

Step Up Migrant Women UK Campaign

#StepUpMigrantWomen #MigrantWomenUK

All women have the right to a life free of violence. Migrant women facing violence have the right to seek help and support, regardless of their immigration status. A firewall must be established to enable migrant women victims of crime to report and seek support without fear of deportation.

Background:

The government's 'hostile environment' policies hit migrant women the hardest and puts their rights at risk. Migrant women with insecure legal status reporting VAWG and crime are at risk of their details being shared for immigration control purposes. The lack of safe-reporting mechanisms in place creates a barrier for migrant women seeking support to flee violence and gives greater impunity to perpetrators.

Aims:

Step Up Migrant Women UK will **aim to bring together diverse voices from BME women and migrant organisations** to challenge the barriers faced by migrant women with insecure status as victims/survivors of violence. Together we will call on key decision makers to actively seek positive changes in the development and implementation of policies affecting women exercise of rights. Collaboration and solidarity will be at the heart of the campaign.

Through involvement in research, consultation and advocacy and campaign activities, Step Up Migrant Women will aim to **increased participation and empowerment of migrant women** in voicing their concerns in strategies, influencing policy at local and national level. We want to **highlight and recognise the intersectional experiences** of migrant women and the specific barriers they face, which are often marked by discrimination linked to race, language, immigration status, income, sexuality, disability, and others.

Our ultimate aim is to **secure safe reporting mechanisms and work towards the establishment of a firewall at the levels of policy and practice** that separates immigration control and reporting from support services to victims of crime. We will actively engage in advocacy activities to ensure that the barriers and needs of migrant women victims of crime inform policy and practice.

Safe reporting must be highlighted in tandem with the need to ensure access to crisis, temporary and permanent accommodation, as well as specialist support services and essential financial support for survivors. This will be done by **actively supporting existing campaigns and good practice models** (e.g. Abolish NRPF campaign, ABC Campaign, Docs not Cops, Ascent Project, Face

Her Future, etc.) and by working in collaboration to complement this work.

This campaign is run in partnership with the EU level ‘Step Up Migrant Women’ campaign led by PICUM and WAVE:

<http://www.wave-stepup.org/wave-step-up-2017/improve-access/migrant-women>

Legal framework for Step Up Migrant Women for national context:

The **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." The CEDAW Committee has noted that intersecting forms of discrimination limit access to justice, such that women "often do not report violations of their rights to the authorities for fear that they will be humiliated, stigmatised, arrested, deported, tortured or have other forms of violence inflicted upon them, including by law enforcement officials."¹ The Committee calls on states to ensure women's "unhindered access to justice systems" without discrimination, as a condition of achieving de jure and de facto equality.

The **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**, in Article 4 paragraph 3 states: "The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties; in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status".

The **EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (2012/29/ EU) (Victims' Directive)**, was adopted on 25 October 2012. It obliges member states to ensure certain basic rights to all victims of crime, and prioritises individuals' dignity and safety above their administrative status. Non-discrimination is at the core of the Directive, which requires that all victims of crime be treated with respect, be offered support services, have access to protection, and be given the opportunity to participate in the criminal proceeding linked to their case. The Directive underscores the particular needs of victims of gender-based violence – which it recognises as a form of discrimination – and notes that women who are victims of such violence and their children often need special support and protection "because of the high risk of secondary and repeat victimisation, of intimidation and of retaliation connected with such violence" (Recital 17). Under Article 9, specialist services that

¹ CEDAW Committee General Recommendation on women's justice (No. 33), para. 10.

member states must provide include shelters or other safe accommodation to prevent retaliation, intimidation or repeat victimisation; and integrated support for victims of sexual violence, gender-based violence, or violence in close relationships, including trauma support and counselling. EU member states (except Denmark) had until November 2015 to transpose the directive into national law.

What next:

Solidarity networks - We need you!

- Women organisations
- Migrant organisations
- Allies to migrant women
- Campaigns resisting the 'hostile environment' and data sharing.
- Trade unions.
- Individual supporters.
- European partners.

Join the campaign!

1. Express your support and endorse the campaign statement online.
2. Be part of the digital launch: encourage others to endorse the campaign statement, share the campaign video and bring attention to the need of ensuring safe reporting.
3. Participate in the #16daysofAction (25th November - 10th of December) to end VAWG and policies contributing to a hostile environment.
4. Join the Steering Group and help us lead this campaign!

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