

# GenderWorks

Putting women at the heart of Europe

February 2009



Welcome to the latest issue of **GenderWorks**, the newsletter for everyone who is involved with women experiencing poverty or who works to tackle social exclusion.

This quarter we're covering the UK Government's scrapping of guidance on funding for single identity groups. We examine a legal threat to councils over their failure to provide adequate services for women who have experienced domestic violence or rape. And we report a call for your views on Jobcentre Plus advertising jobs in lap-dancing clubs.

We've also spoken to some of the women who've taken part in GenderWorks training courses to find out what they got out of them. We're looking ahead to International Women's Day. And we've got lots of suggestions about how you can get involved.

We hope you enjoy it!

**The GenderWorks team**

## What is GenderWorks?

**GenderWorks is a two-year project funded by the European Commission. It aims to explore the problems faced by women living in poverty across Europe, and influence European Union member governments to tackle these problems more effectively. To find out more, visit [www.oxfam.org.uk/genderworks](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/genderworks)**

## Cautious welcome for scrapping of single group funding guidance



Supporters of SBS demonstrate outside the Royal Courts of Justice in 2008. Credit: Judy Greenway

Southall Black Sisters (SBS), the west London support group for black and Asian women who have experienced violence or abuse, has cautiously welcomed the UK Government's scrapping of plans to advise local councils not to fund "single identity" groups, which support a particular community based on ethnic, religious or cultural identity.

"This is a vindication of the struggle that the third sector has been involved in over the last six months to ensure the cohesion agenda doesn't obscure the principle of equality," SBS Chair Pragna Patel told GenderWorks.

SBS' own funding battle was used as a case study to highlight flaws in the proposed guidelines, after Ealing Council decided to withdraw funding from the group in 2008, using the guidance to argue that a new service for all women was needed instead.

Users of SBS' services brought a case against the council, which conceded defeat at a High Court hearing.

In 2007, the independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion recommended that "the presumption should be against

Single Group Funding unless there is a clear reason for capacity building within a group or community', saying the issue had the 'potential to increase insularity and a sense of separation'.

However, in the Commission's summary of responses to the Cohesion Guidance for Funders Consultation, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears said the Government had concluded that guidelines were not the way forward.

"We consider that it is only local leaders who can properly understand the context, assess the local circumstances, and be in a position to make a truly informed choice," she said in her foreword to the document.

Patel said that while she welcomed the decision, she was disappointed that the government had not issued more positive guidance, emphasising the fact that public sector bodies have statutory duties under equalities legislation.

"It could have reminded local authorities that achieving equality is central to achieving cohesion, and this is where the role of single identity groups is important," she said.

## News

## Councils threatened with legal action over inadequate rape services

Over 100 local authorities in the UK are not providing adequate services for women who have experienced domestic violence or rape, according to a report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which has threatened to use the Gender Equality Duty (GED) to take legal action against these councils.

Each year, three million women in Britain experience rape, domestic violence, stalking or other forms of abuse, the EHRC says. But the number of rape crisis centres across England and Wales has fallen to 38, and the EHRC's 'Map of Gaps 2' report found that 24 per cent of the remaining centres fear closure or cuts in services this financial year because of a lack of funding.

Manchester is one of the authorities where provision is good, but many women have to travel long distances into the city from surrounding areas where services are inadequate. Anne Stebbings of Manchester Rape Crisis told GenderWorks she receives calls from all over the northwest, including cities as far away as Blackpool and Preston.

Stebbing believes voluntary organisations have suffered because of an over-emphasis on statutory provision through sexual assault referral centres, which respond to recent incidents reported to the police.

"More than 75 per cent of women don't report rape, and those are the women we work with," she said. "There's nothing else for them."

The EHRC will approach those local authorities whose service provision is inadequate, and any who fail to provide 'a satisfactory response' will be taken to court under the GED. The GED requires all public authorities to demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men and eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment.

The GenderWorks team has written to all the local authorities whose service provision was found by the report to be inadequate, offering them free places on our Policy into Practice training and mentoring programme (see below).

**If you'd like to check whether your local authority is complying with the GED, in terms of rape crisis centres or on any other issue, try using the toolkit on the EHRC's website ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)), which includes a range of letters you might want to send and suggests who you can go to if you're not happy with the response.**

Drop us a line at [genderworks@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:genderworks@oxfam.org.uk) and let us know how you get on!



Anne Stebbings. Credit: Chris Worrall/Oxfam

## Welfare reform – new white paper

Following consultations on its green paper on welfare reform, 'No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility', the UK Government has now published a white paper. 'Raising expectations and increasing support' sets out how the Government will take its plans forward and deliver the UK's National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (see GenderWorks October 2008). **You can read the white paper at [www.dwp.gov.uk/welfare-reform/raisingexpectations](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfare-reform/raisingexpectations) and read Oxfam's response to 'No one written off' at [www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/ukpoverty/resources](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/ukpoverty/resources)**

## Your chance to comment on 'adult' ads

The UK Government is seeking views on the current Jobcentre Plus policy to advertise jobs in the adult entertainment industry, including vacancies at lap-dancing clubs, escort agencies and massage parlours.

Jobcentre Plus, which has been advertising these 'adult' jobs since July 2003, received two complaints during the year ending 31 July 2008 from customers who had applied for specific vacancies and had been asked to provide sexual services.



Sandrine Levêque, campaigns manager at Object, an organisation set up to challenge the objectification of women, told GenderWorks that Government job agencies should not be carrying advertisements for these "highly exploitative" jobs.

"The sex industry is rife with problems; these are not just jobs like any others," she said. "We urge people to respond (to this consultation) and say they don't wish to see these ads in Jobcentre Plus, because they legitimise an exploitative industry."

**The consultation period runs until 27 February. To find out how to give your views to the Government, see the consultation document on the Department of Work and Pensions website, at [www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2008](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2008) For more information about Object, see [www.object.org.uk](http://www.object.org.uk)**

## Training

# Making the Duty Work in Birmingham



Anita Shervington takes part in the GenderWorks training course in Birmingham. Credit: Kate Rowley/Oxfam

The GenderWorks team headed to Birmingham in December to deliver the third 'Making the Gender Duty Work' (MGDW) course, which, like the first two, received a hugely positive response.

The free, two-day course explores the links between poverty and gender and aims to help women's organisations use the Gender Equality Duty (GED), which compels public bodies to take into account the different needs of women and men and promote equality between them.

Roisin Cavanagh from the British Institute of Human Rights provided input on using a human rights-based approach to poverty, and Louise Whitfield of the Public Law Project gave a comprehensive guide to how the GED can be used by

community and voluntary organisations to hold local authorities to account.

The course was attended by eight women from the Birmingham area, all of whom said afterwards that they had learned "loads" that was useful; for example, "how to communicate with public bodies about decisions they make and how to hold them accountable," "what an Equality Impact Assessment is" and that "we can challenge decisions by public authorities and people are there to help us!".

A fourth MGDW course was run in Edinburgh in January by Engender, an information and networking organisation for women in Scotland which has worked with Oxfam in the past and tailored the course to the Scottish context.

## Sharing and supporting

All of the MGDW courses are followed by additional sessions to provide support to women's organisations in using what they've learned, and an opportunity to share their experiences.

Vicky Marsh of WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together) attended the Manchester MGDW training and the follow-up session in November. She says a talk given at the latter by Pragna Patel of Southall Black Sisters (see front page), about the legal battle the group fought to secure funding for the services it provides to black and Asian women who have experienced violence or abuse, was "inspiring".

"The amount of work that went into that battle was amazing," Marsh told GenderWorks. "It just goes to show that if you want to achieve success in your

campaigning you have to pull out all the stops, and be very focused, organised and prepared to work extremely hard."

Marsh herself is part of a group of women in Manchester who want to improve the way women with no recourse to public funds are supported when they experience domestic violence or are made vulnerable to abuse by their insecure immigration status, which means they are not entitled to certain state benefits.

"We are hoping to involve the council, and one avenue is to look at the issue in terms of the Gender Equality Duty," she said. "The background and knowledge that myself and others in the group have, through attending the training and discussions around gender equality obligations, will help us do that."

## Putting policy into practice

GenderWorks has been working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to identify participants for our 'Policy into Practice' training package, aimed at regional public-sector policy makers who provide services.

The training will focus on tools for incorporating a gender perspective, such as gender budgeting, and will encourage participants to become 'Gender Champions'. It will also help local authorities fulfil their duty to involve local people in key decisions, as set out in the government's white paper 'Communities in control: real people, real power' (see back page).

**Two Policy into Practice training packages are planned for the spring, one in England and one in Scotland. For more information contact Steph Kendrick-Jones on 0161 860 2813 or email [skendrick-jones@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:skendrick-jones@oxfam.org.uk)**

## Two more courses – don't miss out!

There are still two Making the Gender Duty Work courses left to run, so don't miss out!

The training is free, refreshments are provided, and we'll help you out with your travel and childcare costs.

**Courses will be run in London on 30 and 31 March, and in Cardiff in May (dates and venue to be confirmed). Places are limited, so get in touch today to book your place. Contact Sandhya Sharma on 0161 860 2817 or email [SASharma@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:SASharma@oxfam.org.uk)**



Comments from training participants. Credit: Kate Rowley/Oxfam

**Get involved!**

# International Women's Day



The Million Women Rise march in 2008. Credit: Tania Glyde

On and around 8 March, events will be held all over the world to mark International Women's Day (IWD), the event launched in 1911 to inspire women and celebrate their achievements.

In the UK, the Million Women Rise march in London will set off at noon on 7 March from Portman Square. A demonstration against all forms of violence against women, the march will be followed by a rally and celebration in Waterloo Place from 14.30-17.00, including speeches

and music. See [www.millionwomenrise.com](http://www.millionwomenrise.com) for more details.

GenderWorks will be taking part in an event at the Town Hall in Manchester on 8 March. This year's theme is 'the inspirations and aspirations of Manchester women'.

**To find out more about these events and many more taking place across Europe and around the world, see [www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)**

## Real people, real power

The UK Government has introduced a bill taking forward proposals from the white paper 'Communities in control: real people, real power', which set out a range of policy commitments aimed at putting more power in the hands of local communities.

The 'Local democracy, economic development and construction' bill includes plans to strengthen the role of local authorities in economic development, and increase transparency and public accountability by allowing the

Audit Commission to appoint auditors to certain local government. To read the bill in full, see [services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/localdemocracyeconomicdevelopmentandconstruction.html](http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/localdemocracyeconomicdevelopmentandconstruction.html)

**To get involved in other consultations related to the white paper 'Communities in control', or to download a Community Power Pack, which offers a practical guide to getting more involved in local communities, see [www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment/communitiesincontrol/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment/communitiesincontrol/)**

## Resources & Publications

For useful links, toolkits, reports and other documents about gender, poverty and social inclusion, check out the Resources page on our website [www.oxfam.org.uk/genderworks](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/genderworks). If you would like hard copies of any of the documents listed, please give us a call on 0161 860 2813.

## Partners

### Lamoro launches training in Italy

GenderWorks' partner in Italy, Lamoro, is gearing up to deliver training courses to local and regional decision makers in two key municipalities. A series of interactive seminars will aim to ensure that gender is integrated into every aspect of regional 'zone plans', which outline how health, housing and social services are delivered.

Lamoro is also focusing on gender budgeting, and has met with two of the local authorities in the northwest Piedmont region in which it is based. Further meetings on the subject are scheduled with representatives of the province of Asti. **For more information on gender budgeting, see [www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/ukpoverty/changeinthinking.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/ukpoverty/changeinthinking.html)**

### WAVE brings experts together in Austria

In Austria, the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) network is facilitating expert seminars looking at the process used to develop the government's National Action Plan, and identifying the links between domestic violence and poverty. The seminars bring together a wide range of experts and will make recommendations about how to combat the social exclusion of women experiencing domestic violence.

WAVE is also working on a GenderWorks report on the links between violence against women, poverty and social inclusion, which includes input from the International Practice Exchange held in Vienna in October. The report will feature contributions from women's groups in the UK and Italy, as well as Austria.

**For more information about what our partners are up to, see [www.lamoro.it](http://www.lamoro.it) and [www.wave-network.org](http://www.wave-network.org)**

### Need some help?

If you would like support to use the Gender Equality Duty or any other piece of public law to improve services for women, get in touch with the GenderWorks team. **You can call us on 0161 860 2813, or email [genderworks@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:genderworks@oxfam.org.uk)**

We hope you've found the GenderWorks newsletter an interesting read. Please send us your comments, ideas and any information you'd like to see included in the next issue. You can call us on 01865 472137 or drop us a line at [genderworks@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:genderworks@oxfam.org.uk) We look forward to hearing from you!



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