

SUPPORTING WOMEN PROJECT

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

12th of June



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Evelyn Oldfield Unit's new Supporting Women Project held its annual conference on the 12th of June in the Resource for London, Holloway.

This event was the culmination of a year of work designed to support refugee and asylum-seeking community groups to be in a stronger position to support women affected by violence and trauma.

The year has seen 9 seminars focusing on updating groups on issues such as FGM, domestic violence, legal aid reforms and mental health support – each session designed to build knowledge of policy changes, how to respond to these issues and funding/ support for groups.

The programme also has had 2 events designed to bring together mainstream women's groups working on issues of violence and trauma groups and refugee and asylum seeking groups in order to build dialogue and engagement.

Furthermore, 17 refugee groups have accessed consultancy support helping groups to develop projects in response to their community needs.

Please get involved in the delivery of year 2!

Contact sarah@evelynoldfield.co.uk or see <http://www.evelynoldfield.co.uk/womensproject> for more information.

What were the highlights of the conference for you?

"The day was an inspiration as a whole"

"The fact that the women enjoyed every bit of the conference and stayed until the end"

"The networking opportunities were excellent"

"I saw a lot of innovation"

"The presentations were excellent"

"Meeting other women working on these issues"

"The workshops were very informative"

"Provoked thought"

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

74 women representing refugee community organisations and mainstream charities and agencies gathered at this conference in order to shift the paradigm concerning tackling violence against women and supporting those affected by trauma.

This full-day conference began with keynote speeches, followed by morning session workshops, mindfulness exercise, presentation of innovation in the sector, afternoon session workshops and the plenary session to share discussions from each workshop.

Timing	Activity
10-10.30	Registration
10.30-10.45	Introductions
10.45-11.45	Keynote speakers
11.45-12.00	Q and A
12.00-12.45	Workshops
12.45-1.45	Lunch, networking & stalls
1.45-2.00	Mindfulness exercise
2.00-2.30	Showcasing innovation/good practice
2.30-3.15	Workshops no. 2
3.15-3.30	Coffee and sweet treats
3.30-3.40	Elena Vacchelli, Middlesex University Research: Refugee Women and Mental Health
3.40-4.20	Plenary Certificates to project graduates + women helpers
4.20- 4.30	Networking + evaluation Close

This event was chaired and run by the Supporting Women Project steering group, all women representing the community sector.

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Several participants considered keynote speech as a highlight of the event.

“Keynote address was quite touching”

“Keynote speakers were amazing”

- ✚ **Liz Kelly**, Professor of Sexualised Violence at London Metropolitan University, where she is also Director of the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit. Liz presented on the long-support needs of women affected by domestic violence, in a recent piece of research that she did with Solace Women's Aid.



- ✚ **Davina James-Hanman**, Director Against Violence and Abuse, presented on reform and policy changes concerning refugee women and policy changes.



- ✚ **Khedijah Ali Mohammed-Nur**, a graduate from the EOU research and advocacy course, presented on Domestic Violence as a taboo in Eritrean community.
- ✚ **Sarah Bigdoli**, also a graduate of the EOU research and advocacy course, presented on FGM and Asylum.

WORKSHOPS

There were morning and afternoon workshop sessions on five different topics:

- ✚ Domestic Violence and Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Women
- ✚ FGM – How to Get Involved and Community Responses
- ✚ Post-legal Aid Support for Vulnerable Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Women
- ✚ Accessing Therapy
- ✚ Responding to the Austerity Cuts and What This Means to You/ Your Organisation.

There were facilitators for each workshop with expertise on the issues to lead discussions. Participants had an opportunity of joining two workshops of their interest and exchanged their experiences and opinions on the topic and what action should be taken.

“Workshops about therapies were quite encouraging and provided practical solutions to ...be able to provide some solutions to the victims of domestic violence.”

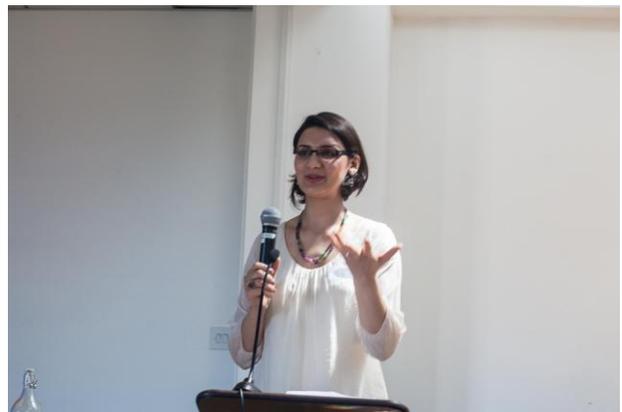
“Austerity workshops which heightened the situation the campaigners face in the efforts to deal with domestic violence at a local level which is very vital.”



MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

The Mindfulness exercise was instructed by Rasha Jorany, who completed her BSc in Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Westminster and is currently working on her MSc in Psychology and Health at City University. Rasha believes that health can be treated mentally first by understanding the beliefs and perception of human's own health before seeking pharmacological therapy.

Rasha believes that Mindfulness is one of these therapy techniques to overcome anxiety and live in the present moment by paying attention on purpose to our lives non-judgmentally. We all engaged in an "Eating mindfully" exercise.



INNOVATION

Indira Kartallozi recently set up a social enterprise called Chrysalis and gave an introduction about its activities to inspire others of the possibilities of social enterprise in the sector. Link to her work here: <http://www.chrysalisfamilyfutures.com/>

Kirsty Lowe introduced her new initiative 'Survivor Media', utilizing her former career as a publicist to help vulnerable women voice their experience. Email her here for further info: kirstylowe@survivormedia.co.uk

She also showcased her colleague Nina Burrowes work (graphic novel psychologist) on surviving sexual abuse: <http://ninaburrowes.com/index.php/books/the-courage-to-be-me/>



Next up was Dr Elena Vacchelli from Middlesex University who presented her most recent research findings on **Refugee Women and Mental Health**.

Finally we invite Grace Adok, Evelyn Oldfield Unit Vice Chair and Director of Latitude Care up to the stage to give out the certificates from the course graduates and certificates of appreciation to the many people who have helped out on this project on a voluntary basis.

We thank you all for your support and interest!

Do stay in touch ...