

# **Refugee Transportation Loans**

## **A Case Study: Mobilizing Other Sectors of Your Community**

AAISA Provincial Conference

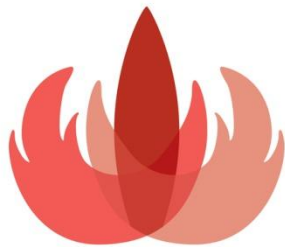
October 28, 2011

# Overview

- What is our campaign?
- Challenges and Solutions
- Has it worked? Our achievements so far

# Who we are

- Roxanne Felix, Matt Hundert and Somkhuun Thongdee
- Strategic Alliance for the Advancement of Immigrant and Refugee Children and Youth (SAAIRCY)



**End the Burden of  
Refugee Transportation Loans**

SAAIRCY Sub-Committee on Refugee Transportation Loans

# Refugee Transportation Loans

- Issued by Government of Canada to cover costs of refugees' pre-entry medical exam and travel to Canada
- Loans are "capped" at \$10000 per family
- Repayment timelines vary from 1 to 6 years
- Rate of repayment: **91%** (2008)
- **Canada is the only country in the world that charges interest on transportation loans**

# Our Campaign

- Building broad base of support to advocate for policy change
  - Ultimate goal = abolishing Refugee Transportation Loan **without** reducing number of refugees accepted for resettlement
- Working in conjunction with Canadian Council for Refugees

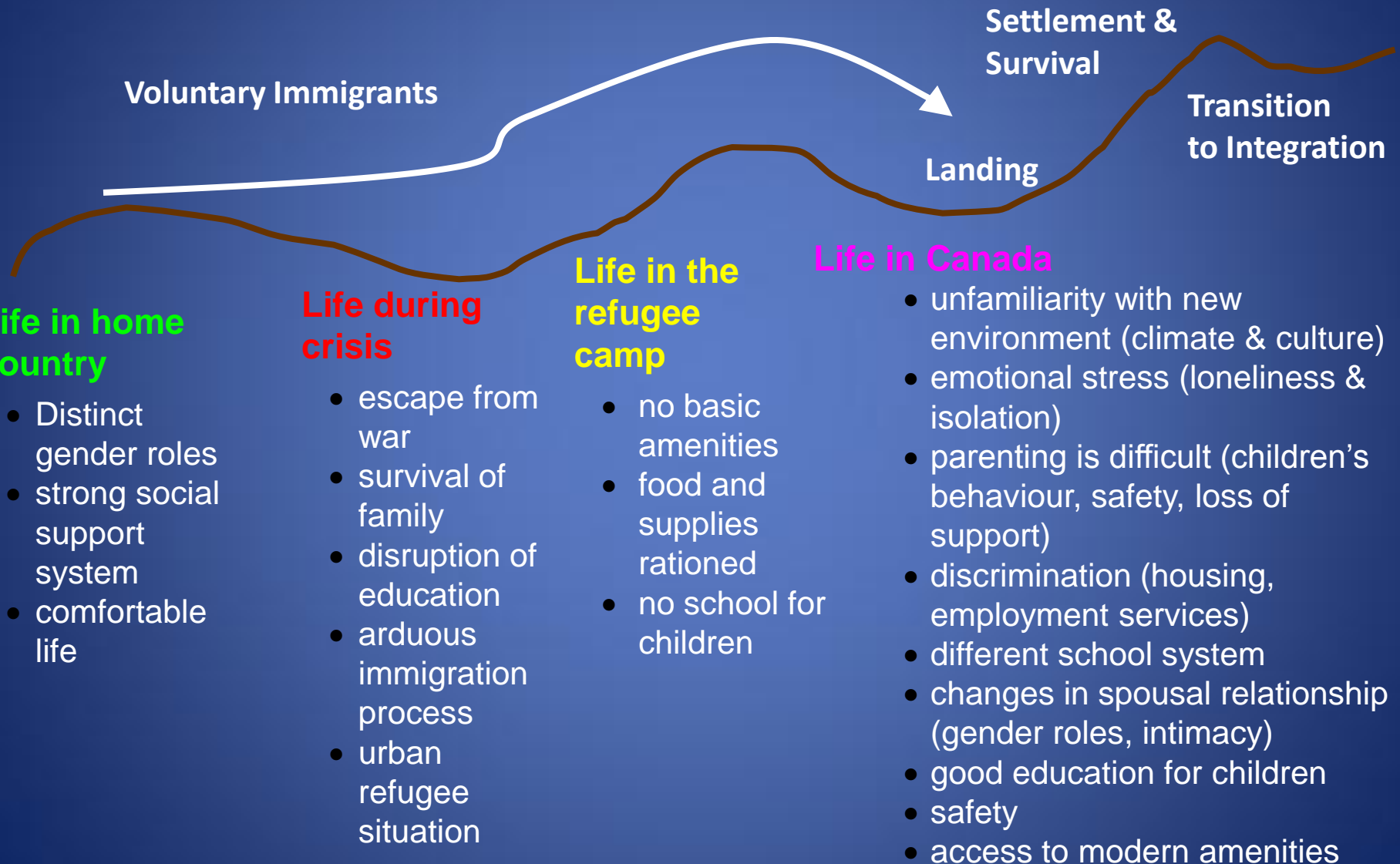
# Challenges and Solutions in Mobilization

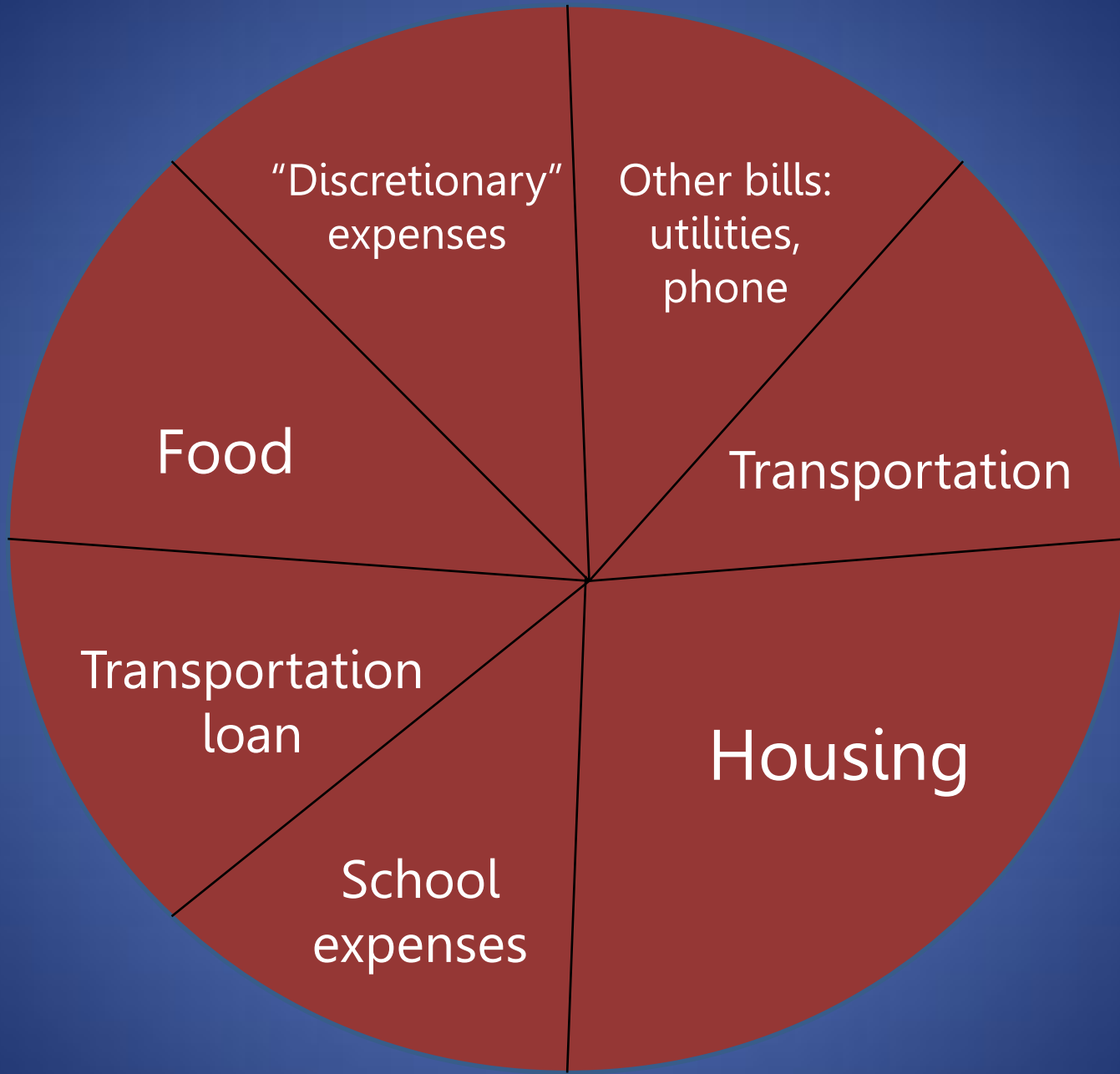
- Too much to do!
  - Strategic planning and goal-setting for first two years
  - Focus on policy change, rather than raising awareness
  - Assigned specific areas to each member of committee of 3 – 5 people

# Challenges and Solutions in Mobilization

- Misperceptions of refugees among general public
  - Clear definitions in our presentations and written resources
  - Highlighting investment in capacity of refugee groups, rather than “burden”

# The journey from home country to Canada: The Immigrant & Refugee Experience (from MCHB)





# Challenges and Solutions in Mobilization

- Refugee Transportation Loan policies are not clear or transparent
  - Research
  - Partnerships: Canadian Council for Refugees, local MP
  - Education package and communication plan

# Challenges and Solutions in Mobilization

- Different service sectors need to know how Refugee Transportation Loans relate to their mandate
  - Develop targeted messages for different sectors and levels of government
  - Research

# Community Perspectives on Mobilization

- Refugee community members may sometimes hesitate to become involved in advocacy
  - Extensive discussions about ethics and “community-based” approach
  - Community consultations

# Community Perspectives on Mobilization

- Refugee communities have had different experiences, which affect perception of campaign
  - Broader perspective of looking at how policy affects most vulnerable
  - Ongoing dialogue

# Community Perspectives on Mobilization

Somkhuun Thongdee

# Our Achievements

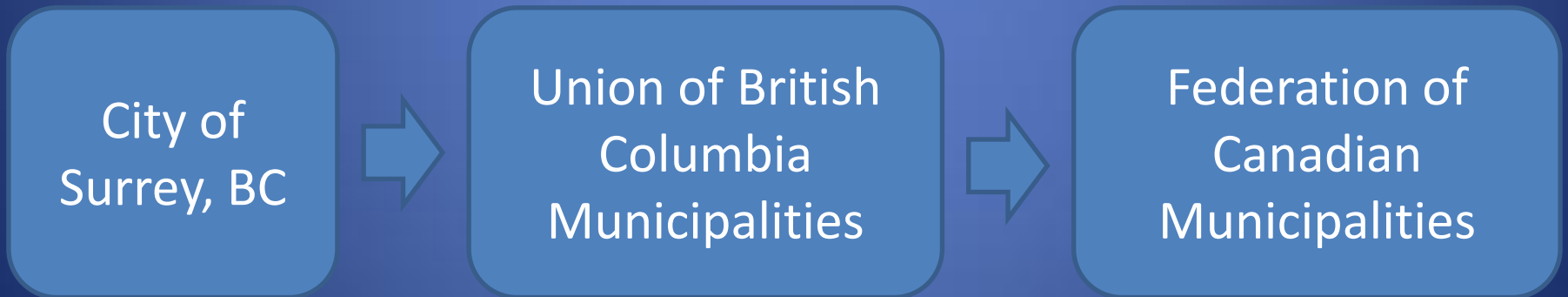
- Defined campaign goals and steps to reach them
- Raising awareness
- Resources for education and seeking support
- Coalition-building across different service sectors and levels of government
- Community-based approach
- Resolutions, letters and other commitments of support from local and provincial organizations

# Supporting Organizations

- Education
  - Edmonton Catholic School Board
  - Edmonton Public School Board
- Health
  - Alberta Public Health Association
  - Council of Public Health Physicians
- Local Government
  - Mayor Mandel – support and advocacy
- Settlement and Integration
  - Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
  - Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Well-being

# Outside Alberta

- Health
  - Health Officers of British Columbia
- Municipal Affairs



# Resources

- Canadian Council for Refugees:  
<http://ccrweb.ca/en/transportation-loans>
- Facebook: End the Burden of Refugee Transportation Loans  
(<http://www.facebook.com/pages/End-the-Burden-of-Refugee-Transportation-Loans/260902073953339>)
- *Hidden Costs* DVD

# Contact Information

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