



Introduction

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**In your perspective, what has
the impact of COVID-19
been on newcomers to
Canada?**

Please feel welcome to share your thoughts with
the Q&A button

Learning from COVID-19 to enhance settlement services for refugees to Canada



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Acknowledgments

SSHRC  CRSH

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines





Introduction



- For newcomers to Canada, the settlement experience can be challenging (Ghahari et al., 2019)
- Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) are particularly vulnerable as many have less access to supports than Privately Sponsored Refugees (IRCC, 2016)

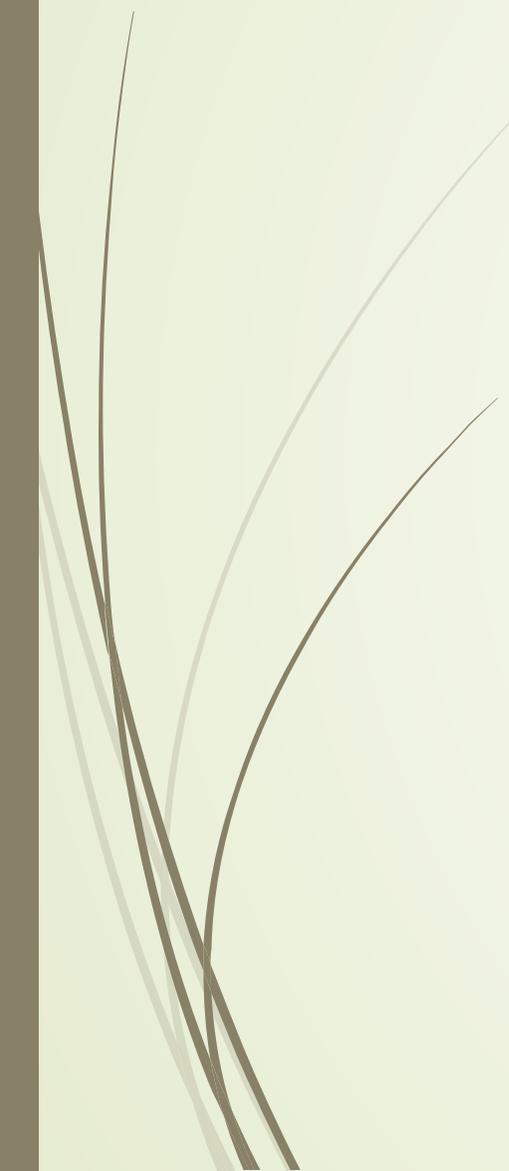


The COVID-19 Pandemic

- Reduced opportunities for informal supports
 - Limits professional supports
 - Create barriers to social determinants of health
 - The closure of language proficiency programs
 - The closure of schools
 - Massive reduction in employment opportunities
 - The closure of usual access points to social services (community libraries and neighbourhood resource centres) (Brickhill-Atkinson & Hauck, 2021)
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Purpose



- Understand the experiences of those resettling in the midst of the pandemic and
- Understand the experiences of settlement staff providing service to this population during a pandemic



Research questions

- ▶ How have Government Assisted Refugee families experienced relocation at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - ▶ What has worked for them and what has not?
 - ▶ What strategies are being adopted for settlement organization staff to adapt to the COVID-19 context?
 - ▶ What are the strengths and challenges for providing appropriate support for the newcomer population within this context?
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Methodology and Methods

- Case study research - multiple-case design (Yin, 2003)
 - Six GAR families arrived from Syria and Iraq in London, Ontario
 - Seven LCCLC staff
 - In-depth interviews
 - Audio-recorded, and notes taking
 - Ethics approval - Western Universities Human Ethics REB
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Data Analysis

- Direct interpretation of individual cases as well as a degree of case aggregation was used
 - The research questions were answered through analysis within and across cases
 - Findings from both staff and family clients were ultimately synthesized into a holistic composite (Stake, 1995)
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Findings

“We do not know, yet”: Living in a Void

“Limited choice”: Finding Services in a Virtual World

“Between four walls”: Missing Connection

“You cannot read”: An English Online Environment

“We have our God”: Gratitude, Struggle, and Resilience

“Thank you”: Staff Carrying a Burden of Compassion



“We do
not
know,
yet”:
Living in
a Void

- Staff “They still don't know if they will start English school or not.”
- FP: “Yes, and up until today, we are not familiar with anything. All we know is the food basics, shoppers and the bank.” (at 6 months arrival)
- MP: “Until now, I don't know the area around me” (at 6 months arrival)



“Limited
choice”:
Finding
Services
in a
Virtual
World

- *MP: “We had no choice to take this house”*
- Staff 1: “There are no delays from our end we are doing our best there is a delay from other governmental organization.”



“Between four walls”: Missing Connectio n

- FP: “My son will walk to the hotel to get an internet connection”
- Staff: “Yes, I haven't even seen all the kids. I still don't memorize the names and the faces”
- FP: “I like the face-to-face services. Because I feel more comfortable when somebody is with me”



“You cannot read”: An English Online Environment

- MP: “For us, the online services do not have any benefit because we know nothing about English language, so we have a language barrier. Even if we have online services, we ignore it. We always go back to them, in-person, face to face services which is limited as you know”
- MP: “From Facebook, there is a page called Arabic culture in London, ON. Every day, they post the press conference of Mr. Trudeau”
- FP: “The UN gave us a workshop for three days and they told us a few things about the pandemic.”



“We
have our
God”:
Gratitud
e,
struggle,
Concern
s, and
Posilione

- MP: “Like, they give us money, God bless them, but it is barely enough for us”
- MP: “I am planning to work as I told you. My job back home was in construction and unfortunately because of the language barrier, I am still unable to work”
- MP: “It is also expensive here, and we are struggling to pay for rent, hydro and grocery.”
- FP: “I put a goal in front of my eyes to learn English. So, at least I will be able to ask about my kids in school. Now, here everything is in English, and I am the one who should learn English for my kids. this is my goal”



“Thank
you”:
Staff
Carrying
a Burden
of
Compas
sion

- Staff 2: “Then I called the life skill worker, and I told him I know it's not in your mandate, but if you can take them to the pharmacy to buy thermometer and vitamin C”
- MP: “The life skill worker went with my family to the grocery store, and I think he offered them a ride because they had lots of things to carry.”



Recommendations

- **For Settlement services**

- Hybrid model of settlement services

- Prioritize internet connectivity upon immediate arrival

- Review the structure and flow of education for newcomers

- **For IRCC**

- Expedite access to child benefits for new arrivals



Recommendations

➤ For the Government of Ontario

- Better align social assistance income with cost of living as rent is rapidly outpacing income assistance
 - Translation of materials across health and social services will better ensure quality settlement
 - If health and social services are providing more virtual contact and support, there needs to be a better process of communicating with people who are waiting.
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References



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- ▶ Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. sage.
- ▶ Yin, R. K. (2003). Design and methods. *Case study research*, 3(9.2).

Circling back:



**In your perspective, what has
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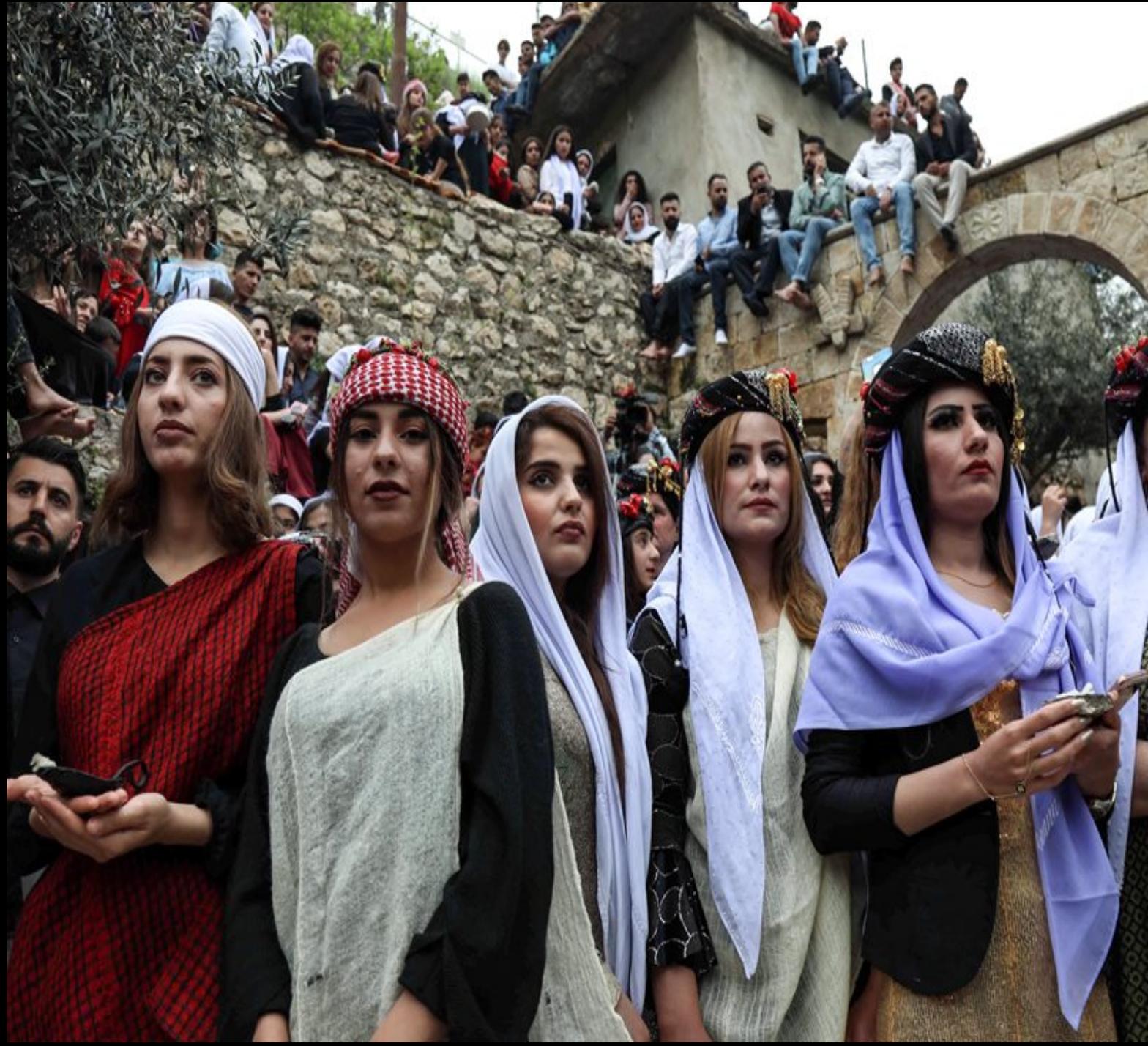
STOPPING

C O V I D - 1 9

London's Yazidi Community and the Coronavirus

Who are the Yazidis?

- Ancient ethno-religious group
- History of persecution
- Insular community
- 2014 genocide





Settlement Process in Canada

- Started in 2017
- London, Calgary,
Winnipeg & Toronto
- Barriers to integration

London Community Foundation's Peer Support Project

- London Cross Cultural Learner Centre
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Mary J. Wright Research Centre
- Merrymount Family Support &



Main Concerns LANGUAGE

Large percentage of the Yazidi community is unable to understand English or French. Some are illiterate in their own native languages.

FINANCES

Many rely on forms of social assistance such as Ontario Works, Immigration Support and Child Tax Benefits. Essentials such as masks, cleaning supplies and alternative transportations are sometimes expenses that are out of reach.

CULTURE

Yazidi culture is heavily based on community and communal living. This lack of access to their community creates an even greater sense of culture shock to Canada, affecting the mental health of many.





New Arrivals to Canada

Government Assisted Refugees
and other newcomers that have
arrived to Canada since March
2020

— DIFFERENT SERVICE MODELS

Service delivery is now very different. Methods of working with new arrivals continues to be adapted during unprecedented times like these.

— EXPECTATIONS

Expectations about Canada, service providers and more has always been something new arrivals had to adjust to, but now pressures and new expectations of COVID-19 can create more tension.

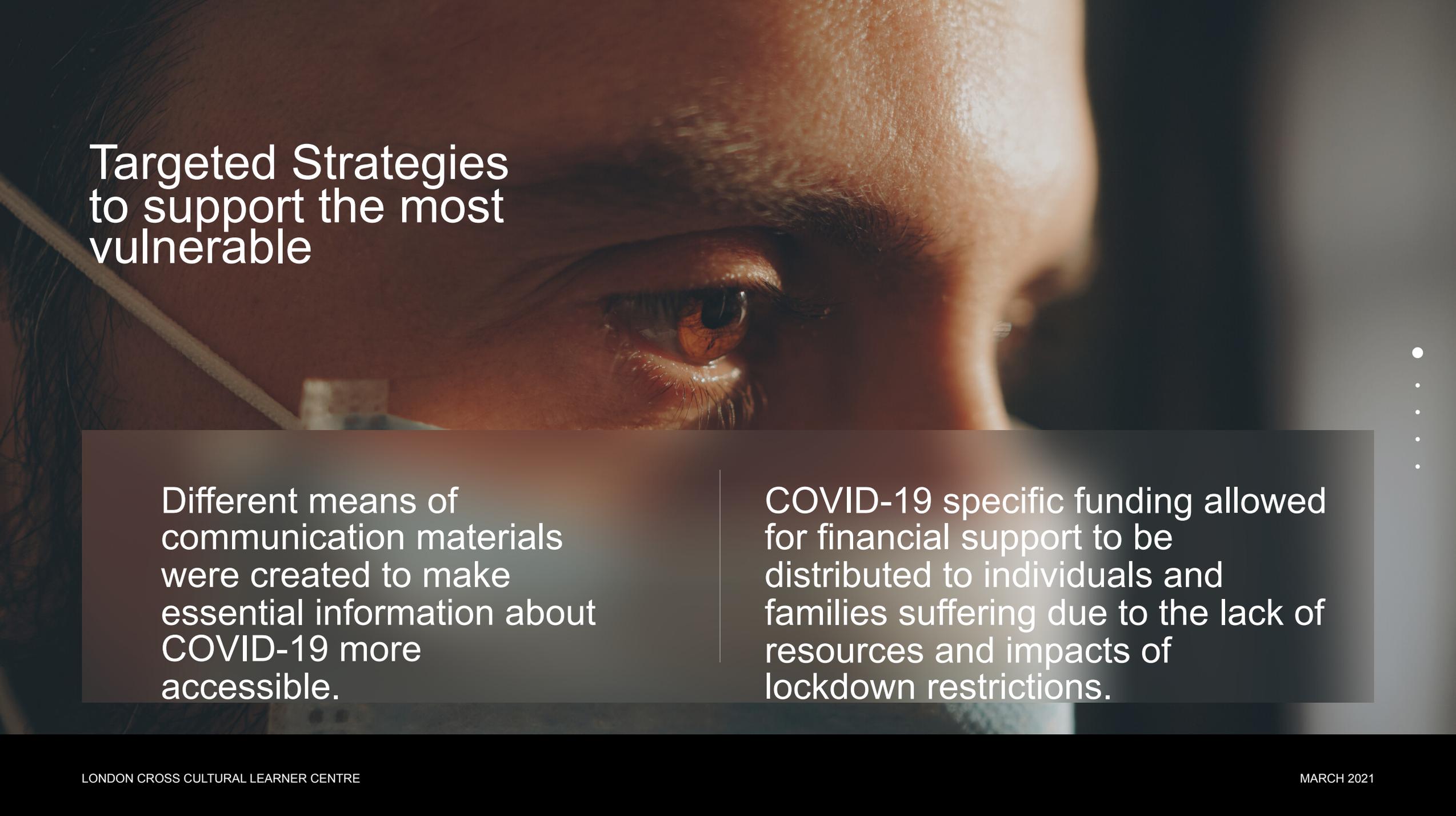
— LACK OF IN PERSON CONTACT

In person contact, whether with CCLC or other service providers, is a large factor in integration. Restrictions create hurdles in building important relationships in settlement journey.

Community Collaboration with the London Middlesex Health Unit

- Collaborative and targeted approach
- Brought together by increase of reported cases
- Focus on effective information diffusion
- Videos, voice messages and other social media tools for easier information sharing within the community
- Information relay between community service providers to support those with COVID-19 and the community



A close-up, high-angle photograph of a person's face, focusing on their eye and forehead. A thin, light-colored tube or wire is visible on the left side of the frame, extending across the person's forehead. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a somber and focused atmosphere.

Targeted Strategies to support the most vulnerable

Different means of communication materials were created to make essential information about COVID-19 more accessible.

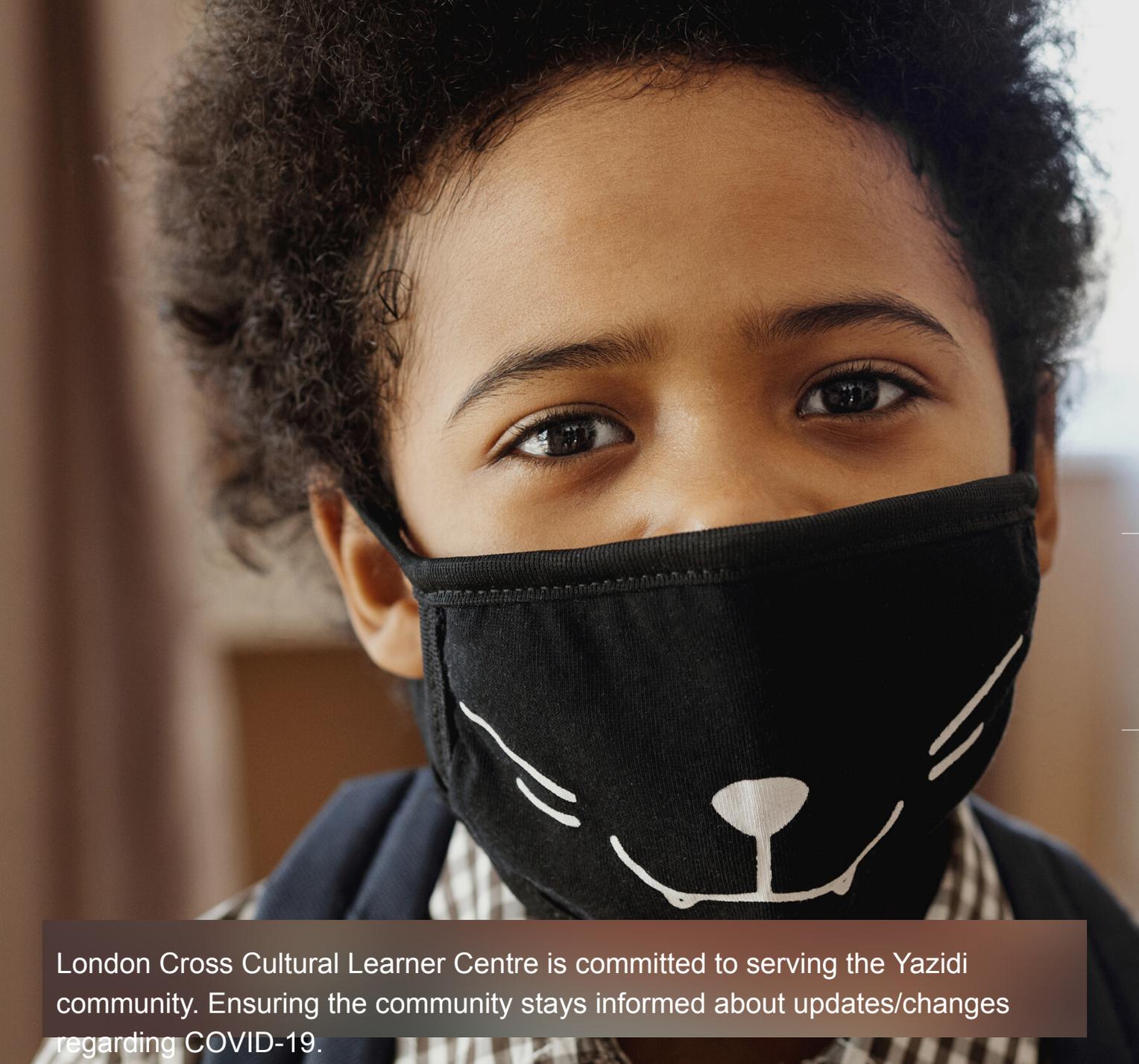
COVID-19 specific funding allowed for financial support to be distributed to individuals and families suffering due to the lack of resources and impacts of lockdown restrictions.

Current cases in the Yazidi community



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As of March 17,
2021



Contact us

Let's Defeat COVID-19

Email

cclc@lcclc.org

Telephone

519-432-1133

Mailing address

505 Dundas Street, London Ontario, N6B
1W4

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre is committed to serving the Yazidi community. Ensuring the community stays informed about updates/changes regarding COVID-19.



Answering your Q & A questions...