

POLICY & ADVOCACY NEWS

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NRPF Women's Network

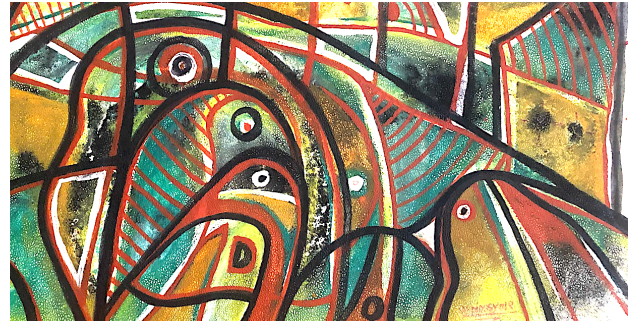
We are excited to be part of the Womens Aid led NRPF Women's support network funded by the Smallwood Trust.

Our role in the partnership is to start and run a group with women survivors of Domestic Abuse (DA), who had, or have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). This will become an advisory group to the newly formed NRPF Women's Support Network, bringing women's voices into the development of the project.

Birmingham NRPF Women's Support Network led by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid is a 3-year programme with the following partners: Roshni, Baobab, Refugee and Migrant Centre, British Red Cross, and Central England Law Centre Birmingham.

The programme brings together partners who have worked with each other over many years in different combinations, to support women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and address the void in services for these women. The network came together formally to address the substantial increase in NRPF women seeking support in Birmingham. This includes women with vulnerable immigration status and those on spousal visas, including asylum seeking women and spouses of refugees.

The Network's aim is to support all women with NRPF, including those experiencing Domestic Abuse, those who are deemed 'ineligible' and those who fall outside the immigration rules.



Project Update

In the last 6 months casework has been abundant and challenging. We have worked with a number of complex cases that highlight the need for improving policy implementation practices. Translating the casework examples into case studies to work with partners on changing the system has been slow to progress. Case studies are being collected for our year 1 review report due to be published in March 2023.

Women's issues are hard to pin down to one thing to focus on, but we have prioritised relevant areas in which refugee and migrant voices will be heard, we hope that by presenting the report to those with the power to improve the system their problems will be addressed in a dignified and fair manner.

We have reached out to Refugee Women Connect and ASAP regarding asylum accommodation issues raised in our influencer group, and plan to follow up policies related to women in practice.

We have been to many regional stakeholder groups, all of which are currently online, we miss the informal connections of a face to face meeting and look forward to hybrid meetings in future.

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www.baobabwomensproject.net

Author: Sarah Taal



Policy Areas Focused on

Our project provided casework to 62 women on the policy areas below since it started, in the last 6 months we advocated with 26 women.

Gender Issues in Asylum Claims

We have been listening to women's experiences of having gender issues addressed by the Home Office. Many feel disbelieved and depressed. Issues will be a core focus of our annual report.

Destitution

We worked with 15 destitute women facing eviction, or evicted from Home Office accommodation. Appealing support terminations, and assisting women to get charity money & accommodations when needed.

Legal Representation

We worked with 23 women to gain representation. Quality representation is a challenge for many women, another core focus of our annual report case studies.

Child Nationality

We worked with 3 children, who gained British and Italian nationality. Parents leave was resolved for 2 mothers, the other is still in process.

Mental Health Access

We worked with 13 women who needed mental health support. All received some help, but much was lacking substance to address their needs. This is another area our annual report will focus on.

Project Partner Updates

- Women with Hope: Founding member Rosemary Crawley passed away in 2022. Women with Hope has grieved, and continues to be a vibrant group led by women with experience of the asylum and immigration system. Group members have contributed to identifying, discussing and addressing issues with the system.
- Women for Refugee Women: we support their detention campaigns, and the work they are doing addressing issues with the New Plan for Immigration.
- Refugee Women Connect: We reached out over women's asylum accommodation and support issues, linking influencer concerns with male housing officers entering women's rooms without notice.
- Birmingham University Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS): We worked with IRiS on a 10 year anthology piece, suggesting if a gender and trauma informed approach was taken by the Home Office, many women would avoid retraumatization & destitution.
- Asylum Support Appeals Project: we connected on a number of issues that women face including: accommodation providers giving inadequate notice of visits to rooms, dispersal arrangements, failure to travel collections, ASPEN restrictions on bus travel and provision of household items. We gained links to other projects, Migrant Help and Home Office workers.
- Asylum Matters: promoted that our local authority Birmingham City Council passed an amendment to sign the pledge against the Anti Refugee Laws.
- Hope Projects Partnership: brings together West Midlands based organisations case working to bring an end to destitution of asylum seeking people. We have made a number of referrals, and accessed their excellent legal advise. Allowing women to have a safe place to be, while accessing destitution grants before re-entering the Home Office system with further representations.



Community Advocacy

Our advise line, continues to be the main point of access for women to get support. Bridget does financial resilience empowerment work for newly settled women, and the NRPF / asylum work, focusing particularly on health, housing, money and immigration support for women who have or are currently experiencing violence. They are supported by volunteer community interpreter advocates.

A regular team meeting allocates cases on Wednesdays. We are taking new referrals, but remain limited in our capacity to provide advice. To get an appointment women need to call our advise line, on 07847271022, Wednesdays between 10-1pm. Or email advocate@baobabwomen.co.uk If we cannot help, we will refer to another agency.

Accounts Team

Our accounts worker Talhatou continues paying destitution grants, volunteer expenses, as well as working on funding and budgets. We have started doing the financial administration for Coventry Migrant Women's Houses.

Development Work

Baobab have been chosen by Rose Rise Fund to receive a grant of £40,000 over 2 years for organisational development work relating to strategy, governance, leadership, alliances and partnerships, funding, demonstrating impact and systems and processes.

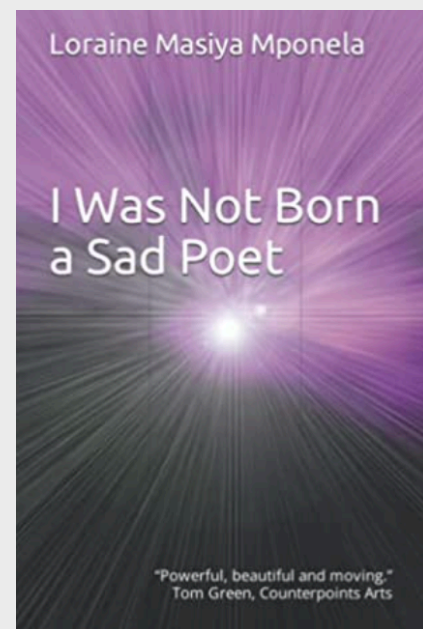
We have two new workers in post job sharing the position. Beth is working on sustainable fundraising, as well as organisational effectiveness and increasing our competence. Sheva is working on finalising and promoting our strategic and financial plans, as well and building skills and women with lived experience into our governance structure.

News and Actions

I Was Not Born a Sad Poet

I Was Not Born a Sad Poet: is Loraine Masiya Mponela's independently published poetry collection.

"There's something about Loraine's writing that makes me laugh at pain, as if she's told the wildest joke I've ever heard. Her poems give us, readers, a glimpse of frozen moments in Loraine's life." Laura Nyahuye, CEO of Maokwo Arts.



Concerning findings: HM Inspectorate of Prisons report into Derwentside detention centre

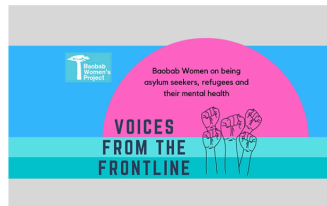
Women for Refugee Women Blog on the 6.12.22 highlight HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) has published its first inspection report into Derwentside detention centre. The findings are extremely concerning and are repetitions of the same lack of care, unsafe conditions and harmful practices we have seen before.

Raising Womens Voices

Baobab Women launched our 'voices from the frontline' book during Refugee Week 2021 - buy a book for £10 to support out work.

Some voices from the book will be included in a contribution to the volume Representing Violence Against Women: Asylum, Voice and Testimony, under contract with the Proceedings of the British Academy series.

This opportunity arose after taking part in a Feminist Representations event.



Refugee Action - Good Practice Partnership

Baobab are one of the 12 partners getting specific support from Refugee Actions CARE West Midlands Project.

For the next 2 years we gain support at Baobab in developing skills and knowledge relating to immigration advice and Experts by Experience groups.

Birmingham University Placement Student

Baobab are working with student Songhee, who is on placement from Birmingham University, studying in the UK from South Korea.

She's going to help us put our yearly report together. Tasks to involve reviewing journal articles into asylum and immigration policy as part of the literature review, attending network meetings to get a feel for the sector and also interviewing women and caseworkers to help draft some of the case studies to be included in this projects year 1 report, to be published in March 2023.

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News and Actions

Rwanda Deportations

Free Movement Blog discusses 'when will there be another Rwanda flight' following the High court decision that the Rwanda policy is legal.

Women we work with are very worried about being deported to a developing African nation. Amnesty report on their human rights violations. We have had to explain that it only affects asylum claimants if they travelled on or after 1 January 2022. Full briefing on the scheme available from the Migration Observatory.

Channel Crossing Deaths

The Guardian report on Channel deaths: desperate call from boat raised alarm for rescue operation where 4 people died and more than 40 were rescued. Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones.

There must be safe and legal routes for refugee and migrants to come to the UK and leave again.

NACCOM News

NACCOM's Annual Survey Data 2022: NACCOM published a new briefing on levels and experiences of destitution in the asylum and immigration system, based on the findings of NACCOM's Annual Survey data 2022.

Events & Conferences

Vanley Burke, A Gift to Birmingham: Ikon Gallery Exhibition, The exhibition features seventeen portraits of members of Migrant Voice

PAP Webinar for those enrolled on the DPG PAP project, or interested to learn more about it, 19 Jan, 1-2pm. Contact Morisha for more info: MKalyan@dpglaw.co.uk.



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