

POLICY & ADVOCACY NEWS

Birmingham and Aston Uni Research | News and Events | Project Partners

BIRMAC Collaborative Conference

This conference hosted by IRiS, the Birmingham University Institute for Research into Superdiversity examined the intersection(s) of forced migration and GBV: Global Perspectives - Local Designs.

Held over three days, the first day was mainly UK based researchers who worked on the SEREDA Project, the second day was Canadian and South American research contributions, and the third a mixture of talks from both sides of the pond, thinking how to research together to make global change.

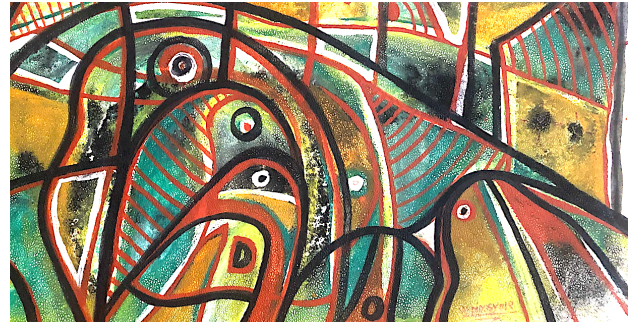
It's impossible to highlight main points or talk about each contributor and what was learned. Each person had a wealth of experience, passion and so much was shared during talks, the Q & A's as well as over lunch, coffees and dinner.

Suffice to say gender based violence is common for undocumented women and those seeking protection, as well as those with a level of residence. The level of abuses is extremely high and many women suffer as they do not know pathways to resolve their issues, or they are excluded from help due to their status. There was hope in talks given around safe space and resistance over therapy themes. As well as integration as happiness and drama as empowerment.

We are pleased to have built links with Birmingham universities community research program. We have been offered funding to train community researchers at Baobab, influencers from this project will be connected to this opportunity.

[@baobabwomen](https://www.baobabwomenproject.net)

www.baobabwomenproject.net



Project Update

In the last 6 months casework continues to be abundant and challenging. The complex cases that highlight the need for improving policy implementation in practice continue to progress. Our year one report has turned into a final project report in December, which makes recommendations for change around the identified themes that have permeated this project.

In the last 6 months we have found that homelessness is on the rise among refused asylum seeking women. Women claiming asylum as well as those preparing a fresh claim are finding it extremely difficult to find competent legal aid solicitors. This is having a negative effect on their mental and physical wellbeing.

In preparing our report we have conducted interviews with women. We have run online and in person influencer sessions. Three influencer women have focused on the asylum interviews, trafficking support and violence against women in the UK, co-authoring our final report.

We have been to regional stakeholder groups, some of which are back in person. Positive links to projects including NACCOM and the NRPF Women's Network have given inspiration and hope.

Author: Sarah Taal



Policy Areas Focused on

Our project provided casework to 74 women on the policy areas below since it started, in the last 6 months we advocated with 44 women.

Gender Issues in Asylum Claims

Nearly every woman we meet has experienced gender based violence (GBV) at some point of their migration journey. The retraumatization of re-telling their story for protection claims is a core focus of our end of project report.

Destitution

We worked with 24 destitute women homeless, facing eviction, or evicted from Home Office accommodation. The number of Home Office evictions after people are refused protection is increasing.

Legal Representation

We assisted 41 women with legal issues. Quality representation is a huge challenge for many women. This period has seen a sharp increase in solicitors appealing Home Office refusals but not representing at the Tribunal. Alternative representation is very hard to get, women are being left to represent themselves.

Asylum Accommodation

Dispersal challenges and not processing support in a timely way are the main problems addressed with 14 women during this period.

Mental Health Access

We worked with 16 women to enable mental health support.

Project Partner Updates

- Women with Hope: We have continued to work in partnership with the Women with Hope group. Attending sessions and gaining feedback on how they wish to improve the asylum system processes.
- NRPF Women's Network: We have continued to meet with Women's Aid, CELC, RMC, Roshni and the British Red Cross to provide holistic assistance to women experiencing Domestic Abuse in the West Midlands.
- Birmingham University Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS): We attended a 3 day international conference, 29-30 June and feel inspired to take joint action on GBV research issues at a global level.
- Refugee Action CARE Partnership: we connected other refugee and migrant projects in the area, sharing knowledge on how to alleviate the impact of hostile policies on migrants.advice
- Hope Projects Partnership: brings together West Midland based organisations case working to bring an end to destitution of asylum-seeking people. We have made a number of referrals, and engaged their excellent legal advice. Allowing women to have a safe place to be, while accessing destitution grants before re-entering the Home Office system with further representations.
- Tactic Training: we know from years of casework that women need to know more about their legal rights to enable them to understand and navigate a difficult asylum and immigration system. The new 20 day questionnaire ([Are the new asylum questionnaires fit for purpose? Free Movement Blog, Sheona York, 2.3.23](#)) worried us. We do not know many newly arrived women, but had two recent advice line calls from initial asylum hostels, and know someone sent a questionnaire in dispersed accommodation. Sue from Tactic did a recorded 20 day questionnaire video which we put on you-tube for more people in the community to view. We are nearly ready to publish again with a Tigrinya voice over. She has also done two appeal workshops with women who have no representation, one in English one in Amharic / Arabic. Sue is detailed, clear and extremely knowledgeable, women really appreciated these sessions funded by LUSH.



Community Advocacy

Our advice line, continues to be the main point of access for women to get support. To get an appointment women need to call 07847 271022, Wednesdays between 10am-1pm. Or email advocate@baobabwomen.co.uk If we cannot help, we will refer to another agency.

Bridget does financial resilience empowerment work for newly settled women. Sarah does NRPF and asylum work for undocumented. Mireille works with women who have experienced domestic abuse and have NRPF. They are supported by volunteer community interpreter advocates speaking Farsi, Amharic, Arabic, Tigrinya, Albanian, Urdu and Hindi.

A regular team meeting allocates cases on Wednesdays. We have paused new referrals on Sarah's NRPF / asylum work due to limited capacity and the complexity of current casework.

Accounts Team

Our accounts worker Talhatou continues paying destitution grants, volunteer expenses, as well as working on CMWH funding and budgets.

Development Work

Beth and Sheva funded by [Rose Rise](#) are focused on organisational development work.

Beth has brought in new funds, gives feedback on ongoing grants as well as improving our administration and processes. She is registering us as a living wage employer - which we already are in practice.

Sheva ran an engaging away day, and is finalising our strategic plan. She is supporting and skilling up women with lived experience to be part of our director board.

[@baobabwomen](#)

www.baobabwomensproject.net

Author: Sarah Taal



News

Last traces of Nationality and Borders Act 2022 erased with abandonment of “differentiated status” for refugees

[Colin Yeo](#) from the [Free Movement Blog](#) writes about how 'Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick today *announced* that the government was dropping its “differentiated status” approach to refugees, introduced less than one year ago as the centrepiece of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

Revealed: government looking at four more sites for asylum vessels

[Guardian News](#) report from [Pippa Crerar](#), [Aletha Adu](#) and [Rajeev Syalon](#) on the 5.6.23 that 'Rishi Sunak confirms two more barges will house 1,000 people, as sources say discussions about other areas are taking place'

Home Office stops units making asylum decisions to prepare for small boats bill despite huge backlog

[Independent News](#) reporter [Lizzie Deardon](#) on the 24.6.23 says that 'Two units to retrain as 'detention decision-makers' and told to refer to asylum seekers as 'illegal entrants'

Home Office workers are being forced to stop deciding asylum claims and retrain to implement measures in the government's controversial [small boats bill](#), despite it not yet being legal and amid record backlogs.

IRiS Anthology Book

Why a Trauma-informed Partnership Approach to Women's Asylum Claims and Support is Essential Sarah Taal's chapter, summarising findings from this project in Migration, displacement and diversity: The IRiS Anthology

"You Can See Me But I Don't Exist"

Baobab worked in collaboration with Gignoux Photos and other refugee groups in the UK, exploring the impact of the asylum-seeking process on individuals.

Working with a camera obscura, Gignoux used a long exposure to blur the identity of the refugees whom he photographed while leaving the background in focus. This intentional blurring has a practical purpose as many people seeking refuge live in fear of the authorities and prefer to remain unidentifiable. However, it is simultaneously intended to be a visual metaphor for the corrosive impact of the asylum-seeking process on people. Refugees wrote creative response to the blurred

How are migrant mothers discriminated against?

Baobab connected migrant mothers with Dr Gaja Maestri from Aston University. Her project explores how forced migrant mothers experience intersecting discriminations as migrants, women, and mothers in destination countries. Focusing on migration governance, racism, social regulations around motherhood, and gender inequality; and it will examine how they affect forced migrant mothers' mental health, daily mobility practices and access to basic rights.

This will make visible the experiences of an important, but under-researched migrant group, and to inform civil society organisations and policy actors on how to better support their overall wellbeing and rights.

@baobabwomen

www.baobabwomensproject.net

News and Actions

Braverman plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda unlawful, appeal court rules

Guardian News Diane Taylor and Ben Quinn reported on 29.6.23 that the 'Court of appeal judges have ruled that it is unlawful to send asylum seekers to Rwanda to have their claims processed.

Rishi Sunak said in a statement that the government would now seek permission to appeal against the decision at the supreme court as he insisted that Rwanda was a safe country and said that the court had agreed with this. The court's conclusion was that Rwanda was not a "safe third country"

The Mediterranean Sea is not only a graveyard it's a crime scene

'Up to 600 people drown off Pylos, Greece - only days after EU leaders agreed to further erode the right to asylum. Open letter by over 180 human rights organizations and initiatives together with Tima Kurdi, aunt of Alan Kurdi.

On the 20 June 2023, World Refugee Day, they jointly demand full and independent investigations into the events, clear consequences for those responsible, an end to the systematic pushback practices at the European borders, and justice for the victims.'

Events & Conferences

'You can see me but I don't exist'
Birmingham Library Exhibition:

Shakespeare Memorial Room, Level 9,
Library of Birmingham. 31 May - 7 August
2023; 11:00am - 5:00pm.

Migration Stories: Stratford Road Walking Tour

22nd July 2023, 11am, The Bordesley Centre,
Stratford Road, Birmingham, B11 1AR, £10.



Author: Sarah Taal