



RCD Women's News

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International Women's day 2007

The 8 March is a very special day for women all over the world. It is a day when women can come together to celebrate their achievements, share their concerns but also raise awareness of the inequality that many women still face. Refugee community organisations across the UK celebrated this year's day by focusing on different themes. RCO Women's News went to Brent Refugee Forum, in North West London to join in their celebrations.

The theme for International Women's Day at Brent Refugee Forum was 'Refugee women into leadership – her struggles and her resilience.' The day included role plays by women refugees, sharing their experiences of adjusting to UK culture; speeches and an award ceremony presented by the Mayor of Brent to acknowledge the work of women members of the Forum. Seven refugee women were awarded for their achievements and individual contributions towards UK society. The recipients were: Magaret Akullo; Jane Atube Amony; Ruqia Hussein, Waris Mahmoud; Hanna Field; Hassina Yassin and Susan Hafid.

Marble Margezi, Chair of Brent Refugee Forum, gave an inspiring speech, which looked at the real meaning of being a refugee woman. She highlighted that even if a refugee woman can speak a country's language, it is culture that dictates how she interacts with the rest of the community. For refugee mothers, she said that the challenges are greater. Many refugee women are forced to leave their home country with their children and in doing so, their children are often taken away from their grandparents and their friends. As refugee mothers, she stressed the value of communicating with children about why they are in the UK and what their immigration status is so that they start to understand and feel involved. She finished her speech by focusing on the importance of integration and by encouraging people to make new friends outside of their own communities. She added that, for her, some of her best friends have been from the British host community. They have been there to help her through some difficult and challenging times. She said "unless we are united as women, we cannot move forward."

For more information about the work of **Brent Refugee Forum** and details of the award recipients, please contact **Falastin Yassin** on **020 8459 9092/3** or email **brentrefugeeforum@yahoo.co.uk**

The Community Development Team at the Refugee Council is committed to empowering refugee women and supporting RCOs to develop their activities and services for women. Our recent London wide training programme included a course on *Developing services for women* and a conference in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS): *A platform for change*. The conference focused on delivering an improved service to refugee women in the community and raising awareness around gender issues, for example, focusing on why more women do not report domestic violence incidents to the MPS. A summary report of this conference will be made available in the near future. Check the Refugee Council website for updates at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/rcos

For more information about our work with women, contact **Elaheh Rambarzini** at the Refugee Council Community Development Team on **020 7346 1160** or email **elaheh.rambarzini@refugeecouncil.org.uk**

Funding

From 2007 to 2012 **the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund's** grant-making activities will focus on three initiatives:

- **The Palliative Care Initiative** - to promote the increase of palliative care in Africa.
- **The Refugee and Asylum Seekers Initiative** - to raise awareness and highlight the needs and issues of young refugees and asylum seekers.
- **The Partnership Initiative** - to increase investments into penal affairs, mental health and other areas in the UK.

Grants will be provided on an invitation-to-bid basis or through negotiated partnerships with selected organisations. However, a restricted amount of funding will be made available through an open grants process under the **Refugee and Asylum Seekers Initiative**. This grants round is currently in the development phase and further details will be available shortly at

www.theworkcontinues.org/what_grants.shtml

Training

Rights of Women are offering two new courses at NCVO, Regents Wharf, London N1 9RL:

- **Sexual violence and the law:** a practical overview of the law on sexual violence and the criminal law. This course is essential for those working as Independent Sexual Violence Advocates and anyone working with women who have experienced rape or sexual assault.
Date: Wednesday 16 May 2007
Time: 9.30am -1pm
- **Immigration law: protecting women from violence and securing their position in the UK:** A practical overview of immigration law and procedure with particular emphasis on the needs of women. This course is essential for those working with women who have experienced violence and who have insecure immigration status.
Date: Thursday 17 May 2007
Time: 9.30am -1pm

For more information call **020 7251 6575** or www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/current.html

New report

Life reduced to language: everyday experiences of social exclusion in South London is a new report which exposes the daily reality of the social exclusion faced by women who do not speak English. Email eghandi@sgul.ac.uk for more information.

Changes to maternity rights

Mothers whose babies are due to be born after 1 April 2007 will receive an increase in maternity leave to 12 months and statutory maternity pay to 9 months. For more information visit www.dti.gov.uk/employment/workandfamilies/

London youth club for unaccompanied minors sets up girls only group

The **Anchor Project** is working together with **Refugee Youth**, a network of refugee youth groups (www.refugeeyouth.org/) to create a small and informal group to encourage girls who lack the confidence to join male dominated larger youth clubs. Female youth leaders from Refugee Youth will use their experience and skills to act as role models and 'buddies' to newly arrived refugee girls, helping them to build confidence and settle in the UK. The group will alternate between outings and workshops such as art, drama and singing, with a view to developing social skills and confidence. The sessions will take place fortnightly, starting on **Saturday 31 March 2007**, with welcome games and henna, makeup and hair sessions. Mothers are welcome to the group, travel and lunch will be paid and volunteers can escort girls to the meeting.

For more information go to www.anchorproject.org or to make a referral, contact **Jessica Leeman** at jessica.leeman@gmail.com or call **07923 839570**.

To submit any articles about women's asylum issues, email penny.mclean@refugeecouncil.org.uk