The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota (The Foundation) has a long history of supporting the movement to end gender-based violence and secure safety for women and girls. In 2010, the Foundation launched the MN Girls Are Not for Sale campaign and convened over 100 cross-sector leaders to combat sex trafficking. The campaign achieved a number of outcomes in pursuit of this goal, including policy protections for trafficked minors and young adults, infrastructure for increased services for those impacted by sexual exploitation, and increased public support. The Fund for Safety builds upon this success, as the Foundation transitions from catalyst to partner in the movement. In 2019-2020, the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota awarded $190,000 in grants to seven nonprofit organizations working to end gender-based violence, including sex trafficking, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.

The Fund for Safety is working toward ending gender-based violence through:

- Strengthening systems and infrastructure to sustain the movement to end gender-based violence including sex trafficking, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment; and
- Investing in and elevating leaders and organizations working with communities of color, American Indian communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, Greater MN communities, and immigrant and refugee populations

### Capacity-Building Resources & Partnerships

- **Men as Peacemakers (MAP)** is providing technical assistance and capacity building support to stakeholders around the state. It partnered with Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition, Casa de Esperanza, and other partners to support their capacity to lead culturally relevant prevention efforts to end the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. MAP is training partners to adapt its *education and advocacy curriculum to be culturally relevant* by engaging their community members to co-create materials. In addition, MAP in partnership with MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault is gathering community input to develop a community-level prevention framework for sexual assault advocacy.
- **Asian Women United of Minnesota** is supporting partner agencies to better serve recent immigrants or refugees by providing *language advocates*—community members who facilitate critical services for violence and trafficking survivors.
- Grantee partners are creating *partnerships with public entities*, such as the Minnesota Department of Health, to collect data to center the voices of communities most impacted to inform strategies for abuse prevention.
- **Casa de Esperanza** was able to *reach more participants* using online platforms, which eliminated barriers to in-person engagement such as transportation and childcare.

### Leadership Opportunities

- **Youth Amig@s**, an initiative of Casa de Esperanza, completed action projects to contribute to building healthy communities. The youth coordinated a conference as part of Teen Dating Violence Awareness month, which was attended by 90 diverse youth.
- **Men as Peacemakers (MAP)** engaged men from Native communities in culturally-informed train-the-trainer sessions on supporting survivors of sexual exploitation.
- **The Link** worked with youth to develop a “best practices guidebook” for shelters for the Minnesota Department of Health. Participating youth were paid for their efforts. Youth advise The Link’s efforts through participation on a youth advisory committee.

“Due to the continued tensions in our nation right now, we have experienced a lot of learning and also unlearning opportunities. As an organization, we have used this opportunity to continue to amplify the voices of our historically marginalized communities in the spaces where we have an opportunity to be at the tables of discussions. Phumulani is currently working with the Global Rights for Women and the Minneapolis Police Department to enhance racially equitable policies.

– Phumulani Minnesota African Women Against Violence
Direct Services & Safe Spaces

- Grantee partners supported community members to meet basic needs by providing food, financial support, information about self-care, and referrals to services such as housing supports and legal services.
- Grantee partners created safe spaces for and with their community members. Developing authentic relationships is key to creating safe spaces. For example, Phumulani Minnesota African Women Against Violence engaged 125 women in virtual healing circles and established a closed chat group for women to share ideas and offer support. Liberty Community Church asked for feedback about what kind of support girls needed, and responded by offering opportunities to engage in trauma-informed mindfulness activities such as yoga, gardening, and art.
- Casa de Esperanza provided mental health support to abuse survivors and supported healthy relationship building through opportunities such as its Mother Daughter Retreat and Men’s Circles.

“In the last eight months, the Community Engagement team has tried to stay one step ahead and anticipate barriers the Latin@ community could face. The team recognized that participants were not in their best place to learn about and share information on domestic violence and healthy sexuality if they were concerned about losing their job, paying rent, keeping their children occupied at home, and worried about COVID-19 and access to healthcare. They responded by ensuring these issues and other concerns were addressed by offering practical sessions. The sessions included: how to apply for unemployment, information about properly disinfecting the home, managing stress in times of quarantine, self care and emotional health, and healthy snacks for children at home, to name a few. Housing, health, food, education, and safety are all social determinants of health.”

—Casa de Esperanza

Awareness & Visibility

- Grantee partners’ ally organizations have grown their awareness of the importance of trauma-informed and culturally relevant services due to their work with grantee partners, who they are looking to as experts in these areas.
- Men as Peacemakers and Casa de Esperanza partnered to host a virtual series with men and masculine folks on ending gender-based violence.
- Asian Women United of Minnesota invested in the leadership of underrepresented cultural communities by leading trainings with college students from BIPOC communities studying social work, public health, and related disciplines.

“Men as Peacemakers partnered with Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition to facilitate a roundtable called Increasing Tribal Capacity to Respond to Sex Trafficking. This roundtable was held in collaboration with Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. Through this roundtable, participants were introduced to grassroots, regional, and national efforts on combatting sex trafficking in Native communities. Participants were also trained on the broad definition of trafficking culture, violence, and the continuum of sexual exploitation. This training included identifying current trends and emerging issues in marketing strategies of sellers, buyers, and groomers.”

—Men as Peacemakers

Advocacy

- The Link is working with other youth services providers to develop recommendations for Hennepin County around white supremacy and racism.
- Phumulani MN African Women Against Violence is advocating with the Minneapolis Police Department to enhance racially equitable policies.
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition participated on the steering committee for the state legislature’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force.

“The grant provided funding for staff time and for youth to be at the capitol advocating for Safe Harbor. It provided opportunities for predominantly women of color who have lived experiences of being survivors of sex trafficking to be part of real systems-level change. We worked to ensure that youth who have been sex trafficked and are experiencing homelessness were included in the COVID-19 relief funding. Within that legislation there was $26.2 million that was dedicated to ESP (Emergency Services Programs), which could be used for street outreach, emergency shelter, and homeless prevention services.”

—The Link

Research & Evaluation

- Grantee partners are developing research and evaluation projects to build visibility, elevate youth leadership, demonstrate their successes, and ground their efforts in feedback from participants.
- Liberty Community Church participants developed Youth Participatory Action Research projects focused on getting out the vote and redlining.
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and national uprising for racial justice:

- Grantee partners are seeing increased vulnerability and trauma in their communities. There has been an increase of racist harassment and violence. There has also been an increase in domestic violence.
- Staff and community members are experiencing high levels of mental health challenges, stress, exhaustion, isolation, and grief.
- In the midst of mass mobilization for racial justice, vandalism has posed challenges. The Minneapolis Police Department has been less responsive to calls for help as it addresses its loss of a precinct building. Some community members have lost their employment due to vandalism of businesses.
- Grantee partners have found their progress slowed down. Lacking the ability to meet in person, and pulled away to respond to urgent needs, some have faced challenges reaching participants due to social distancing measures. Although technology facilitates safe forms of engagement, some community members are burned out on virtual meetings. Those with in-person engagement developed comprehensive systems to protect community members and staff, which have incurred extra expenses.
- Pivoting to online programming to support social distancing posed challenges to relationship and community building including technology fatigue, lack of access to technology, and concerns about sharing confidential information through technology. Conversely, some found online engagement to be a positive alternative as it eliminated certain barriers associated with in-person engagement, such as transportation, daycare, etc.

Grantee partners have taken steps to respond to calls for racial justice, some examples include:

- **Men as Peacemakers** has been focused on learning and growth to be responsive to the wellbeing of its community.
- **The Link** has instituted Racial Equity PTO for people of color and caregivers of people of color.
- **Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition** is exploring ways to continue to do its work in a meaningful way after the federal government released guidance stating organizations receiving federal funding may not talk about white supremacy or white privilege.

Additional investments needed to address COVID-19’s impact:

- Support for meeting basic needs including financial aid, food, housing supports, cleaning supplies, internet, and technology equipment.
- Culturally relevant, holistic, trauma-informed wellbeing and mental health supports.
- Fundraising support, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Timeline extensions to recognize the reality of COVID-19’s impact on grantee partner timelines.
- Funding for crisis response services, such as crisis hotlines.
- General operating funds.

“AWUM staff have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 starting from the onset of the pandemic, when it was being characterized as a 'Chinese virus.' Because we at AWUM – clientele and workers – are predominantly Asian, many of us either originating from East Asia (Chinese) or bearing resemblance to what many people consider to be “Chinese” (Hmong, Vietnamese), we have been targeted by ignorant community members who claimed that we were diseased and had no place in the Twin Cities. Staff and participants reported instances of verbal harassment and a growing sense of vulnerability in February and March of this year. Since that time, several participants and at least one staff have been physically threatened – in one case, outright assaulted – while on or near AWUM property.”

– Asian Women United of MN

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

- The majority (69%) of participants are **women and girls**, 27% are men, and 5% are transgender/gender non-conforming/non-binary.
- Nearly half (47%) are Latina/o/x, 19% are African/African American/Black, 17% are white, 10% are multi-racial, and 7% are Asian/Pacific Islander.
- 70% are **immigrants or refugees**, 14% identify as LGBTQ+, 14% are people with disabilities, and 2% are veterans.
- More than half (64%) are **low-income**.
- Nearly half (45%) are 31-55 years old. A third are 10-17, 7% are 18-24, 10% are 25-30, and 4% are 56 or above.
- 43% live in suburban Twin Cities, 31% live in urban Twin Cities, 17% in Greater Minnesota, and 8% in American Indian Nations.