

Women's Asylum News

Women's Project at Asylum Aid

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Missed Out Campaign – Success

Debora Singer, Policy and Research Manager at Asylum Aid

The demands of the Missed Out campaign were simple. Whilst the Government's Violence Against Women strategy makes a commitment to help women both in the UK and overseas, asylum-seeking women were missed out. Of the 100 'actions' in the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, there was only one commitment by the UKBA – "to work to ensure that the asylum system is as gender-sensitive as possible" – and this commitment was very general. The Missed Out campaign, set up under the Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum, argued that the Government urgently needed to take a detailed look at protecting the rights of asylum-seeking women.

On International Womens' Day on Friday 8th March the Home Secretary announced the Government's revised action plan on Violence Against Women. The UKBA committed to a series of new specific actions. These focus on information provision, training of decision makers, provision of country information, monitoring of decisions in women's cases and referring on women who have experienced sexual violence to appropriate services. What had happened to make the difference and what does this mean for women seeking asylum?

From the beginning of the campaign six months ago there was enthusiastic support particularly from the organisations that have endorsed the Charter of Rights of Women

Seeking Asylum and their supporters. By the time of the publication of the revised VAWG action plan, nearly 800 people had written to over 300 MPs asking them to contact the Home Secretary. Endorsers highlighted the campaign on their websites, distributed leaflets including at the party political conferences and attended stakeholder meetings at the Home Office and the UK Border Agency.

A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls: Action Plan 2013 states:

“Work to ensure that the asylum system is as gender-sensitive as possible

- Work with key stakeholders to improve the processes for referring asylum seekers who are victims of sexual violence to the appropriate services and signpost women and girls to available information and advice.
- Improve guidance and training within the asylum system by enhancing the quality of the country information on violence against women and girls available to asylum decision makers; incorporating a violence against women and girls element into credibility training and foundation training for new case owners; and continuing work with Asylum Aid and other corporate partners to develop a training DVD on managing asylum claims from women.
- Monitor how asylum interviewers and decision makers handle gender-related issues on a six monthly basis, monitor trends in performance over the longer term and address specific gender-related performance issues.” (action points 46-48)

So the Missed Out campaign has been a success. But what does that mean for women seeking asylum? Specifically the government is promising:

- Women who have been victims of sexual violence will be referred for the specialist support that they need.
- Women will have access to a more transparent asylum process, in which clearer information will be available to them.
- Decision-making in women’s cases will be enhanced because of improved training and monitoring of decisions and performance in gender-related cases. Research has shown that credibility is a key factor in women’s asylum claims, so the inclusion of violence against women as a focus in decision-makers’ training on credibility is particularly important.
- Decision-making will be improved by enhanced Country of Origin information which might help reduce incidents of women’s credibility being routinely dismissed when seeking asylum from countries where gender-based persecution is well documented.

But just having these action points written into the VAWG action plan isn’t enough. With the help of Charter endorsers, we will be monitoring these to ensure they are implemented.

More generally there are a number of positive implications from having these action points in the VAWG strategy. With two and a half years of coalition government left, Ministers have invested political capital in agreeing and honouring these promises. The UK Border Agency is

now accountable for these to the Home Secretary, who chairs the VAWG Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) which monitors the actions and milestones in the VAWG strategy. A cross-departmental VAWG Delivery Board, managed by the Home Office, has responsibility for oversight of the actions to which all individual departments have agreed and reports to the VAWG IMG. These accountability processes make it more likely that the action points will be implemented. It also makes it more likely that the UKBA will prioritise resources to achieve these. In addition it opens up the way for us to lobby for more progress again at a later stage.

The Charter endorsers can be proud that their campaign has proved successful. Women seeking asylum are no longer missed out of the VAWG strategy, and a range of improvements can now be anticipated that will benefit them. But we will be vigilant in following up this success, lobby for the action points to be implemented and for new ones to be added and continue to use the Missed Out brand to highlight the gaps in rights for women seeking asylum.

Government's VAWG action plan

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan-2013?view=Binary>

Significant Legal Issues

New EU Directive – Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings.

The EU Directive 2011/36/EU on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims, replaces the Council Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking 2002/629/JHA and comes into effect from 06 April 2013. The Directive has direct effect in all opting-in states (including the UK). It expands the definition of trafficking to include:

- forced begging
- forced marriage
- illegal adoption

Significantly, Article 8 of the Directive provides for non-prosecution or non-application of penalties to victims. It states:

"Member States shall, in accordance with the basic principles of their legal system, take the necessary measures to ensure that competent national authorities are entitled not to prosecute or impose penalties on victims of trafficking in human beings for their involvement in criminal activities which they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being subjected to any of the acts referred to in Article 2".

Provision for non punishment of victims of trafficking for involvement in criminal activities which they have been compelled to commit is not in itself new. The provision for 'non penalty' at Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings states:

"Each Party shall, in accordance with the basic principles of its legal system, provide for the possibility of not imposing penalties on victims for their involvement in unlawful activities, to the extent that they have been compelled to do so"

However, the new Directive is more strongly worded and explicitly refers to entitlement not to prosecute victims of trafficking compelled to commit criminal offences.

The Application of Article 26 had generally taken the form of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) exercising their discretion regarding whether to prosecute. In light of the coming into force of Article 8 of the new Directive in April, it is useful to consider how Article 26 has been considered by the UK Courts. The Court of Appeal case in *N, R v (Rev 1)* [2012] EWCA Crim 189 (20.02.12), provides useful insight into the issues arising in the application of mechanisms for non-prosecution or non-punishment of trafficking victims for involvement in criminal practices.

This case related to the prosecution and sentencing of two young Vietnamese boys who, it was claimed, were victims of trafficking. They had been employed in marijuana factories, for which they had received criminal convictions and sentences. Although the sentences had been served by the time the matter came to appeal, the case was important in considering the issue of child trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation and the practical application of the 'non punishment' provisions of Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

In the UK, Article 26 has been enacted via the CPS exercising discretion on whether to prosecute when the defence of duress is not available but falls within the protection of Article 26. The Court may, if it deems it appropriate, in sentencing, apply Article 26 by dealing with the defendant in a manner consistent with "non-punishment" (for example, by way of an absolute discharge). The defendants argued that the prosecutions were not safe because, had the circumstances of the defendants been properly investigated at the time the decision of the CPS ought to have been not to prosecute or, following proper investigation after conviction, it is apparent that there should never have been a prosecution as they fell within the ambit of Article 26.

The Court was clear that there is a fine balance to be struck between complying with Article 26 and ensuring due process in the criminal justice system when a victim of trafficking appeared to engage in criminal activities. It acknowledged that there may well be circumstances in which fresh evidence emerges which may support an argument that the CPS should have exercised discretion differently. However, it noted that it will only be in exceptional circumstances that a defendant could provide fresh instructions about the facts for the purposes of an appeal against a conviction, claiming the protection of Article 26 long after a conviction, on the basis that subsequent events show that, if the decision to prosecute were taken at that later date, the decision may have been different to the decision taken in the light of the standards and Guidance as they existed at the time the decision was taken. In the instant case, the Court found that the CPS was not at fault for failing to identify the two Vietnamese teenagers as potential victims of human trafficking prior to seeking prosecution.

Hopefully, under the new Directive, we will see the CPS actively considering whether an individual should benefit from the protection of Article 8, a task in which they can be greatly assisted by good immigration and criminal lawyers alert to the signs of trafficking in their clients, to the impact of the trauma of their experiences on vulnerability to coercion and of complex and often subtle forms of control that may be employed by their traffickers to compel them to commit criminal offences.

National News

Calls for Sexual Abuse Reforms To Be Applied To Women Asylum Seekers

Fiona Bawdon writes in the Guardian about the how the police and the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) in the UK are encouraging victims of sexual assault to report their cases and, that when they do so, they will be heard with sensitivity. Bawdon states, however, that this sensitive approach does not apply to all women. For example, some women who seek sanctuary in the UK after experiencing severe sexual violence continue to face a 'culture of disbelief' when disclosing their traumatic experiences during the asylum process. Although Foreign Secretary William Hague has raised concerns regarding how rape is used as a weapon of war in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bawdon reports, women who seek protection in the UK after fleeing this type of violence should not expect a sympathetic hearing. Dr Russell Hargrave at Asylum Aid supports this and says that reforms introduced by the police and CPS are not in place in the UK asylum process. He illustrates that some commitments, such as women having one UKBA case-worker throughout their cases has already been reversed *and " we're back to a situation where they may see one case-worker on Tuesday and a different one on Thursday, which makes the process even more traumatic."*

Asylum Aid's research also suggests how the 'culture of disbelief' impacts on women's asylum cases. Some 87% of the women in their study were initially refused asylum – mainly because the UKBA didn't believe them – only for 42% of these refusals to be overturned later by a judge. The comparable figure for successful appeals for all asylum seekers (male and female) is 28%, which suggests that UKBA finds it particularly difficult to make sound decisions about women.

The specific treatment of pregnant asylum seekers is also an area of concern. A recent report (see New Publications) found pregnant women being relocated, sometimes against medical advice, just one day before their child was born; some reported being dispersed to an area away from the father of their unborn child; a number ended up giving birth with only medical staff for company, and where there was no one who could speak their language. Cathy Warwick, general secretary of the Royal College of Midwives, described the report into dispersal during pregnancy as "*eye-opening*". "Clearly, there are groups of women who are receiving care that is way below even the minimum expected standards," she added.

The problem is that so long as some women continue to be seen as asylum seekers first, and vulnerable women second (if at all), calls for improvement in their treatment are likely to continue to fall on deaf ears.

For full article see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2013/mar/08/sexual-abuse-asylum-seekers>

Diary of a Refugee Mother: Two Weeks Without Heating or Hot Water

This monthly blog written by refugee women illustrates the insecurities refugee women face with their accommodation. This piece outlines one woman's battles with her landlord, the anxiety of having to move and how this disrupts the schooling of her three small children. The blog raises interesting issues regarding people's distress at reporting problems with their accommodation for fear they will be evicted. The refugee woman in this article has no heating, is washing and drying her and her children's clothes in the bath and her children have developed health problems.

For full article see:

<http://diaryofarefugeemother.wordpress.com/>

International News

Syrian Women Refugees Exploited in Egypt

Syrian refugee women arriving in Egypt are frequently placed in vulnerable positions and see marriage as their only option for survival. Lina Al Tiby, a Syrian activist living in Cairo is concerned that these marriages, which are often promoted by preachers is a form of exploitation. She states: *"Syrian families living in Egypt are in deep trouble; their financial conditions are very difficult. So when a man comes to propose to their daughters, they immediately agree, regardless of whether this man is suitable or not....Most of these marriages happen with very small dowries; some marriages happen without dowries at all".* The Egyptian National Council for Women Rights (NCWR) has issued a statement clarifying that such marriages are *"crimes committed against women under the guise of religion"*. Laila Baker, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) representative in Syria says that: *"They're picking out young girls, usually under-age. Wealthy people from Jordan, the Gulf, Libya are saying they will take these girls, marry them and give them a better life."* A joint assessment between the UNHCR, The World Food Programme and UNICEF have identified cases of severe harassment, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and verbal and physical threats against Syrian refugees in Egypt.

At the end of November 2012 the Egyptian government estimated that the Syrian refugee population was close to 100,000. There are no official statistics regarding the number of women involved in these marriages but anecdotal information suggests this is on the rise. A similar trend is also reported in Jordan.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97387/Syrian-refugee-women-exploited-in-Egypt>

India: Violence Against Pregnant Women

This article and associated video explains the harrowing treatment of Devi, a pregnant woman in labor in Bihar, India. Devi, who was anaemic and who was having breach birth, was continually hit by her doctor whilst she was trying to communicate that the pain relief was

not working. During her labor, the doctor also blatantly ignored her cries and answered phone calls during her caesarean.

The Bihar region has one of the highest rates of maternal deaths in India, a country with the highest numbers of women dying during pregnancy in the world. The majority of girls who die during pregnancy are poor, un-educated and young. Women die in delivery mainly due to excessive bleeding, obstructed labour infections as well as issues associated with high or low blood pressure including eclampsia. Women also die in their homes due to poorly trained midwives and village doctors. Some women die because they do not have a say in the decisions about their health care.

For full article see:

<http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/economics-poverty/ec-central-and-southasia/3733-violence-against-pregnant-women-in-india.html>

South Sudan: Child Marriage

The Human Rights Watch are calling for the government in South Sudan to increase its efforts to prevent child marriage. Government statistics suggest that nearly half (48%) of South Sudanese girls aged 15-19 are married and some girls as young as 12 are also being married.

As well as highlighting the consequences of child marriage such as risks of violence, health complications and withdrawal from school, The Human Rights Watch also demonstrates how young girls receive no protection if they try to resist marriage or try and leave abusive marriages. For example, their report '*This Old Man Can Feed Us, You Will Marry Him: Child and Forced Marriage in South Sudan*,' outlines the story of a 17-year-old girl whose father tried to force her to marry a man who had offered a dowry of 200 cows. The girl refused because she did not know the man, she had never spoken to him and he was much older than her. After her refusal, she was then taken to a nearby forest, tied to a tree and beaten until she died. Women's human rights director, Liesl Gertholtz states: "*The South Sudan government must make sure that there is a coordinated government response to cases of child marriage and more training for police and prosecutors on the right of girls to protection.*"

For Full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/07/south-sudan-end-widespread-child-marriage>

For a full copy of the '*This Old Man Can Feed Us, You Will Marry Him: Child and Forced Marriage in South Sudan*' report, please see:

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/03/07/old-man-can-feed-us-you-will-marry-him>

Maldives: Girl 'Lashed' After Being Raped

A 15 year old girl was sentence to 100 lashes after she was raped. The girl was charged with 'fornication' after the body of a baby was found buried outside her house. Her stepfather who had reportedly abused the girl for several years has been charged with sexually abusing a minor. Abbas Faiz, researcher for Amnesty stated: "*This is an absolute outrage. Victims of rape or other forms of sexual abuse should be given counselling and support – not*

prosecuted. We urge the Maldivian authorities immediately to overturn the conviction against the girl, ensure her safety and provide her with all the necessary support”.

Amnesty International are also concerned that similar sentences have been passed on other girls who have also experienced sexual violence in the Maldives.

For full article see:

<http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/31218/>

Burma: Sexual Violence

Thirty one ethnic women's groups in Burma have released a joint statement condemning the government for committing sexual abuse against women in the war-torn Kachin area of the country. The statement reads: *“We call for special care and priority to be given to the protection of civilians, especially women and children. This is in compliance with the spirit and content of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 1674, the Geneva Convention and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Myanmar is a party.”*

At a recent peace building workshop held in Rangoon, several women spoke and emotionally expressed their sadness and concern over the continued suffering of women and girls. Hla Hla Soe, the general secretary of the Rangoon-based Karen Women's Action Group stated: *“I was very sad to hear their terrible stories of sexual violence, such as gang rape against women and girls....Burma needs to implement a law protecting women as soon as possible.”*

For full article see:

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/25991#.URodgLKlIFk.twitter>

Afghanistan: Imprisonment for ‘Moral Crimes’

Almost all girls in juvenile detention and about half of all women imprisoned in Afghanistan have been accused of, and arrested for, ‘moral crimes.’ These ‘crimes’ often involve fleeing an unlawful forced marriage, incidents of domestic violence, rape or being forced into prostitution.

Discrimination against women in Afghanistan is rampant, and the abuse can be appalling. Domestic violence or forced marriages are rarely prosecuted. Women who try to flee abusive situations often face apathy and derision from the police and courts.

The article covers the story of Tahmina, who was kidnapped and raped after she ran away from home after learning of her planned forced marriage. Her abusers took her to a village elder who took her to the police. She was arrested for ‘moral crimes’ which included running away and having sex outside of marriage.

For full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/27/afghanistan-women-behind-bars-moral-crimes>

New Publications

When Maternity Doesn't Matter

Refugee Council and Maternity Action
February 2013

“At home I would have had a lot of people around during the birth [she is crying], not here.”

New research by Maternity Action and the Refugee Council finds that the UK Border Agency is endangering the health of pregnant asylum seeking women and their babies by moving them to accommodation around the country. This takes women away from their midwives and specialist health services and leaves them isolated and vulnerable.

When maternity doesn't matter: Dispersing pregnant women seeking asylum, explores the impact of the UKBA's policies on the health of pregnant women and new mothers. Refugee and asylum seeking women are an especially vulnerable group in relation to maternity care and pregnancy outcomes – they are more likely to have poor overall health and may have been affected by traumatic experiences in conflict and war zones such as rape, torture, female genital mutilation or trafficking for sexual exploitation. This can affect their health during pregnancy and as new mothers and evidence suggests they have a maternal mortality rate at least six times higher than the rest of the UK population.

Like other destitute asylum seekers, pregnant women who apply for accommodation and support because they cannot support themselves (either while they wait for their claim to be processed or after their claim is refused) are 'dispersed' to locations outside of London and the south east, where accommodation is more readily available. They may then be relocated to other accommodation multiple times.

Based on interviews with women directly affected and midwives involved in their care, the research finds that both the process and the repercussions of dispersal and relocation can have a major impact on women's health and experiences of pregnancy, birth, and becoming a new mother. The findings include:

- Women being moved away from midwives, GPs and specialist support that they trust and understand, and suffering serious mental health problems before and after birth.
- Women being separated from their family and social network, and in some instances, the father of their baby and leaving them isolated in an unfamiliar city.
- Women being moved multiple times during pregnancy, often to crowded and dirty accommodation where they feel unsafe and unable to care for their babies.
- Women giving birth alone, without a birth partner.
- Women having no cash for basic amenities for their baby or for transport. Many women are forced to walk long distances after childbirth or caesarean section.

To read the full report or a four page summary see: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/maternity

Following the publication of the report, Maternity Action and the Refugee Council are calling on the government to urgently review its policies to ensure that pregnant women in the asylum system, and their babies, are no longer put at risk. They are asking supporters to write to their MPs urging them to take action on this issue. This is quick and easy to do on the Refugee Council website: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/dignityinpregnancy

For more information about the report or the #DignityInPregnancy campaign, please contact Anna Musgrave, anna.musgrave@refugeecouncil.org.uk or Ros Bragg, rosbragg@maternityaction.org.uk

Too Much Pain: Female Genital Mutilation and Asylum in the European Union

UNHCR
February 2013

Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This harmful traditional practice is most common in the western, eastern, and north-eastern regions of Africa; in some countries in Asia and the Middle East; and among migrant and refugee communities from these areas in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America. FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity; the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and the right to life when the procedure results in death. The practice of FGM is also considered as a criminal act in all EU Member States.

Little is known about FGM in the European Union in general, and this statement holds true about FGM and asylum more specifically. In light of the recognized need for country- and community tailored responses, this study by UNHCR provides some of the statistical evidence needed to advance the discussion on the necessary policies and tools to address the specific vulnerabilities of female asylum-seekers. In addition, in the absence of statistical data on asylum claims relating to this harmful traditional practice, this document also provides estimates that draw attention to specific needs in relation to FGM.

For Full Report see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/512c72ec2.pdf>

Guidelines on the Transposition of the Asylum Qualification Directive: Protecting LGBTI Asylum Seekers.

ILGA - Europe
February 2013

In 2011, the European Union adopted the recast Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU) setting out rules governing minimum standards on conditions under which international protection is granted as part of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The purpose of these guidelines, which update the previous version published by ILGA-Europe in 2005 after the

adoption of the first Qualification Directive, is to identify the relevant parts of the Directive for applicants for international protection persecuted because of their being lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex. This publication will help national policy makers and NGOs to work towards full implementation of EU law in this area.

For full publication see:

www.ilga-europe.org/content/.../3/.../directive+transposition_web.pdf

Action Research with Refugee Women: Good Practice and Solutions to Community Participation

**Margaret Greenfields, Director of Institute for Diversity Research,
Buckinghamshire New University
February 2013**

The publication is based upon discussions with refugee women, a literature review and also knowledge gleaned from carrying out participatory action research (PAR) with other excluded and marginalised communities who face similar barriers accessing services. This 'good practice guide' aims to assist refugee and asylum-seeking women carrying out their own research for on-going projects. It offers practical guidance on conducting PAR, including how to interview women, commonality of experience, barriers and solutions to engaging with interviewees and cultural approaches to narratives. The report also outlines a range of ethical considerations as well as issues concerning family protection and legal status.

For full report see:

http://www.scribd.com/doc/125286265/Action-Research-With-Refugee-Women-Good-Practice-and-Solutions-to-Community-Participation#outer_page_4

India: Child Sex Abuse Shielded by Silence and Neglect

**Human Rights Watch
February 2013**

The research report builds on the 2007 governmental statistics and the "*conspiracy of silence with child sexual abuse*," a term used by the then minister of women and child development, Renuka Chowdury. This research involved meeting with experts, activists, government officials, NGOs, doctors, police officials, lawyers, as well in-depth work with eight victims of child abuse (one male and seven female) and relatives of other children who were sexually abused. The report explores what the Indian government does to prevent abuse, how it responds when it receives allegations of abuse and how it treats victims after they report abuse.

The report acknowledges that most victims of sexual child abuse in India do not report or even speak about their experiences. In addition, some families may conceal sexual abuse for fear of attracting social stigma. For example, In a village in Uttar Pradesh state, the

mother of a two year-old girl walked in on her child being molested by a 17-year-old male second cousin. The parents of the girl wanted to file a case with the police, but were persuaded by the extended family as well as the police to settle the matter privately. Rather than having the perpetrator arrested, he was instead told to leave the village. *"We know that a lot of abuse is happening but people don't talk about it,"* said Anand Prakash, a local social activist. *"It is all related to respect and the dignity of the family. If it comes out, the family will be disrespected."*

The report concludes with several recommendations for the central government, the criminal justice system, the state government as well as international actors, donors and agencies

For full research report see:

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/india0113ForUpload.pdf><http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/india0113ForUpload.pdf>

UK Training and Events

Legal Change from the Bottom Up: The Development of Gender Asylum Jurisprudence in the United States

International Refugee Law Seminar Series organised by the Human Rights Consortium

19th March (17.30-19.30), London

Deborah Anker, Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Harvard Law School Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program (HIRC) will run this seminar series. She has taught law students at Harvard for over 25 years and is the author of a leading treatise, *Law of Asylum in the United States*.

The recognition of gender-based asylum claims has had not only an extraordinary effect on women refugee claimants, but it has transformed refugee law generally both in the United States and to a great extent among many other signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The growing recognition of gender-based asylum is a product of a multi-level approach to legal change, but a bottom-up approach can be seen in persistent efforts of practitioners bringing cases before immigration judges and local asylum offices, and transforming the thinking of adjudicators and relevant institutional cultures. Gender asylum also originated not in statutes, regulations or pronouncements from higher courts but in relatively non-normative instruments including gender asylum guidelines, policy guidance and training material—from the bottom up. Law and social change is an increasingly salient topic among scholars, and the development of U.S. gender asylum law tells a fascinating and different story of progressive legal change.

For further details and to book a place at this free event please see:

<http://events.sas.ac.uk/support-research/events/view/13154/International+Refugee+Law+seminar+series:+Legal+Change+from+the+Bottom+Up:+The+Development+of+Gender+Asylum+Jurisprudence+in+the+United+States>

Creating Safe Space: Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Refugee Council

23rd May, Leeds

This course will cover:

- Understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity
- The current international context in this area
- Addressing prejudices
- UKBA policy relating to sexual orientation and gender identity as a factor in asylum claims
- Good practice for providing safe spaces for this client group

For further information please email: resource.centre@refugeecouncil.org.uk
or phone: 0113 2449404

'Moving in the Shadows: Violence in the Lives of Minority Women and Children'

Book Launch

25th March (18.00-20.00), London

'Moving in the Shadows' brings together an examination of violence against women and children within the diverse communities of the UK for the first time in a single volume. This book also includes a specific chapter on women asylum seekers, which Asylum Aid's Debora Singer contributed.

The event will be chaired by: Dr Purna Sen of London School of Economics, and open with an introduction by the Editors Prof Liz Kelly, Yasmin Rehman and Hannana Siddiqui.

For more event information, please contact:

Gemma Collins

cwasu@londonmet.ac.uk

020 7133 5014

For information about the book *'Moving in the Shadows'* see

http://www.ashgate.com/default.aspx?page=637&calcTitle=1&title_id=11154&edition_id=11499

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum



Endorsements: 335

Google group membership: 168

Love doesn't kill, violence does.

Latin American women have settled in the UK since the 60s. Some came as political refugees from Chile, Argentina and Cuba, others from Colombia or as economic migrants trying to find better opportunities. Many come here fleeing poverty and violence only to face similar situations in the UK.

Currently we are one of the fastest growing ethnic minority groups in the UK but Latin American women remain invisible for policy, strategic and practical [purposes](#).

Latin American women experience culturally specific forms of VAWG. There is no research about the number of women survivors of violence from Latin America and the problems that they face. At the Latin American Women's Rights Service ([LAWRS](#)) we see around 500 women survivors of violence per year many coming with complex cases and multiple needs.

We are seeing growing numbers of women trafficked into prostitution into the UK, young women being groomed by men visiting Latin America and deceived into the false expectation of marriage and a better life in the UK and specific cultural forms of honour based violence.

Latin American women also face barriers in accessing services including multiple discrimination, immigration status, language, barriers to access mainstream services and difficulties in reporting due to fear and isolation. Many women either refugees, asylum seekers or migrants remain trapped in violent relationships for years dependent on their husbands and unable to speak up or scared about deportation.

To raise awareness about the prevalence of VAWG in our community and the fact that it is a crime LAWRS launched its campaign "Love doesn't kill but violence does" in January 2012 with Stella Creasy MP's support.

We are also calling on the Government and Local Authorities to:

- Recognize Latin Americans as an official ethnic minority
- Provide appropriate and targeted services to LA women victims of violence and abuse.
- Secure funding for specialist community organizations responding to the needs of LA women and other minorities victims of violence and abuse

Campaign details at: <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/#/launch-of-campaign/4572019910>

Campaign video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48aoVRVky74>

For more information on the Charter and the Missed Out campaign, please go to www.asylumaid.org.uk/charter

If your organisation would like to endorse the Charter, please send an email simply stating the name of your organisation to charter@asylumaid.org.uk

She was detained without charge

Nobody believed her story and no-one spoke up for her

Her family and friends didn't know where she was

Afraid...isolated...

She had no idea what would happen to her next

And that was after she sought asylum in the UK

Our asylum system is now so tough that, all too often, this is how people seeking help are treated. And that can't be right.

We believe the system should be fair and just and that every asylum seeker should have legal help to make their case - only then can we say in good conscience 'let the law take its course'.

Asylum Aid is an independent, national charity that secures protection for people seeking refuge in the UK from persecution in their home countries.

We provide expert legal representation to asylum seekers and campaign for a fair and just asylum system. Founded in 1990, we have since helped 30,000 people to get a fair hearing. In 2009 85% of our clients were granted leave to stay in the UK when decisions were made on their claims for protection.

Please support us

Your donation will safeguard our independence and enable us to stand up for fair asylum rights without fear or favour.

You can make a donation via our website:
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Please return this form in an envelope to:
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