



RCD Women's News

Issue no 7, September 2004

NEW ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION ACT 2004 & ASYLUM SEEKING WOMEN

The Asylum and Immigration Bill 2004 received Royal Assent on 22nd July. With 50 sections, the Act is nearly twice as long as it was when it first published in November 2003. Despite this, it does not address the basic problem of the quality of decision making and there remain serious concerns about the way people are treated during the asylum process. In particular the Act does not address the need to safeguard the rights of refugee women for whom there is insufficient protection from gender persecution nationally and internationally.

Nearly all of the measures in the Act have a gender blind approach and the Refugee Council is concerned about the position of women. For example, the measure on entering the UK without a passport is more liable to penalise women refugees, as they are less likely to have access or to have their own travel or identity documentation. They are less likely to be able to obtain a passport as they commonly need permission from a husband/father/brother.

Women who are under threat of being killed by their own community or subjected to gender related persecution (FGM, enforced marriage, honour related crime, enforced sterilisation and abortion, restriction on movement etc.) fear of making their grievance public especially in relation to detention and associated rape or sexual abuse. They thus do not have any real choice or power and so become dependant upon and forced to follow the advice and instruction of people facilitating their escape.

For further information see:

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk or www.hms.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040019.htm

CEDAW Optional Protocol

The Government has accepted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women optional protocol. For the first time, the UK will accept an individual petition mechanism, so that people in the UK will be able to take complaints about discrimination against women directly to the UN body that monitors the treaty.

For more information see

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/content/detail.asp?ReleaseID=124322&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromSearch=True>

The Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Bill & update on women with no recourse to public funds

The bill returned to the Commons on 14 June, and was debated in the committee. It remains largely in its original format as no major amendments have been accepted in the House of Lords or during the Committee stage in the House of Commons. Although the key amendments proposed by the Women's National Commission and a broad coalition of women's organisations have not been formally accepted, some progress has been made.

Women's groups led by Southall Black Sisters have lobbied MPs to table and support an amendment that will provide women who currently have uncertain immigration status and who faced domestic violence with access to benefits and accommodation. Some movement has been made on the needs of women with no recourse to public funds through the small one-off grant made by the Government to Women's Aid Last Resort Fund and moves have been undertaken to reduce the length of application waiting times, now reduced to an average of 48 days.

The Bill is expected to be finalised in the Autumn.

Transcripts of the committee meetings can be found at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmstand/e/cmdom.htm>

TRAINING

Rights of Women

is organising legal courses in lesbian parenting, women and Islamic law, domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, partners and the law, children and the law.

Contact Ranjit Kaur on 020 7251 6575/6 or email at info@row.org.uk

The Women's Resource Centre (wrc.org.uk)

in partnership with LASA (lasa.org.uk) is running a series of ICT courses aimed at those in the women's voluntary and community sector who have responsibility for their organisation's computer systems.

Email info@wrc.org.uk or call 020 7377 0088 for more information

Women's Trust

is organising 3 courses on:

Legal and housing options for women experiencing domestic violence: 13th September 2004

Domestic Violence Awareness training: 18th November 2004

Children and Domestic Violence: 2nd December

It is aimed at all staff working in agencies that work with women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Contact Heidi Sabrautzky on 0207 7956444, or email kyria@wtrust.entadsl.com

The University of Westminster

is running a post graduate Certificate in Domestic Violence Studies part-time evening course on domestic violence.

Contact: harviep@westminster.ac.uk or 0207 911 5000 ext. 3051 for an information pack

Refugee Women's Association

is offering training to refugee women seeking employment.

Course For Refugee Women Nurses And Midwives: 6-16 September

Two Accelerated English courses: September-December 2004

Help with childcare and travel costs available.

Contact Lucy : 020 7923 2412

Events

Women in immigration detention in the UK: Public meeting

Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) and the Refugee Women's Resource Project (RWRP) at Asylum Aid organised a public meeting on women's experiences of immigration detention in the UK on Tuesday 19 October 2004.

For further information, please contact Debora Singer or Sophia Ceneda at Asylum Aid on 020 7377 5123 or email info@biduk.org

Old Stories, New Lives: Raising Standards to Tackle Violence Against Black and Minority Ethnic Women

Southall Black Sisters is organising a day conference on 15th November 2004. The aim is to bring together a range of public sector policy makers and practitioners to discuss and debate violence against black and minority ethnic (BME) women. It will cover issues concerning domestic and sexual violence, incorporating culturally specific forms of harm such as forced marriage, honour killings and female genital mutilation.

For booking and more information on the conference see: <http://www.oldstoriesnewlives.org.uk>

Funding

Futurebuilders aims to improve public service delivery through long-term investment in the voluntary and community sector in England. They want to invest in around 250 organisations, with investments ranging from around £30,000 to several million, as well as providing development grants of around £10,000 to a number of applicants. The first funding window will run until the 31 October 2004.

<http://www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk/>

Gender Equality (EU): For 2004, the priority theme is promoting change in gender roles and overcoming gender stereotypes. This priority theme can be developed across the intervention areas of the Programme, i.e. economic life, equal participation and representation, social rights and civil life. For more information see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/fund_en.html