WOMEN FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

Our Year: 2024



Photo credit: Oscar Mucyo

Impact
In 2024 we:

Held over **250** high-quality immigration advice sessions,

put on **443** creative and educational activity sessions,

and supported over **650** women to begin to rebuild their lives.

Last year, we came together in compassion, solidarity and community, time and time again.

We have a lot to be proud of from 2024 and we couldn't have done it without you.

Here is a timeline of some of our highlights:





January 2024

Activities re-started



Our creative and educational activities restarted after a short break over the festive period. This included new additions of a Campaigns Course, a Fundraising Group and a Research Group.

From English classes or Drama to digital skills, our activities support refugee and asylum-seeking women to **connect, heal and thrive**.



"I felt soothed. It was a special morning!" - Amy

February 2024

Flower Drawing

For Valentines Day, members of our Handmade With Love group were thrilled to go to a **flower drawing workshop**, organised by our corporate partner **Damson Madder** and led by Kaiva Kaimins, founder of My Lady Garden.

It was a relaxing and fun afternoon, with plenty of delicious snacks!

We are so grateful for their extremely generous ongoing support.

March 2024

Mothers Day

To mark **Mother's Day**, we shared powerful and moving stories and poems from women in our network about their experiences of motherhood.

You can read them here:

Sara's story

Children are like butterflies: A Poem

Loraine's story



Children are like butterflies

Children are like butterflies
They will continue their life without us.

Mum is like mortar
We are like bricks
She puts us all together and builds the lovely family.

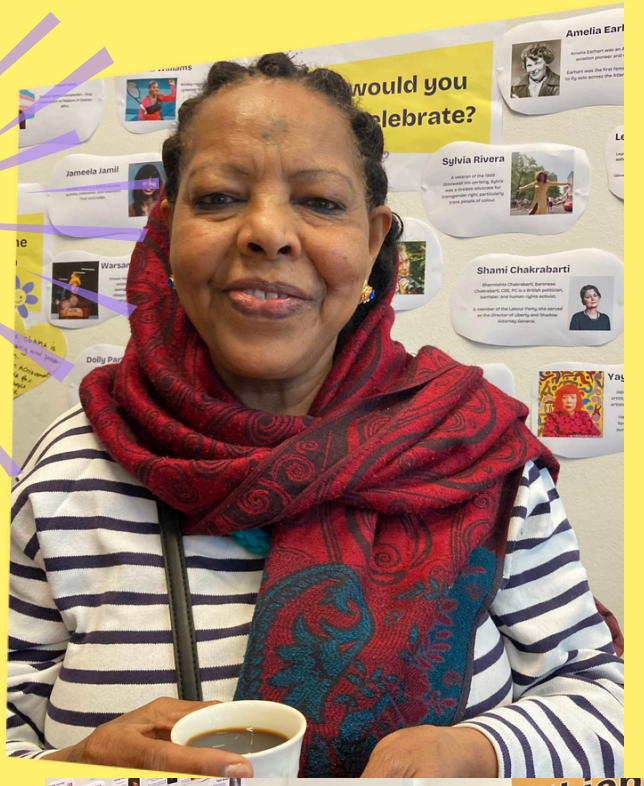
Children make everything nice and bright
She gives happiness and smiles to everything.

Hand delivering cards

To mark **International Women's Day and Mother's Day**, refugee women in our network **hand-delivered flowers and cards** with messages of solidarity and hope to women detained at Yarl's Wood detention centre.

🗣️**"Diamonds are made under high pressure. And you are a diamond. Continue shining and being strong. You are loved and valued."**

International Women's Day Party



For **International Women's Day**, we threw a party with the refugee and asylum-seeking women in our network, to celebrate ourselves and each other through a joyful afternoon of connection, celebration and fun.

From an **Ethiopian coffee ceremony**, to our **hair and nail salon**, and our **'Inspiration Wall'**, there were many wonderful moments of activism and solidarity and much needed relaxation and pampering!



Following inspirational **speeches** from our Director, Alphonsine, and many women in our network, we ended the party with a **delicious African feast**. With thanks to some generous supporters, each woman went home with some beautiful **self-care gifts**.





Lost & Found Drama Show



To celebrate International Women's Day, our drama group performed their original work **'Lost and Found'** to a packed out room at the Southbank Centre in London.

The group's original poetry performances explored themes of childhood, nostalgia and hopes for the future.



The refugee women in our network responded to the cruel and harmful plan passing:

"Already we have fled persecution and sought refuge. All we want is protection. We are valued human beings, just like you. Together we have people power. Let's stand together against this cruel plan."

"

April 2024

Rwanda Plan Passed

In April, the former Government's cruel Rwanda plan passed into law. We were disappointed, angry and sad, but we didn't stop campaigning! We supported women who were detained and given Notices of Intent for forced deportation to Rwanda.

Since then, we are so happy and relieved to share that all of the women who were detained have been released from detention and many have now received their refugee status!

May 2024

Barbican trip





In May, members of our **Radical Knitting** group went on a trip to the Barbican Centre to see the exhibition **"Power and Politics in Art and Textiles."**

The group had a wonderful afternoon and left feeling very inspired.



May and June

Pride Preperations

In May and June, members of **Rainbow Sisters**, our solidarity group for LGBTQ+ refugee and asylum-seeking women, were busy **making placards** and **painting t-shirts** for Pride.



June 2024

Manifesto for Change



In June we launched our **'Manifesto for Change'**, to urge all political parties to **choose compassion, not cruelty** ahead of the General Election:

1. RIGHTS FOR ALL
3. COMMUNITY AND CARE
2. SAFETY AND WELCOME
4. LED BY REFUGEE WOMEN



Voices Unveiled

We were thrilled to work in partnership with Oscar Mucyo, a Coventry based photographer, on **Voices Unveiled**, a portrait photography exhibition featuring refugee and asylum-seeking women from our network and their stories.

The aim of this powerful exhibition was to celebrate refugee women and the people and families they represent and in doing so to humanise the refugee experience.

Kew Gardens

In June, we spent a joyful afternoon at a botanical watercolour workshop at **Kew Gardens**, run by wonderful artist and teacher, Lucy.

It was a relaxing and restorative afternoon full of creativity, laughter and reflection.



"It was really good for my mind. I was relaxed and my thoughts were on the painting." - Maya

July 2024

Messages to Labour



Refugee and asylum-seeking women from our network came together to write messages to the new government, urging it to act with compassion not cruelty. You can watch their video here.

We were extremely relieved that the Government **scrapped the cruel Rwanda Plan** within the first week of office.

🗣️**"Hear our experiences and hear our calls for change, then you can truly make a difference."**
🗣️**"Let us work, let us heal!"**

June - August
Pride



Our **Rainbow Sisters** attended three Pride celebrations in June, July and August: **Black Pride, Trans Pride and London Pride.** This included marching in London Pride's parade, singing, dancing and chanting all the way.



Rainbow Sisters were not only marching and celebrating themselves but were also standing in solidarity their LGBTQ+ siblings all over the world, who aren't able to do so openly.



A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who supported our Rainbow Sisters during Pride Month and beyond, your solidarity makes a real difference. 🌈❤️





"It was my first time - WOW. Beyond anything I could have imagined. I feel so loved!" - Dembe

Summer pary!



In July, we held our **annual summer party** to mark the end of term. The afternoon was full of fun, laughter and dancing! And some competitiveness during our team quiz...



During the party we:

- **Watched members of Drama perform** an original piece on their experiences with the Home Office, accommodation providers, and medical centres;
- **Shared a delicious hot meal together**;
- **Enjoyed a salsa performance** by members of our Dance and Movement group;
- And **celebrated all of the brilliant achievements in our activities** this year.



Everyone went home with a **goody bag of gifts**, kindly donated by our amazing supporters, including toiletries packed and donated by Marriott Hotels!





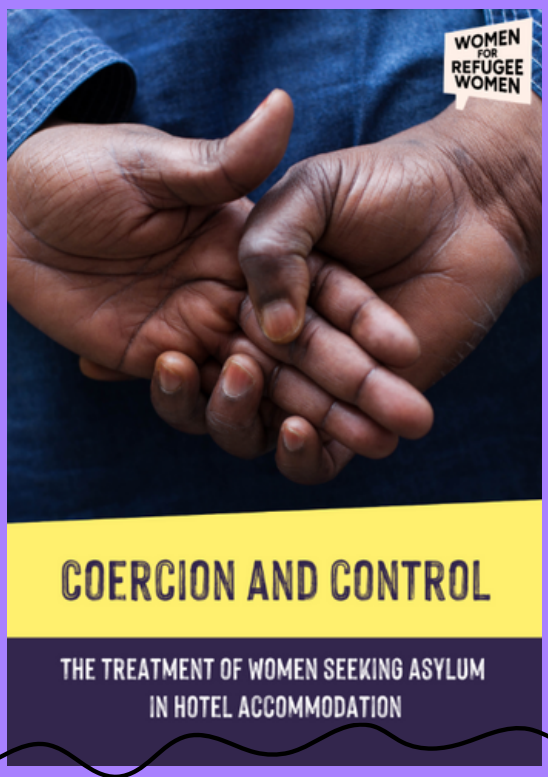
August 2024

10 Downing Street



We hand-delivered a very important letter to 10 Downing Street, together with Directors from Southhall Black Sisters, Hibiscus, Latin American Women's Right Service, Safety4Sisters and Imkaan, to urge the Government to tackle the root causes of the far-right riots.

The letter was backed by 65 organisations and outlined urgent demands to the Prime Minister to protect communities following the racist and Islamophobic riots.



September 2024

Report Launch

In September we launched our groundbreaking research report **Coercion and Control**, carried out by seven women with experience of the immigration system.

The report shows that women who have fled gender-based violence:

- Are **subjected to coercion and control in hotel accommodation**
- **akin to patterns they have experienced in previous abusive relationships** and situations.

October 2024

Portrait Project



Our Director, Alphonsine Kabagabo, and a refugee woman from our network, Thilini, were part of of a beautiful exhibition; **CONGREGATION, Face to Face: 50 Encounters with Strangers**, by Es Devlin. The exhibition launched at St Mary le Strand Church before being moved to Somerset House, London.



End Detention Group



Our **End Detention group**, for women who have experienced immigration detention or who are at risk of being detained, travelled from all over the UK to meet in Manchester.

We spent the day together planning campaigns and future actions, and, most importantly, spending time with each other and having fun!

November 2024

Meeting MPs



In November, we were excited to attend a parliamentary event organised by the Women's Budget Group and sponsored by MP, Yuanfen Yang.

The event was a **great opportunity to connect with MPs** to discuss our report on hotel accommodation, Coercion and Control, and the impact of the work ban of women seeking safety.



Rape Crisis Annual Conference

Two members of our research team, Goldie and Christine, presented our report, **Coercion and Control**, at **Rape Crisis England and Wales' annual conference**, alongside presentations by our friends at Imkaan and Bradford Rape Crisis.

A huge thank you to Rape Crisis for inviting us to speak!

December 2024

Cards to women in detention



In December, refugee women in our network sent hand-written cards to women in detention, to let them know that we are thinking of them and that we are fighting for them.

🗣️ **"You are loved and important. We won't give up fighting to end detention!"**



Write to your MP action

As part of **16 Days of Activism**, we launched our write to your MP action, asking MPs to sign our letter which urges the Home Secretary to END immigration detention.

🗣️**"Being detained is harmful and lonely. It affected us mentally and physically. It takes you away from your family and kills your spirit."**

Take part in the action - Click here to write to your MP today!

Winter party!



To mark the end of 2024 and to **celebrate together as our community**, we held our annual winter party.

Winter is a particularly difficult time for many of the women we support, with the days being colder and darker and many being separated from their loved ones.



With this in mind, we thought it was particularly important to have a big, joyful winter party and for all the women in attendance to go home with a **goodybag, including a £25 shopping voucher** to treat themselves with. A huge thank you to all of our amazing supporters who donated to make this happen!

At the party:

- Members of our network donned traditional dress from their home countries to put on a spectacular **cultural fashion show**;
- our quiz was back by popular demand, this time with a **fabulous London-theme,** which brought out everyone's competitive side;
- we shared a delicious **West African feast**;
- we **celebrated our amazing volunteers**;
- and there was plenty of **dancing speeches, singing and much more!**



"Thank you Women of Women for Refugee Women for an amazing winter party yesterday, for thinking of us and making our day." - Aisha

2024

Our activities







Our fabulous International Women's Day, Summer and Winter parties were all opportunities throughout the year to celebrate the amazing things women in our network have achieved this year.

- Our **Rainbow Sisters** solidarity group for LGBTQ+ women and non-binary people seeking safety, met in solidarity twice a week throughout the year to create, talk, learn and laugh together.
- The women who participated in our **creative activities** made beautiful items, from knitted hats to embroidered cushions and jewellery.
- Our **educational activities** provided opportunities for refugee and asylum-seeking women to learn new skills and develop their confidence. Whether this was improving English language skills, ICT skills, or public speaking, there was something for everyone!
- Those in our **campaigns and advocacy groups** came together to strategise and take action, and in doing so learnt more about how to campaign, conduct research, and speak out for change. We can't wait to see what they do this year!

Our activities wouldn't be possible without the hard work, creativity and time given by our amazing volunteers.

THANK YOU!

Thank you **for everything!**

WOMEN FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

We are so grateful to our **amazing supporters**: those who **volunteered** with us, **donated**, held **fundraising events** — from bake sales to panel discussions — **took on challenges** for us, **campaigned with us**, **invited us to speak** and **supported us on social media**.



Without your support, solidarity and generosity, our work with refugee and asylum-seeking women would not be possible.

We hope you're able to continue to support refugee women in 2025, whether you'd like to organise a fundraiser or give a monthly gift, your ongoing kindness makes a real difference.

THANK YOU!

