



RCD Women's News

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Update on meetings between the Home Office and refugee women's stakeholder group from September 2005 to April 2006

Following the successful conference on gender persecution: *Why women flee* in 2005*, a number of women RCOs and refugee agencies involved in the organisation of this conference established a refugee women's stakeholder group. The group comprises: Refugee Women's Resource Project (RWRP) at Asylum Aid, the Refugee Council (RC), Refugee Action (RA), Refugee Women's Association (RWA), Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), and Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation (KRWO). The group's aim is to maintain dialogue with a range of key staff at the Home Office in order to progress the government agenda on refugee women's issues. The group attends meetings with the Home Office on a regular basis, which provides an opportunity for women RCOs working at a grass roots level to contribute to Home Office policy decision making as it affects refugee women.

The stakeholder group has also developed an e-network of women RCOs and individuals who are interested in receiving information about the group's meetings and who would like to help influence future meeting agendas with the Home Office. The stakeholder group has so far attended four meetings with the Home Office, the outcomes of which are summarised below:

- The Home Office is conducting an audit of one month's intake of women to Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre to monitor the extent to which the Home Office Gender Guidance is being implemented. This action follows in response to the stakeholder group's concerns about women who have experienced gender persecution being inappropriately placed in the detained fast track system.
- Freda Chaloner, Director of the New Asylum Model (NAM), agreed to look at options of increasing women caseworkers at Yarl's Wood. According to Home Office figures, the number of women caseworkers has increased from 33% to 50% since new fast track rules were introduced in April 2005. She also agreed to RWRP running seminars for caseworkers in the NAM areas (West Midlands and Solihull) on implementing the Gender Guidance effectively.
- Freda Chaloner agreed to monitor the number of refugee women who are ex-dependents of principle applicants and who make late claims and are put into the NAM late and opportunistic segment of the detained fast track process.
- Jeremy Oppenheim, former Head of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), agreed to look at NASS's progress in monitoring its domestic violence policy. He also said he would ensure refugee women in NASS accommodation had access to information on the NASS domestic violence policy.
- The Home Office Country of Origin Information Service (COI service) has consulted RWRP country information experts on its revised framework for COI reports and has adopted their categories for collecting information on women's issues. The COI service also asked RWRP to run a seminar on collecting country information relevant to refugee women's asylum cases. They suggested holding an annual liaison meeting with the stakeholder group.

For more information, contact **Debora Singer** on 020 7377 5123 or deboras@asylumaid.org.uk. To join the e-network, contact **Elaheh Rambarzini** on 020 734 1160 or elaheh.rambarzini@refugeecouncil.org.uk

* See report on *Why Women Flee* seminar at: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/downloads/refugee_council/services/women_flee_seminar.pdf

Three tools for rape survivors, legal representatives and supporters

Black Women's Rape Action Project and Women Against Rape in collaboration with all African Women's Group and Legal Action for Women have produced the following three tools:

1. An information sheet for rape survivors: *Claiming asylum from rape.*
2. A dossier of adjudicators who have breached international law and the guidelines they followed in *misjudging* victims of rape.
3. *Asylum from rape petition* which asks the Government to: officially recognise rape as torture and persecution and therefore grounds for asylum; and to end the detention and deportation of rape survivors and their families.

For more information call 020 7482 2496 or email bwrap@dircon.co.uk or orwar@womenagainstrape.net

Free information line for women

Threshold Women's Mental Health provides a freephone national telephone and information service for women experiencing mental health difficulties and/or emotional distress; and their carers. All calls are confidential and answered by women. We receive enquiries on issues, including: depression; anxiety; carers' rights; parenting issues and the effects of childhood abuse. Call free on **0808 808 6000**

Open: **Monday to Thursday** 10am - 12pm and 2pm - 4.30pm. 24-hour confidential answerphone outside of these hours.

Conference

Policy Spotlight is holding a conference called: *In the name of honour* on **21 September 2006**

This conference aims to:

- Increase understanding of honour based violence
- Explore the extent of honour violence in UK
- Look at preventative actions to potentially stop such crimes
- Tackling honour violence and murder:

Venue: Central London

Cost: **£ 117.50** for RCOs

For more information call 0870 351 8720 or email bookings@policyspotlight.co.uk

Training

Advanced Fundraising

Women's Resource Centre is running a two day course on **19 and 26 September 2006**. The course will examine the strategic development of fundraising function and provide a better understanding of procurement and commissioning, earned income, full cost recovery and partnership working.

For more information, call 020 7324 3030 or email membership@wrc.org.uk

Free preparation for work course

Refugee Women's Association is running a 12 week Employment and Communication Skills course for unemployed refugee women on **13 September 2006**. It will focus on preparing refugee women for the UK job market.

For more information call **Monica** on 020 7923 2412 or email monicatucker@refugeewomen.org.uk

Free English course

Hillcroft College, a residential learning college for women, is running a free course on *English for a Better Future* for home students. It will focus on improving grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and communication.

For further information call 020 8399 2688 or **Carol Plots** on 020 8339 4086 or email enquiry@hillcroft.ac.uk

Funding

The Home Office's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors Fund is a grant programme that funds the work of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors whose role will be to address the safety of victims of sexual abuse.

Applications are invited from specialist sexual violence voluntary sector organisations. Application deadline: **14 August 2006**. Average grant value: **£20,000**

For further details call **Musaddika Mohmed** on 020 7035 1854 or email

Musaddika.mohmed2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or visit

www.governmentfunding.org.uk/VCSSearch.aspx?WCI=htmSchemeView&WCU=GRANT PKEY=84