



RCD Women's News

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International Women's Day 2008- celebrating achievement and striving for change

International Women's Day is celebrated across the world annually on 8 March. The day is a symbol of women's united action for global equality and to inspire women to achieve their full potential. Many events on this day celebrate the progress made since the first International Women's Day in the 1900s; women have become Prime Ministers, go to university and have successful careers. However, in many areas women are still unequal to men; they are paid less and are under-represented in positions of power. Even worse, some women find themselves trapped in situations of oppression and vulnerability, particularly those subject to human trafficking who are forced into labour and sexual slavery.

Human traffickers transport innocent victims from one country to another by means that include: threats, abduction or deception in order to exploit them. Most often, trafficking victims find themselves working in hospitality, domestic labour, care, agriculture, construction and prostitution.¹ This crisis disproportionately affects women; they are involved in 77% of trafficking cases worldwide and sexual exploitation is a factor behind 87% of these cases.²

The UK is a prime destination for trafficked women with the Home Office estimating that 4,000 women were trafficked here for sexual exploitation in 2003.³ They mainly come from Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, Balkans, China, Malaysia and Thailand. Thankfully the problem is becoming more widely recognised and last year the UK Government set up the UK Human Trafficking Action Plan. This aims to prevent people becoming victims, to make the UK a hostile place for traffickers, and to provide assistance to victims. However, many of these victims still do not receive enough support and are viewed as illegal immigrants which may result in their forced removal from the UK.

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking seeks to offer more support to these victims. The Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith announced on 14 January that the UK would ratify this Convention by the end of this year. The Convention seeks to provide a period of at least 30 days for victims to receive support to aid recovery, including safe housing and emergency medical support. It also calls for temporary residence permits for trafficked people who may be in danger if they return home and for assistance to be provided for criminal proceedings.⁴ Out of the 47 Members of the Council, 37 have signed the Convention but only 11 have ratified it. Most of the countries that have ratified are home countries of trafficked victims.

The Refugee Council has responded positively towards this announcement, with Chief Executive Donna Covey particularly pleased with the accompanying news that there will be a review on the UK Convention on the Rights of the Child. She said: "Children who are the subject of immigration control are often among the most vulnerable, some here without their parents or anyone to look after them. All children should be treated equally while they are here." This International Women's Day it is hoped that the women and children who are in situations of oppression and vulnerability are not forgotten but that commitments to empowerment and equality are acted upon together.

Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking:

www.coe.int/t/dg2/trafficking/campaign/Source/PDF_Conv_197_Trafficking_E.pdf

Official International Women's Day website:

www.internationalwomensday.com

¹ www.amnesty.org.uk

² www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5343036.stm

³ www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/England/6459369

⁴ www.amnesty.org.uk

Funding news

BBC Children in Need provide grants for up to 3 years for not for profit organisations working with disadvantaged young people, aged 18 and under.

Grants are given to organisations that work with young people suffering from illness, distress, abuse or neglect, disabilities, behavioural or psychological difficulties and those living in poverty and deprivation.

Closing date: **30 March 2008**. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/charity/grants.shtml for more information.

Harland and Voss International Women's Day Donation 2008

Harland and Voss International (London electricians) are inviting applications from any registered charity that provides a direct service to London women to benefit their health, safety or wellbeing.

Priority will be given to charities with an annual turnover under **£500,000** that serve women in **North West** and **Central London**.

Closing date: 29 February 2008.

To apply for the donation, visit the company's website at www.harlandvoss.com

New resource pack

How can I Support Her? Domestic Violence, Immigration and Women with no Recourse to Public Funds - provides information to voluntary and community organisations that support women with insecure immigration status who experience domestic violence. It gives advice on making applications under the Domestic Violence Rule, information on other immigration and asylum procedures and details of financial support that women may be eligible for. The report can be downloaded at www.wrc.org.uk/resources/publications.htm

Hard copies are available from Southall Black Sisters at a donation of **£10** on **020 8571 9595** or email southallblacksisters@btconnect.com

Training

Two day training on **Working with Female Survivors of Violence and Abuse** provided by the Lilith Project at Eaves Housing for Women and Tender.

The training is for staff working with women that have experienced violence and abuse. The training will provide a better understanding of common barriers to accessing services and supplying appropriate information.

Date: **25 and 26 March** at **Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2**

To book a place contact **Suzan Malaquias** on **0207 840 7952** or email suzan.malaquinas@eaveshousing.co.uk

New publication

Safe to Return? Pakistani women, domestic violence and access to refugee protection- A report of a trans-national research project conducted in the UK and Pakistan, is a new joint publication from the South Manchester Law Centre and Manchester Metropolitan University.

It explores the experiences of female asylum seekers fleeing domestic violence in Pakistan and seeking protection in the UK. The report is aimed at people working with asylum seekers, refugees and the survivors of domestic violence, including refugee community organisations.

Cost: £17.30. Contact **Nadia Siddiqui** on **0161 248 1879** for more information or nadia@smlc.org.uk

New theatre production

Motherland with Juliet Stevenson is a new production to highlight the problems facing women and children when they come to seek asylum in the UK. All proceeds go to Women for Refugee Women and the Yarl's Wood Befrienders.

Date: For one night only, on the **2 March**

Venue: The Young Vic, London SE1.

Cost: £10 (free for asylum seekers).

Booking opens 28 January at www.youngvic.org or on **020 7922 2922**. To register interest before sales open, email wrv@womankind.org.uk