



UP FROM DESTITUTION

WOMEN AND OUR CHILDREN ESCAPING
PERSECUTION, WAR AND ECOLOGICAL DEVASTATION
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INTRODUCTION

People seeking asylum in the UK are being made deliberately destitute by government policy and law. Financial support for asylum seekers is provided by a separate system from mainstream benefits and is set at a level that is well below the poverty line. As soon as someone's claim is closed all financial help is terminated. This survey lifts the lid on the hardship, homelessness, exploitation and abuse that results from this on women seeking asylum and making immigration applications in the UK, and it demands change.

People seeking asylum are not the only ones left without the means to live in this society. Benefit sanctions and other austerity cuts, 86% of which have targeted women, mean that over a million and a half people were destitute in the UK before the pandemicⁱ and that has increased.ⁱⁱ

Global Women Against Deportations (GWAD) is a coalition based at the Crossroads Women's Centre, which includes the All African Women's Group (AAWG), a 100 strong organisation of women asylum seekers and refugees from every continent, along with Legal Action for Women (LAW), Women Against Rape (WAR) and Women of Colour/Global Women's Strike (WoC/GWS).

All African Women's Group members, who conducted and participated in this survey, describe how they were forced to flee to the UK to escape persecution, rape and other violence, war and environmental devastation. On arrival women face a hostile immigration environment focussed on throwing every obstacle possible in the path of those fighting for the right to stay. For women, this fight is harder because they are poorer to begin with, are often traumatised and stigmatised from rape and other violence and most importantly women are more likely to have care of children or other family members. Some women were forced to leave children behind when they fled and live daily with the grief and worry that brings. They risk their safety, their freedom and sometimes their lives to try to raise a little money to send home.

Many of the groups based at the Centre have campaigned for decades against destitution, detention and deportation. As the pandemic hit and women's situation got more desperate,

Women Against Rape's Refuge from Rape and Destitution project with the All African Women's Group, in particular, worked to get food vouchers and parcels and other emergency help to women in need. Women in GWAD also focussed on advancing their asylum claim, overturning the injustices in their case and helping others do the same. Some won their right to stay as a result. Others won housing or their right to independent financial support which meant they could leave abusive living situations or better stand up to abuse, if they chose to stay.

In the course of this lifesaving work, women were asked about their living situation. This survey reports the results.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 48% (22) of women have no income at all.
- 60% (27) in total are classified as "destitute" that is a single adult living on less than £70 a week.
- All of the women in this survey (including those in waged jobs) are living on an income which is below the poverty line (£156/week for single adult, £209/week for lone parent with child aged one in London after housing costs.)
- 20% (9) of women are supported under the National Asylum Support Service which allocates an income that is 50% of mainstream benefits.
- 4% (2) of women get discretionary S17 support from the local authority for their children but no allowance for themselves.
- 67% (30) of women had no status in the UK.
- 9% (4) of women had won the right to be in the UK but had No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).
- 15% (7) of women (5 of whom are mothers) are on Universal Credit.
- Of the 27 women that had no income, two-thirds had applied for asylum and been refused.
- 44% (20) of women had suffered rape although this may be an under represented issue as women find this very hard to speak about.
- 73% (33) of women had suffered domestic violence and this was one, if not the primary reason they had to flee from their home country.

METHODOLOGY

This was a self-selecting sample of 45 women from a pool of over 100 women who are members of AAWG. Two researchers from the AAWG sent 50 women a standard set of questions and gathered the responses from the 45 who answered.

Women answered “yes” or “no” to the following questions:

1. Are you destitute?
2. Why are you destitute? Because:
 - a) You haven't made any asylum or immigration claim.
 - b) You applied for asylum and were refused so you are now not entitled to NASS support or you are still waiting to hear from the Home Office.
 - c) You applied for NASS and got it.
 - d) You applied for family life/Article 8 (or for it to be renewed) and are waiting for a decision and are not entitled to any support.
 - e) You were granted family reunion/Article 8 but aren't entitled to public funds – that is you can't claim benefits like Universal Credit/housing benefit/disability benefits.
 - f) You have status in the UK but your benefits/wages are not enough to cover your outgoings: e.g. essential bills or debt repayments.
 - g) You get Section 17 -- social services support for your children.
 - h) You have status and had a job or some informal way of earning money but have lost it since Covid.
 - i) You have status but are not able to work because of trauma/disability.
 - j) Any other reason? Please describe below.
3. Are you a survivor of rape and/or domestic violence?

THE WOMEN IN THIS SURVEY

Twenty women (44%) are mothers of children under 18. Twenty are survivors of rape and other torture, although rape survivors may be under represented as women find it difficult to disclose all that they have suffered. In some instances, women don't know that what happened to them and their children is officially described as rape.

DESTITUTION & POVERTY

Twenty-seven women (60%) are officially destitute defined as living on less than £70 a week for a single person.

All women in this survey are living in poverty. The weekly income needed for a single person not to be living in poverty is: £245 outside London and £269 in London.ⁱⁱⁱ All but three women in this sample are living in London or Greater London.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

Four women (9%) had won status in the UK based on Article 8 of the Human Rights Act which protects people's family and private life, but a condition was attached to this status that they had No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and are therefore excluded from claiming benefits (including for example, universal credit, disability benefits and housing benefit) and a range of allowances and tax credits.

In general people from other countries who come to live in the UK are expected to be able to maintain and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds. This applies while their applications are pending AND even after they have been granted status in the UK. For those whose applications are pending, they also usually don't have the right to work.

In addition to the four women with status with NRPF, seven women had put in an application under human rights law which protects private and family life and could not claim benefits or work. Two of these women with children were dependent on S.17 support (see below).

One injustice of the NRPF policy is that no account is taken of the terrible psychological and physical suffering that women in particular have endured which makes it very difficult to take on waged work. One woman in the AAWG had suffered years of horrific domestic abuse until she fled to the UK. She was traumatised to learn later that her son had been sexually abused by his father and then suffered homophobia when this became public knowledge. She won the right to stay in the UK but was incapable of doing waged work.

WAR helped her apply to have the NRPF policy removed from her status so she can now claim benefits and is able to begin to recover.

Women describe how the relief and happiness in finally being granted the right to stay is then often smothered by the worry of how to pay Home Office fees. People who win under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, that is on the basis of the family and private life, get status for 2½ years. For the next 10 years, every time they renew their status they have to pay extortionate fees.^{iv} On top of the immigration health surcharge^v, this plunges many into debt and destitution.

“Women like me who’re on NRPF are struggling to live while trying to get over mental torture. My life-threatening illness on top of the long wait for my status has taken its toll. Every few years I will have to find money and apply for my status to be renewed. Life is not the same, it’s depressing and I sometimes feel like ending it all - but my faith keeps me going.”

NATIONAL ASYLUM SUPPORT SYSTEM

Nine women (20%) were on National Asylum Support (NASS) which is deliberately set at destitution level and is 50% of mainstream benefits. Whilst Universal Credit was increased by £20 a week during the pandemic, NASS support was increased by just £1.65.

The amount^{vi} of money that someone on NASS gets each week after housing costs is:

- £31.15 for 18 – 24 years old
- £39.34 for over 25s
- £61.71 for couple
- £39.34 for single mum plus £43.88 for child under 16 and £33.85 for child aged 16-17 years old.

The breakdown of what the NASS money is supposed to cover is brutally unrealistic and reveals a discriminatory attitude about what people need, want and deserve.

- £23.75 for sufficient food *“to avoid illness or malnourishment”*;
- £2.80 to cover clothing and footwear *“and indeed the strong evidence is that the need can be met more cheaply by using charity stores”*;

- £2.84 which would “*comfortably enough*” cover someone’s needs for toiletries, household cleaning items and non-prescription medication;
- £4.30 for the cost of a return bus journey which “*may be necessary in limited circumstances*” to maintain “*interpersonal relationships and a minimum level of participation in social, cultural and religious life*”;
- £3 per week for communication i.e. mobile phone costs.

Seven women who were entitled to NASS support had not applied for it. This was because they:

- a) didn’t know they could, or
- b) feared applying and being dispersed to accommodation away from their support networks.
- c) couldn’t apply because of obstacles like needing extensive paperwork on finances from their host family. No women had got NASS during the many months, and even years, while they were preparing the extensive evidence needed in order to submit “fresh” asylum claims (often reporting rape for the first time) even though, on paper, this help is meant to be available.

SECTION 17 CHILD ASSISTANCE

Two women (4%) get support via Section 17 (S17) of the Children’s Act under which local authorities have a duty to “safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need”.^{vii} Mothers get no allowance for themselves. Applying for S17 can trigger deportation, if you don’t have a current application, and/or the threat of your children being taken by the state. Even if you get S17 the amount you are entitled to is discretionary. For example, one woman with three children gets £110.50 a week which is 64% of what she would get on NASS support.

HOUSING

Two women (4.5%) were living in overcrowded NASS hostels sharing communal facilities, which during a pandemic was especially dangerous as they were unable to socially distance or follow public health guidance. Some women in NASS accommodation had no cooking facilities even though they have children. They were dependent on the food from the hotel/hostel.

Evictions have continued despite the pandemic. A mother with two children was evicted by Lewisham council in January 2021 during a cold freeze and a pandemic lockdown.^{viii} When she appealed to the Council (with the help of WAR) to stop the eviction, a council officer threatened that, as a result of WAR raising the dangers this posed, he would have to pursue “safeguarding concerns”. This is a well-established code for proceedings to take children from their mothers.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Seven women (five of whom are mothers) are living on Universal Credit which during the pandemic was £95 a week for a single person (plus allowances for children).^{ix} However, none of the women were getting this amount as they were either paying part of their housing costs out of the universal credit personal allowance or were having to pay debts including for Home Office fees to make immigration applications.

“I get Universal credit but it’s swallowed up by paying a bit of my rent, and then big bills like gas, electricity, broadband and water. I have to pay TV licence but I don’t own a telly, but we need to get online because of home-schooling my son. My son is growing and needs shoes and school clothes but COVID closed all the charities which we relied on. Here we survive off food banks and vouchers. I have to borrow and pay back all the time. The stress and anxiety I live with every day is too much.”

LOW WAGED WORK/ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

Two women had waged work before the pandemic and had lost their job or had their hours cut. They were not on furlough as they had been on zero-hour contracts.

Two women are in waged jobs and are not entitled to public funds and are therefore deprived of tax credits that other workers get.

“I lost my permanent care workers job due to COVID lockdown and had to leave London to survive. Now I’m in a very difficult situation because I only get six, sometimes eight hours work and live off £50/60 a week. Some weeks I get nothing and sometimes I cannot work as I have a chronic health condition. I only have

somewhere to live because I look after a friend's house and pay a little rent in exchange."

"I have a caring support job - it's very hard work with long hours. I'm also exhausted by my living conditions which are terrible. I share a bathroom with four strangers - it's usually dirty so I have to clean it every time - it's very worrying with COVID. I'm forced to cook in my room which means my clothes smell and I can do nothing about it."

"I'm a mother and a paid care worker. I struggled to save money from my small wages to renew my visa. After I won the right to stay I had to find £2,500 to pay Home Office visa fees. I didn't have money or savings so I asked for a fee waiver but was refused so I've borrowed it. And even though I'm classed as a key worker, I have to pay to get any NHS treatment. The Home Office finds so many ways to punish mothers like me and our children."

WHY ARE WOMEN'S ASYLUM CLAIMS REFUSED?

Seventeen women (38%) had claimed asylum and been refused.

Women's experiences are not recognised as persecution and therefore as grounds for asylum and there is an inherent bias against women in the asylum system.

People claim asylum under the Refugee Convention. But when the Convention was introduced, issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic violence – violence that was more likely to be committed in private rather than public domain -- were not considered as 'persecution' despite the massive harm and life-threatening nature of these crimes. And the five "convention grounds" – the reasons why someone might be targeted for persecution – do not include being a woman.

In later years there has been some recognition of the particular forms of persecution that women suffer. For example: the courts accepted that domestic violence could constitute persecution if women couldn't get protection from the authorities in their home country.^x

The stigma and discrimination that a rape victim faced from her own community was recognised in a landmark ruling by Baroness Hale.^{xi} But such precedents are invariably ignored by the Home Office which is determined to refuse cases no matter how unjustly.

Of the 41 women in this survey who answered the question, 33 had suffered domestic violence in their country of origin and this was one, if not the primary reason they had to flee.

One of the women who participated in the survey commented:

“I suffered the most serious violence at the hands of my ex-husband and had to leave Kenya to save my life. Speaking to other women they describe being beaten so badly that their bones are broken and being burnt and tortured so they are maimed for life. If we go to the police we are told it’s a “family matter” and that we were being disciplined. So our lives are at risk but it isn’t considered persecution and a reason for us to get asylum and safety in the UK. This must change. Otherwise women will be sent back to a certain death.”

Systemic hostility and discrimination against rape survivors is common in the asylum system. Brutal disregard and downright cruel treatment was repeatedly described by women in this survey with one woman reporting:

“Last year, just before lockdown I went to a screening interview. I took my partner for support. I was taken into a room and a man on a screen started asking me questions. Before I could stop him, he asked me if I had been raped. I was so shocked. I said no because my partner didn’t know anything about what happened to me. I then asked if my partner could leave and had to reveal that I had been raped. My partner was so upset he nearly left me. He thought I had been keeping things from him and wasn’t to be trusted. I am still shaken and distraught at being questioned like that.”

Previous research^{xii} by Women Against Rape (WAR) found evidence of institutionalised sexism, racism and other discrimination from both Home Office officials/caseworkers and judges. Delay and minor inconsistencies are used to discredit survivors’ accounts and

judges even accuse women of using rape to “embellish their claim”. Guidelines^{xiii} which acknowledge the longstanding trauma of rape, and how stigma and discrimination may deter or prevent women speaking about what they suffered, are ignored. There is no acknowledgment of the important legal precedent^{xiv} that WAR helped win which is that women are unable not unwilling to disclose rape.

In their evidence^{xv} to the government in 2018, WAR documented in detail the problems that rape victims face in getting asylum and protection in the UK:

“Institutionalised disbelief and hostility from immigration officers and decision makers and lack of acknowledgment of the traumatic impact of rape and sexual abuse;

“Trauma and stigma make it much harder to report rape than any other violence. Many women we work with have never spoken to anyone else about what they have been through. Others haven’t been able to tell professionals like lawyers or GPs. Hardest of all is speaking to officials.”

“Rude and hostile officials”... pressed [women] to “speed up” or alternately kept for hours ploughing through details of traumatic experiences which they have never spoken about before and have battled to keep at the back of their minds.”

“Officials scan the overall account for potential ‘weaknesses’ which may offer grounds to refuse a case . . . Meanwhile other crucial information, for example, about the situation a woman fears if sent back, is not gathered... We have seen this pattern repeated so often that it appears to be “policy”.

“Discrepancies resulting from the interviews and sometimes translation errors are seized on. These are not presented to the woman at the interview so that mistakes and misunderstandings can be resolved.”

LEGAL AID

Cuts deprive women of the evidence and expert support needed to fight the Home Office
One example cited by WAR is:

“Ms YF was raped as a child by her school headmaster who was also a priest and then by a male relative she was sent to live with. She carried so much shame and was so scared that she never spoke about this. She was left dependent on an exploitative partner who raped her and then reported her to the Home Office after she left him. She couldn’t get legal aid to have her own lawyer and the couple’s private lawyer discouraged her from seeking asylum and instead keep pursuing her application on family life grounds – telling her that he would sort things out with her ex-partner. It was only after she was detained and was encouraged by other women there that she felt able to report what had happened to her and include it in her application for asylum. But she had no lawyer to help her appeal against the Home Office accusation that she was lying and the judge again refused her. She contacted WAR from detention which found her a pro bono lawyer to challenge the judge and when that failed, helped her apply without any legal representation to the Court of Appeal. The judge’s ruling was put aside because he hadn’t considered that Ms YF was a “vulnerable witness”, that is he hadn’t taken into account the impact of trauma on her ability to speak earlier about what she suffered. She went on to win full refugee status.^{xvi xvii}

The systemic discrimination against rape victims means that 88% of victims have their asylum claims rejected.^{xviii}

Of the women supported by WAR over a three-year period from 2018, 100% won at appeal^{xix}. This shows that many rape survivors’ asylum claims, which are dismissed by the Home Office as “unsubstantiated”, are in fact being blocked and knocked back by a hostile immigration policy focussed on finding reasons to refuse claims. When women get appropriate support, many go onto win their case.^{xx}

At least two women in this survey described being put off from claiming asylum because of discrimination and hostility from the Home Office, including the threat of immediate detention and deportation (with no right of appeal).

Gloria Peters from the All African Women's Group describes how women come together to fight their case.

“Our collective work changes women and prepares us to be able to present our case and win our immigration claim. Women who come to our group meetings have nearly always been refused asylum. Even the thought of reading their refusal makes women sick with fear. But together we help each other understand our case and the injustices of how we have been treated. We've seen women who are frightened of their lawyer transform into someone that is respectfully correcting their mistakes. We have seen women protest against doctors and other professionals that charge extortionate fees for support letters, despite knowing that the woman that needs that letter is destitute. We learn from each other and support and encourage each other. It makes all the difference in the world to know that you are not the only one going through this. It helps us to shed the embarrassment and self-blame we feel for all that we have suffered.”

HOME OFFICE DELAY AND OBSTRUCTION

At least nine women have been waiting for longer than a year in their (current) application. Long delays in processing applications are the standard.

Women Against Rape helped one young woman secure £30,000 damages in a precedent-setting case against the Home Office's nine-year delay in responding to her asylum claim.^{xxi}

The Home Office is quick to slander lawyers for causing delays by bringing appeals, but what women in this survey describe is that even when they win their case the Home Office brings spurious challenges that fail to adhere to legal precedents and even its own guidelines and official reports. One rape victim finally won her case after four years of legal wrangles.

DEPENDENCE ON OTHERS

Three women described being dependent on men for their survival. This made them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Women couldn't buy their own food and therefore

maintain a healthy diet. They often lacked basic freedoms such as being able to go out when they chose to take exercise.

“My survival right now depends on me walking on eggshells on a daily basis to remain sane. I have no independence. I have to suffer in silence because to speak out would aggravate the situation I’m in. The man I’m with is ill with health issues so I have to care for him on top of doing all the cooking and housework. If I don’t, he says the door is open, I can leave. But I have nowhere else to go. I’m longing for the day when I get my status and have my freedom.”

MOTHERS AND OTHER CARERS

19 women (42%) were either caring for (including financially supporting) children, people with disabilities or older people within their household. One woman said:

“I cared for my husband who needs full-time care. He is disabled which means I would start work at 6.30am in the morning, cooking, feeding, washing, cleaning. It was never ending. He abused me all the while. He controlled me. My asylum claim was joined to his and I couldn’t even find out what was happening with it. Eventually I got in touch with the African women’s group and through them got the strength to make my own asylum claim. Then I left. Now I’m staying with a friend. I’m grateful but of course the caring hasn’t stopped. For three hours each day I take care of my friend’s children in exchange for housing. Without me she couldn’t go to work. It is our work that keeps the world going round but no-one sees it and no-one counts it.”

Eight women (18%) are caring for children left behind when they were forced to flee. This is very common. Often if women face persecution in their home countries, they feel that their children will no longer be under threat once they have left.

Every mother interviewed spoke about her fears, worry and distress about her children. In the decisions that women made, the protection and safety of their children was their primary concern. One woman who faced eviction from her home in the height of the pandemic and in freezing weather, decided to leave because the council callously threatened “safeguarding concerns” which women recognise as code for removing your children from your care.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND LAW

This survey found that half of women seeking asylum and with immigration applications in the UK had no income at all and two-thirds were destitute. Many are rape survivors and many are mothers. Women face a sexist and racist asylum and immigration system. Legal aid cuts have made it almost impossible to get a fair hearing. When women's claims are refused they are being cut off from all support.

This was a small-scale survey but its findings ring true across the rest of society. It means that millions of women are deprived of any income and in the money society that we live in, women are therefore deprived of the means to survive. Baroness Hale describes this as inhuman and degrading treatment.

"It might be possible to endure rooflessness for some time without degradation if one had enough to eat and somewhere to wash oneself and one's clothing. It might be possible to endure cashlessness for some time if one had a roof and basic meals and hygiene facilities provided. But to have to endure the indefinite prospect of both, unless one is in a place where it is both possible and legal to live off the land, is in today's society both inhuman and degrading." ^{xxii}

Inhuman and degrading treatment is illegal under international law.

Lack of money also means lack of status. People are seen as less important, and our lives less valuable and deserving. This is at the root of the discrimination and injustice women face.

If one set of people are made deliberately destitute, not only is it easier for governments to impose destitution on others it also sets a standard that undermines everyone's struggle for an income, for resources and for the right to live.

Poverty and destitution put women more at risk of exploitation and violence. Yet there has been little said about this by prominent feminist politicians. Poverty is at the root of our powerlessness as women and is a form of violence. This is and should be acknowledged as the foundational feminist issue.

With this government and virtually every other government, poverty is a political choice. Women asylum seekers aren't the only ones that are destitute in fact 75% of destitute people are British born. Benefit sanctions in particular have left hundreds of thousands of people without any income at all for extended periods of time. And if poverty and destitution are a political choice made by brutes in Westminster and Whitehall then our struggle against it isn't a personal fight but one in which we can come together to fight. This means resisting the way we are divided among those of us who have papers and those that have none.

Destitution is a policy that promotes rape and other violence. Lack of acknowledgement and justice for rape exacerbates and compounds women's suffering and trauma. This has a ripple affect which can continue over generations. In opposing imprisonment for women, Baroness Hale describes women as the "useful member of the family". Women are the primary carers in every society which means that when women can no longer cope, families and whole communities are left unprotected.

The pandemic has showed how dependent everyone's survival is on caring work, overwhelmingly done by women, in the family and outside, unwaged or low waged, with or without papers. The contribution of immigrant people and refugees is visible and acknowledged as never before but this has not brought an increase in rights and wages. While nurses were offered a shameless 1% wage increase for risking their lives to save lives during the pandemic, many immigrant NHS workers are still denied access to the very service they provide.^{xxiii} The demand for a Care Income^{xxiv} would be some recognition for this vital contribution.

Poverty is often deliberately classed as neglect by the authorities which means that destitute mothers are at heightened risk of having their children taken from them, causing unimaginable grief and terror for both child and mother.

During the Covid pandemic, destitute women have largely been unable to follow public health regulations to isolate or access health services including emergency dental and eye care. This increases risk for the whole of society.

Grassroots women fighting their own and each other's cases, coupled with campaigning is saving lives. Women in AAWG are in dire straits but are surviving, and as part of GWAD are helping others and winning -- stopping deportations and evictions, getting out of detention, opposing discrimination against rape and domestic violence survivors, demanding money, housing and health care, and keeping children with their mothers.

Women got little help from the well-funded voluntary sector organisations which seem to be there to manage women's poverty rather than oppose it and even worse collaborate with some of the government's most cruel policies. So-called voluntary returns is one example. One woman in this survey was "offered" voluntary return as an alternative to eviction and destitution. Campaigning^{xxv} has exposed the voluntary return policy as a deliberate ruse by the Home Office to recruit the voluntary sector into the deportation process and some organisations have dissociated themselves as a result.

The government's deliberate policy of destitution of asylum seekers coupled with the refusal of the right to work are economic policies aimed at creating an army of people with little or no power to refuse low pay and exploitative bosses. This drags down everyone's wages, undermines labour rights and as a consequence boosts profits for the employer class.

The government's Nationality and Borders bill will enshrine in law some of the worst of these destitution policies. It introduces a two-tier system so that anyone entering the UK by a so-called illegal route (there are virtually no legal routes) will no longer be entitled to full refugee status. People will have no access to benefits and family reunion, and have only one chance to make an application, if at all – this means even rape survivors will be expected to speak about everything they suffered at the very beginning regardless of trauma and the fear of stigma and discrimination. It is based on lies.^{xxvi}

But the movement against this is growing, led in many countries by Sans Papiers (people without papers) who have launched hunger strikes and occupations demanding #PapersForAll. The anti-deportation movement is connecting up with others opposing the torrent of repressive legislation^{xxvii} from the current government. The Black Lives Matter movement shone a light on rampant racism and has rightly forced a reassessment of empire, slavery and imperialism. AAWG working with Women of Colour in the Global

Women's Strike are documenting the debt owed to Africa, India and countries of the south for the theft of people and resources over centuries from slavery, colonialism to the present day. This has strengthened women asylum seekers in their demand to be seen as wealth creators and the descendants of wealth creators and demand the right to be here.

This isn't research that is going to sit on a shelf and gather dust or be filed somewhere in an academic institution. It is campaigning research. Its aim is to first of all inform ourselves and others about what is happening to women in the UK – one of the richest countries of the world – in order to strengthen our struggle to end destitution for good.

DEMANDS FOR CHANGE

- End the hostile immigration environment and restore legal aid so that people can get a fair hearing.
- Ensure that women who have suffered rape and other sexual violence are able to get the support they need to speak about their experience so that the full evidence of their claim is presented to the authorities/court.
- Abolish the National Asylum Support System, an apartheid system of benefits which means that asylum seekers get less than mainstream benefits and that private companies and NGOs rack up massive profits for providing poor services and substandard, dirty, dangerous housing.
- Abolish the No Recourse to Public Funds policy.
- Abolish Home Office fees and the immigration health surcharge which people have to pay every time they renew their status.
- Restore the right to waged work while asylum claims are being decided.
- Provide a Care Income in recognition of the caring work being done by women asylum seekers and immigrant women even if they have no official status in the UK. This is still work that people depend on for survival. It should be recompensed.
- Full and immediate compensation for all those illegally denied their status including the Windrush generation and Commonwealth citizens.
- Grant automatic right to family reunion to anyone with status in the UK.
- Scrap the National and Borders Bill which violates the rights of people to seek protection from persecution in the UK.

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- ⁱ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/unemployed-destitution-uk-budget-sunak-b1805292.html?r=7948>
- ⁱⁱ In April, one month after the first lockdown “1.5 million Britons reported not eating for a whole day because they had no money or access to food. ...More than 1 million people reported losing all their income because of the pandemic.” <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/11/uk-hunger-crisis-15m-people-go-whole-day-without-food>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Poverty definitions and thresholds | Trust for London. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/poverty-thresholds/>
- ^{iv} Fee for permanent residency: £2,389; Fee to renew status every three years for people given discretionary leave to remain: £900 each time.
- ^v The Immigration Health Surcharge is £624 per year for a single person over the age of 18 for all visa and immigration applications.
- ^{vi} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/99032/2847-support-asylum-seekers.pdf
- ^{vii} <https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/resources/section-17-support/>
- ^{viii} <http://theprisma.co.uk/2021/03/01/abuse-victim-wins-battle-for-housing/>
- ^{ix} The £20 increase is being taken away at the end of September 2021
- ^x *Shah and Islam v SSHD* [1999] 2 AC 629
- ^{xi} *ex parte Hoxha* [2005] UKHL 19
- ^{xii} <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/dec/06/immigrationasylumandrefugees.genderissues>
- ^{xiii} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/699703/gender-issues-in-the-asylum-claim-v3.pdf
- ^{xiv} *R v. Secretary of State, Ex parte Ejon*, QBD (1998) INLR 195
- ^{xv} <https://womenagainstrape.net/written-evidence-to-the-home-affairs-select-committee-enquiry-into-modern-slavery/#more-1771>
- ^{xvi} *YF (Cameroon) v SSHD* in the Court of Appeal, civil division. Application for a second appeal. (Ref: C5/2014/2595)
- ^{xvii} <https://refugefromrapeanddestitution.blog/2019/11/07/our-pioneering-work-puts-the-onus-on-judges-to-protect-vulnerable-witnesses/>
- ^{xviii} <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-rape-survivors-sexual-abuse-destitution-homeless-a9250746.html>
- ^{xix} <https://refugefromrapeanddestitution.blog/about-us/>
- ^{xx} <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/shine-a-light/fighting-to-win-asylum-from-rape-case-of-erioth-mwesigwa/>
- ^{xxi} <https://refugefromrapeanddestitution.blog/2019/10/17/asylum-for-anna-at-last/>
- ^{xxii} *Limbuela v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] UK HL 66 paragraph 78.
- ^{xxiii} <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/oct/14/migrants-denied-nhs-care-for-average-of-37-weeks-research-finds>
- ^{xxiv} <https://globalwomenstrike.net/careincomenow/>
- ^{xxv} <https://refugefromrapeanddestitution.blog/2019/01/14/bullied-into-voluntary-returns/>
- ^{xxv} <https://refugefromrapeanddestitution.blog/2021/05/01/oppose-the-new-immigration-plan/>
- ^{xxv} Such as the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill, the Overseas Operation Act, the “Spy Cops” Bill.

Report compiled by Global Women Against Deportations which co-ordinates anti-deportation work at the Crossroads Women's Centre and includes the All African Women's Group, a 100 strong organisation of women asylum seekers and refugees from every continent, along with Legal Action for Women, Women Against Rape and Women of Colour/Global Women's Strike.



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