

Women's Asylum News

Women's Project at Asylum Aid

IN THIS ISSUE

Lead Article: Improving the assesment of 'credibility' in asylum claims in the UK and Europe	pp. 1-3
Sector Update	pp. 4-6
Significant Legal Issues	pp. 7-8
National News	p. 9
International News	pp. 9-11
Publications	pp.11-13
UK Training and Events	p. 13
Charter Update	p. 14

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Improving the assessment of 'credibility' in asylum claims in the UK and Europe

By Mohbuba Choudhury, Senior Protection Associate, UNHCR London

Credibility findings form a core element of asylum decisions, involving a determination on the facts in respect to the applicant's statements and other evidence about past events and/or their current circumstances and profile. It is only once these findings have been made, and facts accepted that a decision-maker can go on to make an assessment as to whether the individual will be at risk on return to their country of origin. These findings are often the pivot upon which a case turns, influencing the outcome of the asylum decision. There is a general trend across EU Member States whereby applications for international protection are often rejected at first instance on the basis of negative credibility assessments. This is coupled with a lack of common understanding of, and approach to, assessing credibility amongst those States. In recognizing these trends UNHCR¹ has undertaken a comprehensive study into credibility assessments, the results of which have just been published in the report 'Beyond Proof: Credibility Assessment in EU Asylum Systems.'

¹ Alongside the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Asylum Aid.

The report includes research conducted by UNHCR in the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Belgium providing a unique insight into State practice in relation to credibility assessments. The report draws on existing guidance from the UK and other states, training material including the European Asylum Curriculum and over 200 rulings by international, regional and national courts in an effort to clarify key concepts and standards which have a bearing on credibility assessment.

A key requirement of EU asylum law is that decision-makers undertake an objective, impartial, and individual assessment of an asylum claim taking into account the applicant's background and circumstances.² To do this the decision-maker must cross geographical, cultural, socio-economic, gender, educational and religious barriers to fully understand different individual experiences leading to a claim for asylum. In recognition of this requirement, a prominent feature of the report is the call for a multi-disciplinary approach to credibility assessment. Such an approach requires decision-makers to be informed of developments in a number of disciplinary fields including neurobiology, psychology, anthropology, cultural and gender studies. These fields provide a holistic view of human behaviour and memory, which help prevent unreasonable expectations and various assumptions from being drawn in regard to the applicant's credibility.

Whilst 'Beyond Proof' acknowledges that the current UK Asylum Instruction on credibility³ outlines some multi-disciplinary factors (referred to as 'mitigating circumstances') which may affect the applicant's ability to provide detailed, coherent and consistent evidence, the report also highlights the drawback found in the same guidance which encourages decision-makers to discount such factors:

*'It is reasonable to expect, subject to mitigating circumstances, that an applicant relating an experience that occurred to them will be more expressive and include sensory details such as what they saw, heard, felt or thought about an event, than someone who has not had this experience. **Notwithstanding any mitigating circumstances, [emphasis added] it is a reasonable expectation for an applicant to recount an event to the level of detail that can be reasonably expected of an individual who has experienced the claimed event.**'⁴*

In practice, UNHCR's review of case files showed few examples of decision-makers taking into consideration the various factors which affect the applicant's ability to provide evidence.

'Beyond Proof' mainstreams considerations in respect of gender throughout the report, highlighting the gender-specific considerations which should be at the forefront of decision-maker's minds when applying credibility indicators. Asylum-seeking women often face different experiences of

² Relevant provisions found in: Council of the European Union, Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted; Asylum Procedures Directive: Council of the European Union, Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005, on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status.

³ UK Border Agency, Asylum Policy Instruction 'Considering Asylum Claims and Assessing Credibility,' V8.0, July 2012

⁴ UK Border Agency, Asylum Policy Instruction 'Considering Asylum Claims and Assessing Credibility,' V8.0, July 2012

persecution from that of men such as rape, sexual abuse, forced genital mutilation amongst many others. UNHCR's report draws attention to the wealth of research in the field of psychology which reveals that the consequence of these traumatic events may affect a woman's ability to recall past and present facts relevant to their application. In particular, the report emphasizes the gender differences on recall, the limits and variations of human memory as well as the impact of trauma on memory.

UNHCR's review of case files showed a general lack of awareness of gender and its resulting consequences upon credibility indicators amongst decision-makers. By way of illustration, in one case reviewed, despite a female applicant's claim to have been sexually abused repeatedly from a young age, the impact of this experience on her ability to provide detail about it was not acknowledged nor considered in the assessment.⁵ The reasoning in the decision also failed to recognize the potential impact of shame and stigma experienced by women in disclosing details relating to sexual violence.

The report acknowledges the gender constraints in some societies which restrict access to information for women curtailing their knowledge particularly in relation to the professional, political, military and social activities of men. This is likely to account for a female applicant's lack of knowledge. However, UNHCR's findings show that, in practice, some decision-makers considered this an unsatisfactory explanation, instead regarding gaps in their knowledge as an adverse indicator of credibility. In one case for example, an Iraqi woman who claimed that her husband worked in the Iraqi Republican Guards repeatedly asserted she did not know the details about his job. Nevertheless, the subsequent decision letter stated: *'It is very unlikely that your husband served for the Republican Guard during 16 years and you can only provide so little information about this. You indicate that nothing about this was told to you as a woman [...] This explanation however is not sufficient.'*⁶

UNHCR's observations show that whilst the UK and other EU States have made progress in developing guidance on credibility including gender specific guidance,⁷ challenges in relation to implementing this guidance remain in practice. With this report UNHCR hopes to equip decision-makers with the requisite knowledge and skills to achieve an objective, impartial and protection-sensitive approach to credibility assessments.

The full report is available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/519b1fb54.html>

A summary of the report is available at: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=51a704244&skip=0&query=credibility>.

⁵ IRQ04F

⁶ IRQ08FSP

⁷ Asylum Policy Instruction 'Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim,' Version 2.0, September 2010

Sector Update

Women's asylum rights under scrutiny in Parliament

by Dr Russell Hargrave, Communications and Public Affairs Officer, Asylum Aid

The Home Office has substantial problems whenever asylum claims involve gender. Refusals are still overturned for women at a disproportionate rate. The quality of decisions made for victims of trafficking, rape, FGM and other gender-based persecution remains poor. Co-ordination of work through the allotted Gender Champion is generally non-existent. In recognition of this, representatives from Asylum Aid and Women for Refugee Women were invited to parliament last month to explain why these problems have endured as long as they have and what needs to happen next.

Debora Singer and Natasha Walter were questioned by the influential Home Affairs Select Committee, which holds the Home Office to account over its policies. The Committee had just started its much-anticipated inquiry into the asylum system, and started with the rights of women who ask for refugee protection here.

Both stressed the importance of getting asylum decisions right first time, something which has long needed attention if asylum seekers are to be treated fairly and the government is to save money. But this was also a welcome opportunity to put a human face to some of the numbers and statistics. Debora told the Committee about the women who come to see Asylum Aid's lawyers every day, seeking help after fleeing many of the most dangerous parts of the world. Natasha talked about the support that her organisation was able to give to women who had been persecuted, and their evidence of how vulnerable these women could be to further abuse in the UK.

There was a consensus from both charities that the policies in place to help women are either ignored or inadequately implemented. While improvements to policy are crucial, the most pressing concern was clearly to make count those which are already in place. Natasha warned against the 'domino effect' whereby small inconsistencies in accounts by traumatised asylum seekers was used to undermine their entire claim, in breach of the Home Office's own policy; Debora pointed out the Home Office consistently applies the wrong standard of proof when assessing the credibility of women seeking asylum, holding them to more than the "reasonable likelihood" or "real risk" of harm required under asylum caselaw and policy.

The Select Committee is understandably keen on solutions, however, so Asylum Aid and Women for Refugee Women recommended two routes to lasting reform. Firstly, there need to be tangible changes to the way the asylum system is run. It should learn from the success and failure in recent decades of gender-sensitive reforms in the police and Crown Prosecution Service, for example, by making asylum interviews less adversarial and more consensual. The government should collect more transparent data to guide its future decisions. And support should be available so that women are never forced into destitution.

But secondly, and essentially, these changes on the ground need to be accompanied by a change in culture, away from an unswerving focus on immigration control and towards an environment confident about giving refugee protection to those women who need it. The disbandment of the UK Border Agency provides an opportunity to breathe new life into the way asylum seekers are treated and decisions are made. The final report of the Select Committee will provide another. It just waits to be seen whether ministers and officials make the most of them.

Refugee Women's Strategy Group mark World Refugee Day by calling for an asylum system that ensures protection for women

On 20 June Refugee Women's Strategy Group (RWSG) launched [*Making Asylum Work for Women: Our recommendations for a fair asylum system*](#) to coincide with World Refugee Day. Arguing that too many women seeking sanctuary in the UK are denied the protection they deserve, RWSG calls for an asylum system that recognises and responds to the needs and experiences of women fleeing persecution.

Building on their experience engaging partners and communities in Scotland around the issues facing refugee and asylum seeking women, RWSG outlines what it believes are relatively simple and cost-effective measures for improving the way women are treated in the asylum process. These measures, they argue, will not only help prevent destitution and exploitation but also backlogs, delays, and the high cost of unnecessary appeals.

RWSG was inspired to publish their recommendations by the Women's Asylum Charter and the work of others such as Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST). Their work draws on many of the RWSG members' own experiences of claiming asylum in the UK. As RWSG member Patricia Nganga said, "Women who make it through the asylum process should be awarded a medal – it's so difficult and it takes so much endurance."

Key recommendations RWSG put forward include increased training for frontline Home Office staff to promote a better understanding of the impact of gender and trauma. They also highlight the need for childcare during substantive interviews in Glasgow (where women have been unable to access childcare for the last year) and across the UK to ensure that women – and particularly those who have experienced violence – are able to disclose their experiences.

RWSG also make the case for the introduction of routine asylum screening in Scotland, highlighting the difficulties involved in women having to travel to Croydon to register their applications. Children's needs also feature, with a recommendation that children should be exempt from reporting during the asylum process.

With around 15 key members, many of whom represent refugee led groups and all of whom have experienced the UK asylum system first-hand, RWSG are well-informed about the obstacles facing refugee and asylum seeking women. Since 2004 they have been committed to ensuring that the voices of refugee women in Scotland are heard and to improving their lives in Scotland. With funding from Comic Relief and support from Scottish Refugee Council, they have campaigned for an asylum system that is genuinely gender sensitive, holding meetings with Home Office officials, submitting

oral and written evidence to parliamentary inquiries and, most recently, through engagement with the wider refugee community in Scotland as part of their 'Speak for Yourself' initiative, which is expected to culminate in the autumn with a refugee women's conference.

RWSG have already been successful in mobilising support for a fairer asylum system in the UK and it is hoped that the recommendations laid out in *Making Asylum Work for Women* will further influence change. They have written to the Immigration Minister, officials at the Home Office, and the Scottish Government with their recommendations and it is expected that meetings will now take place to take forward their work.

To download the full report go to

http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/6398/SRC_Making_Asylum_work_for_women_V5_3.pdf

For a copy of the recommendations or for further information please email rwsg@mail.com

Alternatively, you can contact:

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Tell us about your #EverydaySexism

"I was destitute for 15 months when the Home Office refused my asylum case in 2009. There were many women, just like myself, who had nowhere to go, and we spent our nights in shelters. Sometimes those shelters are full, and we were forced to spend the night on the streets. One woman told me how she had been raped on the streets because she was sleeping rough."

This is Herlinde's experience of sexism in the UK asylum system, which she has shared on the new page dedicated to women refugees on the hugely popular Everyday Sexism website. It was launched last year and already 25,000 women have shared their experiences of sexism.

Women for Refugee Women has joined forces with the Everyday Sexism project so that refugee women can share their stories and build solidarity for their cause. There is a dedicated white flag to symbolise the statelessness of refugee women on the home page, alongside the flags of 16 other countries.

We ask you to encourage and support all women who are refugees, claiming asylum and forced to flee their countries to share their story at <http://refugeewomen.everydaysexism.com/> or to tweet it to **@4refugeewomen**

If you have any questions about how you or your organisation can be involved in this project please contact kate@refugeewomen.co.uk

Significant Legal Issues

Protection from Prosecution: Trafficking Case Law Update

The recent Court of Appeal case of **L, HVN, THN,T & R [2013] EWCA Crim 991** is a major step forward in securing justice for victims of trafficking who are forced into criminal activity by their traffickers.

The case involved appeals by four separate victims of trafficking against their criminal conviction for engaging in criminal activity as a result of being trafficked to the UK. Three of the victims had been trafficked to the UK as children and forced to engage in production of controlled drugs. The fourth was a woman in her 30s who had been trafficked into prostitution and convicted of possession of a false identify document.

The court allowed the appeal against the conviction on the grounds that, had the evidence now available to the Court been available at the time when the decision to prosecute was made, the prosecution would not have proceeded. In all cases, the Court found that the appellants had been compelled to engage in the criminal activity which was a direct consequence of the exploitation as a victim of trafficking. As a result the convictions against the appellants were quashed.

The Court went on to set down guidance on how prosecutions of victims of trafficking for involvement in criminal activity would be considered, and stressed the complexity of striking the correct balance in securing justice for victims of trafficking whilst at the same time appropriately punishing culpable engagement in criminal activity. Indeed, the Court commented that the four cases before it demonstrated that;

'....the investigating and prosecuting authorities, the legal professions, and the courts must be alert to the potential difficulties to which cases involving victims of trafficking can give rise' (para 34).

The Court was clear that there was no blanket immunity from prosecution for criminal activity purely on the grounds the defendant was a victim of trafficking, very careful consideration must be given to any evidence that the victim of trafficking was compelled to engage in the criminal activity, having no realistic alternative open to them.

The Court stated, *'The criminality, or putting it another way, the culpability, of any victim of trafficking may be significantly diminished, and in some cases, effectively extinguished, not merely because of age (always a relevant factor in the case of a child defendant) but because no realistic alternative was available to the exploited victim but to comply with the dominant force or another individual, or group of individuals' (para 13).*

The Court has discretion to 'stay' a prosecution, if it finds that, taking all of the circumstances in the round, it disagrees with the decision to prosecute. Indeed, it commented;

'The court protects the rights of a victim of trafficking by overseeing the decision of the prosecutor and refusing to countenance any prosecution which fails to acknowledge and address the victim's

subservient situation, and the international obligations to which the United Kingdom is a party' (para 16)

For instance, this would be the case if the evidence before the Court was overwhelming that the victim of trafficking was compelled to engage in the criminal activity, such that they cannot fairly be held to be 'culpable'. This will most obviously be so in the case of a child, although it is not limited to child victims and every case must be considered on its own merits.

In other cases, where it is accepted the prosecution was appropriate, nonetheless, the evidence may support an argument for 'diminished responsibility'. This reduced level of culpability may be reflected in the sentence imposed by the Court.

However, in other cases, the fact the defendant was a victim of trafficking will not be a relevant factor in consideration of culpability or of sentencing, and may *'provide no more than a colourable excuse for criminality which is unconnected to and does not arise from their victimisation'* (para 33).

It is understood that, in light of the Court's guidance, the Director of Public Prosecution is to review existing guidance on the exercise of their powers of discretion in deciding whether to prosecute victims of trafficking. However, this case also has significant implications for the treatment of victims of trafficking by the police. As was stressed by the ECHR in *CN v UK* (No 4239/08) (discussed in WAN Issue 115, January/February 2013), the police are under a duty to carry out a thorough investigation once they become aware of an actual or suspected case of trafficking. The quality of the police investigation, and how diligently any signs that the defendant was potentially a victim of trafficking, were pursued, is now likely to be under considerable scrutiny in cases of criminal prosecution of victims of trafficking when the Court considers whether the prosecution should have been brought.

Clearly, immigration lawyers need to remain alert to signs that a client may be a victim of trafficking, keeping in mind the EU Directive, effective from 6th April 2013, which expanded the definition of trafficking.

It is worth remembering here the recent cases in the ECHR which provided useful guidance on the assessment of what constitutes 'forced labour' and the factors to be borne in mind when assessing how far a victim may have perceived their situation as 'immutable' and hence felt compelled to engage in criminal activity. This may include threats by the trafficker to send them back to their home country, where they may fear persecution, if they fail to comply. Some of these ECHR cases were explicitly referenced by the Court in its consideration of the evolving body of case law on trafficking.

As a result of this Court of Appeal decision, we may now move towards a closer and more collaborative working relationship between immigration lawyers, criminal lawyers and the police, in avoiding unnecessary prosecutions. However, in cases where prosecution does take place, the willingness of the Court to seriously consider degrees of culpability, both in deciding whether to stay the prosecution and in the exercise of its sentencing powers, is a huge and welcome advance in preventing miscarriages of justice for victims of trafficking.

Going a step further, to pursue some form of redress for victims of trafficking, an additional area where immigration and criminal lawyers may fruitfully work together is taking claims for financial

compensation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme for the trauma suffered as a direct result of the criminal act of being trafficked to the UK and exploited.

National News

UK Government examination by UN Women's Committee

On July 17th the UK Government was examined on its activities to eliminate discrimination against women by the Committee of the UN Convention on Women (CEDAW) in Geneva. A full shadow report for the Committee, covering all the CEDAW articles, was coordinated by the Women's Resource Centre. Those working through the Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum contributed to this shadow report detailing the issues that exist for women seeking asylum.

The States reporting to the CEDAW committee during the 55th session held 8th to 26th July in Geneva are Afghanistan, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Cape Verde, United Kingdom, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

UK report to CEDAW Committee

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/648/56/PDF/N1164856.pdf?OpenElement>

Shadow report to CEDAW Committee

http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WRC-CEDAW-Booklet_final-links.pdf

International News

Pakistan: Honour Killings

The BBC has reported on the 'honour' killing of three women in northern Pakistan. The article documents how a woman and her two daughters were shot by her step son after seemingly bringing shame on the family. The attack was in response to male family members seeing footage of the women laughing outside of their home and one of the women thanking an admirer for a gift. The article also highlights that other 'honour' crimes have been reported in the same mountainous region of Gilgit Baltista. Last year the tribal Jirga, or local council ordered the killing of five women and two men after they were seen laughing and dancing together at a wedding. Campaigners say more than 900 women were killed in Pakistan last year in the name of family 'honour'. In spite of reform in the law they say conviction rates are not encouraging and in most cases the killers continue to escape justice.

For full article see:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23084689>

Afghanistan: Women's Rights

Human Rights Watch has called for greater political measures to be implemented to help protect women in Afghanistan. They raise concerns that after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, women's rights may deteriorate. Such apprehensions come amid recent suggestions that President Hamid Karzai told women's rights activists that he is unable to support further efforts to protect violence against women. Several women's rights advocates state that Karzai told them that he *"had done all he could for them and could not do any more"* to protect the 2009 Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women (the EVAW Law). They said he advised them specifically to stop advocating for stronger enforcement of the EVAW Law. Brad Adams, Asia director for Human Rights Watch said: *"President Karzai needs to understand just how high the stakes are for Afghanistan in the debate over women's rights. Donors should be clear that if Afghanistan doesn't defend women's rights, the money will no longer flow for the army or the police."*

For full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/28/afghanistan-defend-women-s-rights>

Thailand: Calls for an Investigation into Sexual Trafficking

Human Rights Watch has called for an immediate investigation into reports that a 25 year old Rohingya woman was taken out of a government run shelter by human traffickers and repeatedly raped. Descriptions have emerged that known traffickers were able to gain access to the shelter in Phang Nga province soon after a group of about 70 Rohingya women and children arrived.

Tens of thousands of Rohingya flee persecution in Burma and try and find sanctuary in Thailand. Under immense international pressure, the government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra agreed in January 2013 to let these Rohingya stay in Thailand temporarily, until they can be safely repatriated to their places of origin or resettled in third countries. Calling them "illegal immigrants," Thai authorities have put Rohingya men in overcrowded immigration detention facilities across the country. Women and children have been sent to shelters operated by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. As a result, in a number of cases, families have been split up.

The Human Rights Watch is fearful that Rohingya women are being exploited by traffickers and corrupt Thai officials. They call for the United Nations and international community to do more to help.

For full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/27/thailand-traffickers-access-government-run-shelter>

Mali: Women and Girls Forced into Survival Sex

Fourteen months of occupation and conflict in Mali has purportedly resulted in 475,000 being displaced from their homes. With few other options, women and girls are believed to be increasingly turning to sex work. NGO 'Danaya So' (House of Trust in the local language Bambara), has registered

3,800 sex workers in central Mali's towns of Mopti and Sévaré, as well as in Bamako, but the real number is much higher. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has registered 41 girls in Mopti aged 15-18 who have turned to survival sex. Aminata Dicko Sangaré, UNICEF's protection project administrator in Mali stated: *"Of the 41 we registered, almost all were without their parents or without their husbands who they said had disappeared or been killed during the fighting"*. Young women are also under immense pressure to financially support their family and some young girls are pushed on to the streets in order to help their family survive. One woman recites that she has 3-5 clients a night to pay for her food, clothing and rent; on average she earns US\$2 a night. She claims: *"I do not want to do this, but I have no choice. It is really bad but this is the only way for me to get money at the moment."*

Women and girls have also reported being raped by rebels. 'Danaya So's director, Kadidjatou Coulibaly said: *"I first heard about the rebels raping women in May, a couple of weeks after they occupied Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu [and] almost immediately after we received the first group of young women."*

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/98161/displaced-malians-turn-to-survival-sex>

Syria: Female Activists Detained and Abused

Female opposition activists as well as female relatives and neighbors of pro-opposition activists have been detained by pro-government forces in Syria. Human Rights Watch interviewed 10 Syrian women who were detained, either due to their own engagement in activities related to government opposition, or that of their family members. Eight were themselves activists who had been detained, all of whom said that security forces had abused or tortured them in detention. All said security forces detained them at checkpoints or during home raids, and held them for periods lasting up to nearly 14 months. Human Rights Watch also interviewed two women who were detained, and five who were physically abused, by government forces simply because of the suspected association of their relatives or neighbours with pro-opposition forces.

Liesl Gemholtz women's rights director at Human Rights Watch stated *"The Syrian government is punishing women for delivering humanitarian assistance, participating in protests, and supporting the opposition by subjecting them to detention, torture, and sexual assault....The Syrian government must immediately stop abusing female activists and put in measures to protect them. Those who have committed these crimes must be held accountable."*

For full article see:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/24/syria-detention-and-abuse-female-activists>

Publications

Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-partner Sexual Violence

World Health Organisation June 2013

This report, developed by the World Health Organization, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council presents the first global systematic review and synthesis of the body of scientific data on the prevalence of two forms of violence against women — violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner violence) and sexual violence by someone other than a partner (nonpartner sexual violence). It shows, for the first time, aggregated global and regional prevalence estimates of these two forms of violence, generated using population data from all over the world that have been compiled in a systematic way. The report also details the effects of violence on women's physical, sexual and reproductive, and mental health.

The report highlights the need to address the economic and sociocultural factors that foster a culture of violence against women. The findings demonstrate that violence against women is pervasive globally and that it is a major contributing factor to women's ill health. In combination, these findings send a powerful message that violence against women is not a small problem that only occurs in some pockets of society, but rather is a global public health problem of epidemic proportions, requiring urgent action.

For full report see:

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf

Trafficking in Persons Report 2013 US Department of State June 2013

This report published by the US Department of State is informed by information from U.S. embassies, government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, published reports, news articles, academic studies and overseas research trips. It provides clear definitions and illustrates which individuals are at risk of different forms of trafficking including: sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, bonded labour and debt bondage, forced labour, involuntary domestic servitude and forced child labour.

The publication provides a Trafficking in Persons report with four tiers (tier 1, tier 2, tier 2 watch list and tier 3). At one level, Tier 1 ranking indicates that governments have acknowledged the existence of human trafficking, have made efforts to address the problem and meet minimum standards. At the other level, Tier 3 illustrates the countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. Tier rankings and narratives in the 2013 TIP Report reflect an assessment of: enactment of laws prohibiting severe forms of trafficking in persons; criminal penalties; implementation of human trafficking laws; proactive victim identification measures; government funding and partnerships with NGOs to provide victims with support and governmental measures to prevent human trafficking. A detailed breakdown of regions and individual country narratives are provided.

For full report see:

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/index.htm>

Making Love a Crime: Criminalisation of Same Sex Conduct in Sub Sahara Africa

Amnesty International

June 2013

This report provides an analysis of the legal environment and wider context of human rights violations against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals in sub-Saharan Africa. The continued criminalization of consensual same-sex conduct in 38 African countries is a serious cause for concern. The existence and implementation of these laws violates a raft of international and regional human rights norms, and serves to marginalize one group of Africans based on their sexual orientation and gender identity alone.

This report reviews, with supporting legal authority and other relevant material, the current state of criminal provisions outlawing consensual same-sex conduct in sub-Saharan African countries. The analysis of the legal environment covers all sub-Saharan African countries. The implications of the legal environment for LGBTI people are further illuminated through examples based on interviews with activists and experts from four countries: Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon and South Africa. Specific chapters include: violence by state and non-state actors and the role and influence of gender norms as well as the specific vulnerability of lesbians.

For full report see:

http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/making_love_a_crime_-_africa_lgbti_report_emb_6.24.13_0.pdf

Training

Free On-line Course: FGM

Partners of the END FGM Campaign have developed a free online learning tool to help health and asylum professionals. The on-line course is aimed at strengthening the skills needed to maintain a high standard of decision-making in asylum claims and to protect women and girls affected or at risk of FGM. The tool is supported by the UNHCR and is currently available in English, Italian and Portuguese. Course participants register for one of three streams of study:

- Asylum Stream
- Health Stream
- Combined Stream

The course consists of two Foundation Modules and four Specialised Modules—two in the area of health and two in the area of asylum. Designed as virtual seminars, each module provides the practical information and specialised training required to support and guide those affected by FGM through healthcare and asylum procedures, along with extensive web-links to primary data and sources. Each module combines a variety of material and exercises, including docudramas, case studies, additional reading and self-assessment quizzes. To register for the course see: <http://www.uefgm.org/>

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum



Endorsements: 339

Google group membership: 165

London Refugee Women's Forum

Who are we?

London Refugee Women's Forum (LRWF) is a newly established organization. It was formed after a pool of talented refugees and asylum seeking women came together in March 2013, after a successful 6 weeks campaign training course by the Movement for Change, and supported by the Refugee Council and Women for Refugee Women. LRWF now consists of 15 founding members.

Our aim and our beliefs

We are currently campaigning to end the destitution of asylum seeking women. We believe the right to work should be considered for all human beings, regardless of their asylum status. Because their asylum case has been refused, women become destitute with no money and no access to basic needs. Many women are left vulnerable on the streets, sometimes resulting in them becoming prostitutes, sex workers or domestic slaves. We want to overturn the culture of disbelief, which is the biggest threat to women seeking asylum. We simply want a fair and just asylum system.

Our story so far!

We carried out a research into destitution. We interviewed 30 women, 23 of whom were currently destitute. We submitted this evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee who are undertaking their first inquiry on asylum in ten years. Following this, we were also asked to give oral evidence. We've had further training in film making and have produced a short film showing the experiences of asylum seeking and refugee women in the UK, and we were both behind and in front of the camera!

We are going to launch our film shortly. We hope that many groups will invite us to show our film so we can raise awareness of the plight of refugee and asylum seeking women, and share our stories with them.

What is our future plan?

Please get in touch if you would like to organise a film screening. We would like to connect with as many groups as possible as we build the support for refugee and asylum seeking women.

You can contact us at marchu@refugeewomen.co.uk.

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:
www.asylumaid.org.uk/pages/give_now.html
OR send it to us by post with this form:

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone:
Email:
I want to make a one-off gift of £

(please make cheques payable to Asylum Aid)

Your Gift Aid declaration

If you are a UK taxpayer, the value of your donation can increase by at least 25% under the Gift Aid scheme - at no additional cost to you. Please tick the box below to join the Gift Aid scheme.

I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer and that I pay as much income or capital gains tax as Asylum Aid will reclaim in the tax year. Please treat all donations I make or have made to Asylum Aid for the past four years as Gift Aid donations until further notice.

Please notify us if you are no longer eligible to Gift Aid your donations.

We will not sell or swap your personal details with any other organization. We would like to keep you informed about our work, campaigning and membership. If you do not wish to receive any information from Asylum Aid other than relating to your donation, please tick this box

www.asylumaid.org.uk

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Or, I want to make a regular gift to Asylum Aid by setting up a Standing Order

To: The Manager, Bank:

Address:

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I wish to make a regular gift of £

each month/ quarter/ year (please circle) until further notice and debit my bank account:

Account number:

Sort code:

Starting on (date):

Signature:

Date:

FOR OFFICIAL USE: To: The Cooperative Bank, 60 Cornhill, London EC3N 3NU, Sort code: 08-03-01, Account number: 0208 1202

Please return this form in an envelope to: Freepost RRJJ-BRGA-ZHAR, Asylum Aid, Club Union House, 253-254 Upper Street, London N1 1RU



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