



Women's Resilience Center International Rescue Committee in San Diego

The Women's Resilience Center is a safe, collaborative space where the diverse needs of all women and girls are respected and where women and girls can seek, share, and obtain information about their rights and their inherent potential for safety, health, education, economic wellbeing, and power. It is a responsive, creative space that engages women and girls as co-creators and encourages expression, enhanced wellbeing, and community connectedness.

BACKGROUND

Starting a new life in the U.S. as a refugee comes with many challenges from learning English and securing employment to adapting to a new environment and cultural norms. For those who identify as women and girls in particular, the challenge can be even greater as they face additional barriers to adjusting to life in America. Refugee women are less likely than men to work outside the home, limiting their opportunities to build social networks and learn English. Internal research across IRC programs has indicated that there continues to be a discrepancy in outcomes between men and women, and girls and boys, and client feedback to San Diego.

The IRC has been working toward narrowing the gender gap across all programs and becoming a more gender equitable organization for many years. This has included conducting internal research to assess gender inequities in client outcomes across services, as well as identifying adjustments to program models and supportive services to remediate the inequities. This led to the development of the Safety and Wellness Unit which has prioritized staff awareness around gender-based violence and trauma informed practices, creating an environment that is safer for survivors to access services. In addition, the IRC in San Diego has created targeted programming such as Women in Action, Business Women in Action, and Girls Academy which more holistically and responsively address the needs of female identifying clients.

Historically these efforts took place in 10-week cohorts as staffing and funding allowed. Past participants have requested time and again the desire to stay connected when cohorts end, and for a safe space in their community to gather with other women and continue to engage in learning opportunities. To create a permanent space and continue to improve the efficacy of interventions aimed at supporting women and girls, the IRC set a goal to open a full-

