governments
- Networking with community organizations and other migrant rights groups
- Organizing international Mother's Language Day

Linking Organizing Goals and Strategies Tibetan Community

TIBETAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Strategies:

- Raising public awareness in Canada of Chinese occupation of Tibet and Free Tibet campaign
- Building capacity and coalition across different Tibet support groups networks in Canada and the Tibetan diaspora
- Fundraising for Tibetan freedom movement
- Including political actions at cultural community events
- Creating platform for young Tibetans to get involved in the Tibetan cause

Activities:

- Mobilizing university students to take action for the Free Tibet campaign
- Actions for political prisoners in Tibet: celebrating the birthday of a high profile Tibetan political prisoner and spiritual leader, Panchen Lama to raise awareness
- Providing leadership training to students and youth
- Lobby days at Ottawa: meeting MPs and Senators
- Tibetan Youth taking part in international conferences and training to become more politically involved in the Tibetan cause; learn about Tibet and its culture
- Organizing march in Toronto for March 10th the national uprising day
- Organizing events for March 12th commemoration of Tibetan women's uprising in Tibet

SUPPORTING TIBETAN DIASPORA

Strategies:

- Provide financial support to Tibetans living in Nepal and India
- Supporting resettlement of Tibetans in Canada (as sponsored family members or refugees)

Activities:

- Fundraising to provide scholarship for Tibetan students in Nepal and India
- Townhall meeting and lobbying Members of Parliament to issue a one-way visa for stateless Tibetans living in Nepal
- Community mobilization for the project to resettle Tibetans from India to Canada

Linking Organizing Goals and Strategies

Tibetan Community

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN CANADA

Strategies:

- Establishing and maintaining the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre
- Preserving Tibetan language and cultural practices
- Sharing cultural knowledge and practising mutual aid through Kyidug (i.e. traditional mutual aid groups) in Canada
- Creating alternative avenues in the community to navigate the psychological toll of exile
- Joining international workshops and conferences for Tibetan diaspora
- Fighting gentrification and displacement of "Little Tibet" in Parkdale

Activities:

- Fundraising for Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre (TCCC)
- Community gathering at the TCCC for social and religious events
- Offer programs to learn Tibetan language, Buddhism, performing arts, drop-in conversations on mental health, gender based violence
- Organize weekly community circle dance in Parkdale, drop in basketball
- Celebrating regional festivals like 'Phak-nying' (A summer festival in Western Tibet where people gather to celebrate what is considered as the most 'nutritious' day of the year) and passing down of folk song and dance to younger Tibetans
- Social programs for seniors: yoga, prayer sessions, health talks
- Offer arts-programs for youth to share experiences and stories

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Strategies:

- Leverage the geographic concentration of Tibetans in Parkdale
- Joining campaigns for affordable housing
- Empowering women leaders
- Advocating for workers' rights
- Social media advocacy
- Reaching out to mainstream media
- Advocacy for immigration status

Activities:

- Participating in rent strikes and rallies to protest rent increase and legal aid cuts in Parkdale
- Supporting workers' strike at Food Terminal Strike for better wages by showing up to join the protesting workers and spreading news through social media
- Building a relationship with organizations & groups in Parkdale
- Raising awareness and mobilization: lobby meetings, door-to-door knocking and flyers



Every Wednesday in summer, Tibetans gather in Parkdale for community circle dance.

Credit: Tenzin Nawang Tekan

Because of how concentrated we are in Parkdale, there is a relationship that the community people have to different offices. The MP's office has someone who is from the Tibetan community, we have a Tibetan MPP, the municipal office (Gord Perks) who is also receptive to the Tibetan community, so I think that the Tibetan community made use of that kind of what little power they have and they understand how to navigate these different interests, right?

Tibetan Community Leader



South Asian women discuss Canadian civic processes and strategies for advocacy initiatives.

Credit: SAWRO

I started to go to the park and sit down with the women and discuss why they're not working, what is the cause and most of the women said they don't know where is the job, they don't know how they should go, because I feel like for the political work, first you have to work with the people, so they have the problem, so I talk with some group of people I say why not you come together to make an organization.

South Asian Woman Leader

D. Individual and community-level barriers to organizing collective actions

This report documents how South Asian immigrant women and Tibetans organize, support each other and resource their communities and grassroots organizations as they resist different forms of inequalities. While this shows their resiliency, it is also indicative of their marginalization and their lack of access to resources that support their communities. Thus, it is important to highlight the challenges migrants face when organizing collective actions.

Economic and political insecurity

Migrants who experience economic and/or political insecurity fear the repercussions of participating in collective actions as it might result in loss of jobs, housing, legal status or even arrest and deportation.

Reluctance to resistance

Migrants who have left difficult situations in their countries of origin often compare their living conditions pre- and post-migration, which creates barriers to organizing against inequalities in Canada. Their reluctance also stems from the idea of upholding a 'good image' for their community in Canada.

Lack of resources

Grassroots migrant organizations function out of a scarcity of resources. Limited and unstable funding, overstretched manpower and lack of resources and capacity building opportunities for organizers are identified as significant barriers to collective organizing.

Institutional barriers

Many grassroots organizations who receive government funding are restricted from political organizing that critique the system. South Asian immigrant women organizers feel frustrated that some stakeholders and people in power dismiss the issues they raised as not pressing enough. Tibetan organizers point to lack of mainstream media coverage of their organizing for Tibetan freedom movement in Canada.

Challenges in building network

Due to limited networking capacity and differing priorities and analysis of issues, building solidarity across migrant communities and organizations has been a challenge for migrant organizers.

They [people who are participating in collective action] don't see their voices being reflected in decision making, whether it be in the faces of who makes those decisions, but also in the kind of narrative that comes out from those places.

Migrant Community Organizer

Transformative Resilience during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many migrant communities who were already experiencing multiple layers of oppression and inequalities, faced exacerbated social isolation and economic hardship due to job loss, unpaid leave, and the stress of working in front-line essential jobs or living in high density housing with limited options for social distancing.

Though our research activities took place before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, while writing this report we learned how migrant communities involved in our study were well prepared to organize mutual aid and to provide various forms of support to their community members and beyond. Below we highlight excerpts from conversations with advisory members, to illustrate the continued manifestation of transformative resilience during the pandemic.

Some examples of community responses to COVID-19 led by the two communities included:

South Asian Women in East Danforth

South Asian Women's Rights Organization:

- Distribute face masks, shields, sanitizers and food supplies to the members
- Provide support to people seeking access to emergency financial assistance
- Youth help elders and others in the community to navigate online services and platforms
- Invite medical professionals to offer online info sessions in Bengali language to share information COVID testing, vaccination and other health-related information
- Support with accessing legal aid for housing, immigration and domestic violence during COVID as an expressed need
- Organize cultural and social events virtually
- Organize online discussion for community members to share experiences and impacts of COVID-19 in the community
- Partner with East Toronto and Scarborough Health Network community to discuss vaccine strategies and disseminate information on vaccine services.

Tibetan Community in Parkdale:

Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre:

- Partner with local Tibetan restaurants to deliver fresh meal to frontline healthcare workers and homeless people in encampments in Parkdale and across the city
- Invite public office holders for virtual info-sessions on refugee claims and accessing COVID-relief assistance
- Provide food rations and personal protective equipment (PPE) to seniors in the community
- Organize virtual daily prayer sessions as well as circle dance every Wednesday

Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario:

- Sow and distribute cloth masks and scrub hats to healthcare workers, seniors, community centers
- Offer virtual wellness and recreational sessions including yoga, meditation, children's ballet classes
- Organize free virtual income-tax clinic/consultation for low-income families
- Organize info-session in Tibetan on immigration, legal and settlement services, seniors' benefits

*** Thoughts from Youdon Tenzin Khangsar, Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario**

"The past pandemic has taught us a lot, where we emerged even more resilient and stronger as a community. Especially all the community organizations and leaders surrounding Parkdale-High Park. There was a point when we had weekly 'Parkdale Mutual Aid' community zoom meetings/conferences. This was very pleasant and amazing to watch, as there were multiple community organizations and leaders of various ethnic backgrounds that came together to aid, discuss and inform each other about all the resources that are available in the light of pandemic and ongoing struggles that have been there, prior to the pandemic."

*** Thoughts from Sultana Jahangir, South Asian Women's Rights Organization**

"When the pandemic hit, Canada was not ready. There was no emergency system to support racialized immigrants who lost their jobs and didn't have money for housing and food, many who were excluded from federal emergency assistance because of their precarious work. The Covid infection rate, the loss of life, these impacted us first and the hardest because of pre-existing systemic inequality.

As immigrants from Bangladesh and Tibetan refugees, we arrived in Canada with emergency disaster experience. We drew upon our experience to act even before the government, to offer mutual aid to support each other, bring food to people, and find out how seniors are doing. When the government started to take action, they recognized that small community-based organizations like SAWRO have an important role to play because we are very close to the community and understand their concerns. When we received funding for pandemic relief, we distributed this aid immediately, while bigger organizations that were unaccustomed to working remotely, moved more slowly to offer essential aid and support.

Pandemic is showing us the importance of community organizations like the Tibetan community and SAWRO who provide "social love." All of the smaller ethnic community organizations are the social glue in times of crisis. Even though we have different histories and points of view, we stand with the community, working tirelessly to take people to hospital, drop off food, help people not to panic, because we have experience in disaster management from our own backgrounds. When we take care of our neighbors and see how everyone is doing, we increase social love and the communities' capacity to overcome systemic inequalities. These are the skills that we bring from our own community, when we do collective action."

How Do Migrant Communities Promote Transformative Resilience?

When migrant communities work together, they build stronger communities that improve the well-being of their communities in Canada, in the diaspora, and in the larger Canadian society. Some examples of the impacts of migrant collective actions include increased political consciousness, public awareness on migrant issues, individual and community resilience, and solidarity with migrant and Indigenous communities.



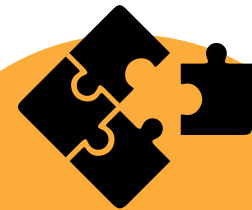
Identify shared concerns that stem from systemic inequality



Provide mutual aid and support to address immediate needs



Strengthen cultural bonds and practices that provide a sense of identity and belonging within Canada



Develop a collective capacity to address issues related to systemic challenges in Canada and their homelands



Envision and work towards systemic changes to promote equity, inclusion, and well-being for all members of society, including support for Indigenous sovereignty



Tibetans in Toronto commemorate 61st Tibetan National Uprising Day on March 10th, 2020.

Credit: RTYC Toronto

People when they participate in these collective actions, they see the power of many. They see that if we all stand together and we are all together, whether it's occupying somebody's office or blocking traffic or sealing off the Chinese consulate, there is power in numbers, there's strength in numbers and it would not be the same if it was just one person, whatever the issue is.

So, I have seen people, almost joyful after actions. We laugh, we joke around, you can visibly see people feel empowered, if there's such a thing you can see it. And when you come together you realize that we are all connected, we are all affected by the same issues right so, I think it makes a huge difference when people do participate in collective actions.

Tibetan Community Organizer

Thank you!

We express our deep gratitude for the generosity of shared wisdom from all of the community partners and migrant organizers who informed this report.

We hope the stories of migrant collective action inspire others in building solidarity through reciprocal relationships of love, respect, and radical imagination.





Lessons on Transformative Resilience from Migrant-Led Collective Action in Toronto

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ICONS on page 21 from "The Noun Project"
look for - By Tatyana Kyul, RU
help (hands) - By Adrien Coquet, FR
Puzzle - By Agarunov Oktay-Abraham, RU
Soup -By Deemak Daksina, ID
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