



# The Ground Beneath Our Feet: Towards a Narrative on Social Change

Newham  
Asian  
Women's  
Project



Annual Report  
2014

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## Foreword by the Management Committee

The Management Committee of Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) is proud to present its Annual Report 2014. In this report we look back at the achievements over the last 12 months placing them in historical context – the ground beneath our feet and map the future of organisation considering the challenges that lay ahead reflecting the project we began 27 years ago towards social change.

**Working  
for  
Women  
Working  
against  
Violence**

Returning to summer 2012, NAWP felt compelled, strategically and politically, to enter a tendering exercise to retain accommodation based refuge services, the same services NAWP had provided since its inception. Tendering was part of the 'new' wave of market-based and competitive systems introduced to the so-called voluntary and community sector but operated as a contradiction, whilst 'opening markets and creating competition it also excluded providers from participation by operating exclusionary criteria: gender neutrality, generic services and efficiency by condensing the economy of providers and safeguarding large-scale provision. Having made a strategic decision to enter the tender process and following 18 months of tendering including service re-modelling and mini-tenders, by the end of 2013, NAWP was the successful bidder and became the leader provider in Newham for refuge services to women fleeing and surviving domestic and sexual violence. With this tender NAWP led a successful partnership bid with East Thames Housing Association enabling NAWP to expand its vision for refuge services and implement standards in the provision of work to address domestic and sexual violence.

Safeguarding the provision as lead provider enabled NAWP to challenge prevailing trends in tendering and commissioning that is, here was a grassroots community based black women's specialist organisation leading the tender with a large-scale housing association as partner. This was a significant shift away from the patterns that had been witnessed across the country as it meant that NAWP had located itself in a position that would safeguard black women's refuges and shape and influence the nature of that provision.

**NAWP  
SAFEGUARDED  
A LIFELINE  
FOR BLACK  
WOMEN  
FLEEING  
VIOLENCE.**

Reversing the trend on mergers happening across the country with mostly black women's refuges 'losing out', NAWP consolidated and sustained a service under threat and remained a critical provider in the local economy of provision. Striking down reactionary stances that is, maintaining the importance of vision as black feminists serving both to strengthen identity and create a pathway through which to navigate against pressure to be 'funder-led', or to adopt gender neutral positions or to merge to reduce the financial burden thought to be created by economies of scale,



By choosing vision NAWP made hard economic choices. Over the course of three years it meant that we 'sustained a blow' and suffered from cuts to our funding however the vision remained strong. Recently NAWP was unable to participate in a tender because it required, as a part of the criteria, that the bidding provider deliver gender neutral generic services. Winning the contract could have meant sustainability for a period of three years however, the risk to vision, identity and purpose instigated by gender minimisation and rationalised as institutionalised sexism, would produce irreparable damage for generations of black women to come.

This raises another point, the exclusion of black women's specialist services from tender processes due to tight and inflexible criterion regarding application specifically around gender minimisation/neutrality policies. This means that black women's organisations are often excluded from participation in tendering and commissioning processes if they act in ways to protect and safeguard black women's space. In doing so, it allows for critique on the democratic openness of such processes and the nature of socio-economic participation vis-a-vie the restricting and closing of spaces.

Growing the earlier success, NAWP continued its development in the casework management approach integrating needs analysis with risk assessment underpinned by frontline work delivered to service users. The model that emerged enabled NAWP to promote good practice in safeguarding approaches which could be replicated across the board in work with vulnerable women and children and also enabled NAWP to define gender violence for practitioners across the board. This was a critical development because it maximised sector-wide capacity to identify violence against women and children especially in cases where it could be minimised and rationalised within institutionalised structures. The number of cases of young women in particular who were disempowered by existing safeguarding approaches was problematic because under such practices, mediation with families perpetrating violence was considered a necessary step towards safeguarding. In such scenarios the violence suffered by young women was minimised as 'fantasy'. One young woman was told that as she described such severe abuse towards her that she could "...only have been making it up..." NAWP's case manage approach identified gender violence using narrative as a critical expression in the process of delivery thus successfully challenges mediation defined as an effective approach in official policy and which is mirrored in the so-called privatised legal processes. This led to the expansion of NAWP's capacity building training programme on safeguarding, domestic and sexual violence, and self-harm among other issues.

NAWP achieved Comic Relief funding for a further three years enabling the organisation to expand its counselling and therapeutic support project to young women and girls. More crucially, the project develops an understanding of therapeutic support for young women and girls and promotes engagement under an empowerment

framework. Critical to success is the de-institutionalised approach which young women can find alienating, clinical and non-reflective of their needs.

THE NOTION OF SAFE WOMEN-ONLY SPACE IS A KEY COMPONENT ALONGSIDE, AN ORGANISATIONAL ETHOS ADDRESSING RACISM, SEXISM AND THE OPPRESSIVE STRUCTURES WITHIN WHICH THESE OPERATE.

NAWP achieved for the first time in her history, funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to introduce a specialist keyworker for young women and girls. This project focuses specifically on challenging attitudes around normalisation and tolerance of gender violence in society, working directly with young women and girls to identify how violence impacts their lives from the individualised experience to the social manifestation of violence thus providing individual support but inclusive of collective approaches to gender violence. The examples of normalisation and tolerance are numerous: the 'blind eye' turned by schools when sexual harassment is witnessed and experienced in school corridors and bathrooms, the failed response at statutory level when young women are told that mediation is their best and only option, and societal acceptance that unhealthy relationships function to preserve patriarchy thus exposing young women to violence, inequality and diminished value in forms of human interaction and inter-relationship. The project aims to challenge and replace such prevailing attitudes with empowerment based responses upholding that there shall be

## zero tolerance to violence of any kind.

NAWP successfully delivered an early intervention and prevention programme in Newham schools focusing on a much younger age group, the 8 to 11 year olds, than previously targeted. To run alongside the programme an intensive project was continued for those aged 12+ focusing on specific issues like grooming, bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexting and safety planning.

NAWP AIMS TO POSITIVELY AFFECT A GENERATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES FREE FROM VIOLENCE AND HARM.

As part of this process, children and young people must also become critical of state sanctioned violence as a dominating ideology that creates a paradox in young minds about violence as a message resonating from governments and often targeting specific ethnic and migrant communities.

NAWP was accredited with Customer First for the third consecutive time and achieved Advice Quality Standard (AQS) for casework in the thematic areas of women and housing advice for the first time under the new framework. NAWP was previously accredited with Level 2 advice information by the Legal Services Commission. These achievements were based on the casework management model and enabled NAWP to develop and promote good practice in the frontline service supporting black women and children.

In terms of future developments towards transformation and change, funding for services is a key priority each year. Over the past three years, austerity has meant that further work is needed in ensuring sustainable funding for core services. All areas of NAWP's work are prioritised for funding therefore it is not necessary to mention each area specifically in this space. However as this work is done it is ethos and vision that take centre stage. Remaining independent, grassroots based, emphasising the importance of self-determination for organisation and for those individual women who access services, and specialist, building from the foundation and grounding the work, are critical drivers mapping how we develop in the years to come. We established ourselves as a social change project and to achieve this objective, in the year to come we will work to consolidate support to women fleeing domestic violence by strengthening refuge provision.

**We recognise that it is through refuge provision that we strengthen our core and protect a critical lifeline. We recognise that it is through refuge provision that we strengthen our core and protect a critical lifeline.**

*Management Committee  
Newham Asian Women's Project  
November 2014*

## Introduction by NAWP's Patron



I am proud to introduce the Annual Report of Newham Asian Women's Project 2014. It has been a year of reflection and challenge, gaining strength from vision, remaining critical of processes and systems that deny women their rights and commitment to the core values. The Ground Beneath our Feet is a reminder of the necessity for vital lifelines to women in need, a discourse generating from critical change narratives presented by women.

While as an organisation and as a community of women we have created collective spaces free from violence and harm, substantial work is still needed. NAWP is responding by creating services to challenge tolerance and normalisation of violence and the often confused messages that young women and girls receive about healthy and unhealthy relationships that result in victim-blaming, prompting young women and girls to look within rather than enabling them to develop a critical lens to observe and respond to society and its disproportionate representations of gender. NAWP continues to preserve a lifeline to legal advice for women without means because without a community grassroots based legal advice service for women, where would they go? How would they seek representation? NAWP also looks to the future and the need for protecting and sustaining accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence. The internal developments are cross-cutting and far-reaching responding critically to the position of women in society, both locally and globally, in the fight for rights, advocacy and representation.

THE  
WORK  
CONTINUES.

Meera Syal  
Patron, Newham Asian Women's Project

## Transforming Power Structures towards Gender Equality

Looking back over the annual reports produced over the last three years we are returned to an analysis about our existence as organisation to race, gender and class. In 2011 we explored identity politics in a report entitled 'Gendering Sustainability: Women's Resistance and Survival'. The purpose of the report was to prepare organisation for change and transformation at a time when black women's organisations, especially refuge providers, were facing threat of closure, targeted by cuts to core funding which would have the long-term effect of destabilising organisation and dismantling black women's struggle for representation, voice and space. In terms of strategic initiative, NAWP undertook a comprehensive gender analysis around economic policy and social impacts under austerity and the impact on women's contribution in relation to their participation and activism.

### **BLACK WOMEN'S TRADITION, STRUGGLE NOT SUBMISSION**

The narrative did not start with the 2011 report but it can be located within the emerging discourse and dialogue in both an individual and collective sense, as a critique on economic and social policy. It was felt that transformation, grounded in theory around black feminism would provide NAWP with a way to make structural changes while promoting identity politics.

In reality, this implied structural change without shifting purpose and vision of organisation. NAWP strengthened and imbedded the idea of social change as organic to organisation, that without identity, the consequences for the project, as organisation, would be least beneficial to the women served, that without identity, there would be a shift in the service model away from addressing multi-layered oppression and the intersecting realities. Clearly, the report was a response the racist and patriarchal stance of government at the time which became manifested in policies and initiatives like gender neutral and generic services.

In 2012 the narrative continued focusing on black women's history in a report entitled 'Celebrating 25 Years: from Violence to Safety and Freedom'. Through the lens of history we were able to explore sustainable housing through a gendered approach bringing together themes around identity, the purpose of NAWP being a provider of safe space for black women at risk of or surviving all forms of gender violence, and the affordability question, that the current political environment was creating unsafe space for women thus exposing them to the further risk of repeat victimisation. Sector-wide data was already beginning to show women returning to unhealthy relationships or to perpetrators due to the lack of choice for independent and safe housing which was complicated further by poverty. At NAWP we also began to document data on women forging 'marriages of convenience' to escape the poverty trap thus placing themselves at potential risk of future harm. These were alarming trends inherent in policy which failed to protect and safeguard women through sustainable resourcing.

From a historical perspective NAWP identified the negative impact of the 'perpetrator' state defined as imperialist and capitalist, and racist as seen in immigration policy and its response to issues like the criminalisation of forced marriage, dismantling of social structures, and removing collective space towards individual drivers with the personalisation agenda being a case in point.

The critical question we asked was about 'the disconnect' in economic and social policy manifested in many ways. In terms of women's housing need, homeless priority in practice became personalised, dependent upon individual housing officer understanding of domestic violence and women's priorities thus replacing collective recognition of need. This was best demonstrated between homelessness strategy targeting vulnerable people in resettlement and move-on in ways that distanced them from appropriate housing support services. For women most at risk, it illustrated the precipitous nature of social policy creating conditions for their disproportionate representation on social and economic indices measuring, at a minimum, their well-being and progress.

While warning of a crisis in meeting women's housing needs, the 2012 report suggested that the refuge movement was at risk. Reflecting on previous successes, the report provided the framework for grounding the work moving forward using identity explored the previous year, and history as fundamental principles upon which social change is based.

In 2013 the narrative was advanced further moving from identity and history and the links between these aspects in building organisation and movement, to focusing on transformation, fuelled by the voices of services users who simply captured their struggle as the difference between 'bread or milk'. This phrase became the title of the report. The report outlined the case that women leaving refuges were already finding it difficult to meet rent obligation as they risked move-on to unsustainable tenancies.

Looking at the possibility of income generation, women with children accommodated in the refuge were finding it difficult to take-up employment or access training because they were unable to afford child care.

The poverty trap, created by limitations on income, experienced as the inability to earn income or reliance on capped fixed incomes placing women moving from refuges into the category of severe poverty.

For women without children, the measures were even more punitive with the lack of housing to meet their needs coupled with income limitation and under-employment creating conditions for 'permanent' poverty.

Official policy functioned in a way that undermined the value of women's contribution in private and public space, their ability to achieve independence grounding race, class and gender discrimination at institutional level.

The report suggested that in order to understand the full impact of poverty, it was significant to examine intersectionality, the socio-political status of women and experiences of violence in relation to the process of impoverishment. The narratives explored how intersectionality was a useful strategy in exploring the social, economic, political and legal environment that contributed to discrimination and structures maintaining the dynamics of oppression and privilege. NAWP was concerned about the impact on the lives of women, particularly black women who were specifically at risk of severe and extreme poverty suggesting gender-blind approaches as leading to the further marginalisation of women in general and ethnic minority women in particular. The rendering of ethnic minority women as invisible led to inadequate responses to the needs of ethnic minority women living in poverty and unless there was a shift in thinking, the recession would continue to exacerbate this problem, disenfranchising black women and affecting their longer-term recovery in social, economic and political spaces.

**‘Bread or Milk’  
became a  
rallying cry at  
NAWP and  
strengthened the  
historical space  
exploring the  
need for  
social change as  
transformative  
of the  
structures of  
power.**

In 2014 the focus is on social change, as concept, discourse and plan for survival. The idea of social change is explored using women’s narratives, identifying how women suffering gender violence changed their lives transforming to strength of organisation.

### *Space and Representation: Discourse on Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism in Public Policy*

Structures can present barriers for women resulting in punitive and restricting practices affecting social and economic mobility. We have had a number of cases where the system itself, unequal in application, produced unrealistic demands on women. For example, the paradox that without income security women have been expected to rebuild their lives from violence. In reality and faced with few options due to the lack of response from housing authorities and the benefits’ system, women have found themselves addressing additional barriers and obstacles. Not surprisingly then, that the local authority has not resettled any woman leaving refuge accommodation in the most recent period making housing, a public resource, essentially a non-option for women.



In 2014, NAWP undertook a snapshot survey of women's experiences with the benefits' agencies.<sup>1</sup> We were concerned about the number of complaints women had made about their treatment by agency staff. Of particular concern to us was the experience of racism women perceived when they accessed benefits' agencies. The survey said ample evidence of women aiming to work towards an improvement to their economic circumstances and considering employment as a key economic goal. However in the immediate term, more pressing issues such as childcare, secure and sustainable housing and re-integration to economy and social space through training and job opportunity identified needs for support. Findings suggested that access to benefits was not a long-term goal but rather an essential lifeline in the immediate term.

The length of time taken to process JSA (job seekers' allowance) in particular adversely impacted women's economic and social wellbeing with only 51% of the survey sample suggesting that the process time was reasonable. Respondents were asked about how they viewed their economic situation in the next 12 months bearing in mind that most were already negatively impacted by the rising cost of living and other economic determinants. 51% said that in the next 12 months they could witness their situation changing where they could access the benefits' system again. The survey and the many women's narratives that we had gathered prior to the survey found that women were treated punitively for having presented for benefits claims. They felt stigmatised by agency staff and were met with insensitivity when disclosing domestic violence. All women who responded felt that their ethnic minority background had a bearing on their treatment.

In the case of GK NAWP considered judicial review against the Job Centre for failing to recognise domestic violence. GK did not have the economic means to leave her family home. She was refused benefits for 12 months because agency staff who interviewed the husband accepted his claims that GK was making a fraudulent claim while all evidence of domestic violence including financial control as part of the abuse she suffered, was ignored.

**No Justice  
Without  
Recourse**

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was completed in May 2014 with 50 women responding. The aim of the survey was to find out about women's experiences of benefits' agencies specifically job seekers' allowance as NAWP had received a number of complaints from women who felt agencies were not responding effectively to them and that delays were causing further stress for them.

GK's spouse used financial control to keep GK in the violent relationship and the reaction by job centre staff functioned to empower the spouse as the abuser, further isolated GK damaging her self-esteem and confidence, and justified violence towards her. NAWP raised concern about the case and possible action for judicial review. The case was re-assigned to another worker who processed and backdated the claim. This case raised a number of issues. First, the perpetrator's account was legitimised by the agency worker and the abuse experienced by the woman was not taken seriously. The mindset that 'if she is really suffering then she would get out' influenced the way action was taken in this case, discriminating GK and rationalising the notion of patriarchal sexist institution. Once institutionalised, violence against women and girls, as seen in this case as well as the many other cases presented at NAWP, minimise women and girls' experiences while creating institutionalised actors who play a role in keeping women and girls in violence through non-action or insufficient action.

Second, agency staff training and general awareness of domestic violence and how it operates in intimate settings was absent from the institutional environment creating a system that was dependent upon individual worker insight to problems and issues rather than reliance upon an appropriate and effective institutional response. This creates a piecemeal system in responding to domestic violence and undermines the equalities framework denying women rights and affecting their ability to gain equal opportunity in access to necessary services. Such institutionalised barriers require redress in a number of ways. The survey research and case review suggest three key areas for action:

<p><b>Domestic violence awareness raising through training as essential requirements for frontline staff and central to staff development and concession planning.</b></p>	<p><b>Specific action, through reflective practice for workers at all levels, addressing institutionalised cultures where there can be a risk of racism, discrimination and sexism.</b></p>	<p><b>The need to adequately support advocacy services of specialist black women's organisations in particular under an anti-racism and anti-sexism framework.</b></p>
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### *Critical Lifelines: Protection and Safeguarding of Women and Girls at Risk*

When we realised that Supporting People funding would be reduced by as much as 65% by some local authorities we were concerned about the impact on emergency services for women in need. Needless to say, services were re-shaped by local authorities. In one example a local authority removed specialist provision altogether along with high risk case management creating a generic service stating that there was no evidence of high risk need for women fleeing domestic violence because the risk had already reduced from high to medium and low as a result of the woman fleeing violence. In another example, specialist provision was retained but move-on/resettlement targets were reduced to 9 months from a women's arrival in a refuge.

While targets were restructured, nominations to housing associations reduced from 2 to 1 and the need for affordable housing multiplied. High cost private sector options were initially suggested by the authority for women moving on however benefits' cuts dissuaded many private sector landlords letting to vulnerable people on benefit.

NAWP began to map risk and discovered a changing pattern. Prior to austerity women stayed in a refuge for up to 18 months. This enabled them to get the supported they needed and move on to safe, sustainable and affordable housing of their own. Risk for a woman entering the refuge was high and through more effective support provision, risk reduced to medium and then to low by the time she reached resettlement stage. After austerity the picture changed. In the first three months of the nine month stay, risk was assessed at high. In the next three month it reduced to medium or low (in some cases). In the final three months, it increased to high. High risk at resettlement stage reflected the situation of women's poverty and economic circumstances defined as insufficient affordable housing options and fewer opportunities to generate income to sustain housing. Harsh economic circumstances go hand in hand with limited choices for freedom and safety from violence for women and therefore the risk of repeat victimisation is created – unhealthy relationship choices including 'marriages of convenience', return to perpetrator and sexual exploitation. In the long-term there are fewer safe options for women placing their protection in jeopardy and thus creating conditions for most costly emergency interventions later on.

## *Criminalisation and Punishment – the Targeting of Communities*

A few years ago when discussion first started about the criminalisation of forced marriage a government official from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office related his account of rescuing a young woman from a forced marriage in Pakistan, in rural country without paved roads, where danger lurked in every corner and the only escape was led by a lonely British government official travelling in a jeep in foreign land. If you missed the reference to forced marriage in his re-telling, then it would have been easy to think that what he was talking about was his most recent viewing of 'Rambo' or any such movie where the lead male actor is sent on a government mission to spread capitalism and imperialism under the guise of 'freedom and democracy' through terror and violence from a sub-machine gun glued permanently to his arm and hand. New legislation criminalising forced marriage came into effect early this year. Under the legislation the maximum penalty for anyone convicted of FM is seven years. Law enforcement agencies will also have powers to pursue perpetrators in other countries where a UK national is involved and therefore forcing a UK national into marriage outside the UK becomes an offence under domestic law. The new criminal offences will work alongside existing civil legislation (Forced Marriage Protection Orders - FMPOs) allowing victims to pursue civil or criminal options however a breach of a FMPO will carry a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.



NAWP had always expressed concerns that proposals to criminalise forced marriage could silence many women from leaving marriages. Civil protections and existing laws like the Domestic Violence Act already sufficiently cover forced marriage, emphasising the protection of women and offering important interventions which are not only cost effective but lead to positive outcomes for women. These interventions are used by women to flee forced marriage situations and access necessary support to re-build their lives. NAWP was concerned that a specific law aimed at criminalisation ties in with Islamophobia reflecting the racist propaganda of the state targeting specific communities through racial profiling and other means aimed at control and surveillance. The new legislation was also being brought in at a time when support structures are being reduced or disappeared as a direct result of funding cuts leading to the questions about what protections are really available to women seeking support. Recently, women rights have been used as justification for the politics of imperialism and militarism, invasion ideology and re-alignment of economic structures to preserve power and privilege. NAWP continues to work to strength effective response to women at risk of fleeing forced marriage under a framework of human rights and remain concerned about the lack of real protections offered to women.

Mediation is making a comeback. A Single Family Court has now been introduced in London with three more planned for operation. All paperwork for divorce, children, care work and related matters will be sent to the administrative centre which has authority to allocate the hearing centre and level of Judge. Before making an application to the court is the requirement on parties to undertake mediation (except for injunctions). Mediation is already a response upheld by statutory agencies where young women present with experiences of domestic and sexual violence. This action alone turns back the clock on effective response to domestic violence jeopardising a woman's decision to flee where she may have to undergo mediation. While there is a 're-design' of sorts of the court system under British law adversely impacting women, privatised legal processes like Sharia courts are on the rise presenting further obstacles to women without legal recourse or the limited economic means to secure appropriate representation before British law. A two-tier system presents with many disadvantages for women specifically reinforcing unequal status before the law. Where the legal framework should naturally be viewed as progressive, changing over time to offer advance protections to citizens, the emerging situation creates a dual system where law can fall victim to unjust ruling, inequality in treatment and lack of transparency, protection and representation thus characterising the legal framework accessed by women as male dominated and patriarchal in the administration of law.

## 'So where are you really from?' Racism, Patriarchy and Otherness

Last year we reported that over a six month period there had been 6 domestic violence homicides in Newham. The victims were identified as 'foreign nationals', those born 'elsewhere', according to a Council official, and residing in the UK. A number of different ideas began to emerge however key to the ensuing debate was the question 'how should a public authority support foreign national women to access Police for support in domestic violence situations?' A village council, similar to a panchayat system, was identified as a possible way to engage women at risk or fleeing domestic and sexual violence.

The idea that women's voluntary and community sector organisations dedicated to supporting women at risk could be strengthened as a possible response, was an alien concept because those women murdered over the summer and autumn of 2013 were not known to agencies. Perhaps because in the years prior, women's outreach services had been slashed due to cuts in funding and in the year that the homicides occurred legal aid services had been cut by more than 50% of their capacity.

Absent from the discussion was the framing question, the context within which systems function.

With critical enquiry, there is no understanding of the patriarchal, class and caste construct of a panchayat-like system. Another idea suggested closer liaison between Police and Sharia courts. Absent again was the role of black women's organisations as frontline agencies delivering support to women. The emphasis was instead placed on male-dominated and institutionalised responses to women in need. The human rights framework was also not considered as a possible location for the framing of an effective response. From the Middle East and North Africa, the idea of parading women victims to perpetrator groups as a way to hold perpetrator groups accountable for violence was presented.

There was no mention of women's safety and empowerment or existing remedies and no question about recent violence against women and girls and the prevalence of sexual harassment faced daily by women in the regions where such ideas were practiced.

It was widely believed that the so-called Newham 'communities' of black people might engage better with familiar responses based on the country of origin and more culturally specific (this term is interpreted narrowly within the above context, without a social framework and a gendered understanding). There was no recognition of the human rights framework or whether such responses could constitute good practice. The ideas were presented uncritically as a way to address DV homicide.



The notion of 'they' was presented through the lens of otherness, the approach was racist in tone and application, there was no concept of class or other divisional structures, not to mention gender as permeating through such responses, and it was based in patriarchy as the prevailing discourse to address VAWG.

There was a need for a more critical approach to VAWG. A failure to dialogue with black women and representative organisations suggested the function of institutionalised patriarchy evidenced in engagement with organisations where gendered representation was weak. 'So where are you really from?' highlights the shifting agenda (and it has been shifting for quite some time) where expertise is being displaced by attitudes around otherness evidenced in a quest for so-called global best practice to VAWG without critical reflection. The framing of VAWG from a gendered perspective is lost as well as the language to express violence as a social, economic and political problem.

No War  
No Violence  
Justice and  
Equality for All

The long-term consequence is that public policy will continually marginalise women and silence black women in particular. As long as this mind set exists the response to VAWG will remain reactionary and piecemeal and where action around criminalisation comes in on the back of patriarchy and racism and systems of dominance. Recently NAWP undertook a focus group with service users to try and address the question asked at the beginning of this section ourselves.

Women who used our services said that they did not engage the Police because of racist attitudes and that they did not view Police as a support agency but rather an enforcement agency. The question asked about the homicides is not the right one because it implies victim blaming 'her own fault for dying', 'those communities where these things happen' and the like.

## A Share in the Wealth of Nations?

From our own analysis we have been able to evidence the critical link between gender equality and economic growth where there is participation by women and opportunity for their development in socio-economic and political life. In a survey of 6 European countries quoted widely, the UK held the penultimate position in terms of women's contribution to the GDP behind Ireland. Women's contribution as portion of the GDP was just under 30% in both these countries. Further, women's participation and representation is disproportionate to women as consumers in the same economy. This means that women do not shape the policies that affect them. Women's participation is systematically excluded necessitating reform through deconstruction of economic and social policy.

*...live and fulfil all my dreams...*

*...the right to live my life...*

*...GET SOMEWHERE IN LIFE...*

*...freedom to live independently...*

*...kept it confidential...*

*...UNDERSTAND MY NEEDS...*

**THAT'S WHY I CAME TO NAWP**

**...plan for my future...  
...LIVE MY LIFE...**

**...believe in myself...  
I DO NOT  
FEEL  
ISOLATED**

*...We need  
government  
support.....help for  
women...*

By emphasising gender policy there is critical space for the creation of a new discourse more reflective of women's experience and therefore, of society as a whole. Where the market place does not include women, then there is a need to transform it. Women's inclusion is not solely about active participation in the existing order of things but rather, transformation of the existing order away from capitalism and patriarchy. The UK system is designed for the 1% of society. This is not a new phenomenon and it is actually global. It has been this way for a few hundred years, fuelled by the wealth from colonialism, domination of systems under imperialism and underpinned by patriarchy. There is a strong connection between gender, economy and society based in human rights and justice-based approaches among others. For women, it should not have to be a decision between bread or milk.

## Refuge Service - Providing Safe Space



NAWP has provided refuge services for 27 years and has 25 bedspaces in Newham and Haringey. In 2013 NAWP became the lead provider for domestic violence accommodation services successfully bidding for housing related support in Newham through a competitive tendering process.

A significant aspect of the bid was its social change approach. As a grassroots voluntary sector organisation NAWP led the bid as lead provider with a housing association as partner agency. In doing so the partnership demonstrated grassroots leadership and recognition of specialist provision to black women reversing the national pattern of takeovers and mergers which disadvantaged smaller women's organisations through a 'one size fits all' and 'bigger is better' mindset reflected in social policy of the time.

The model serves as best practice in tendering and commissioning with the local authority including both a gendered and race analysis in the mapping of provision

and the housing association recognising expertise of specialist provision as overriding size as a determinant, in terms of physical and financial capacity. However critically, NAWP's work in the borough as a specialist black women's organisation relying upon its independence and self-determination, enabled it to occupy a strategic position within the local economy of provision. Equally significant is an understanding of gender, race and class advocacy with practical implication in policy and practice ensuring that black women fleeing violence to Newham, have access to services to meet their needs.

## Key Achievements

Over financial year 2013 to 2014 NAWP provided accommodation to 105 women and 30 children.

Of the women supported significant outcomes were achieved enabling them to 'journey from violence to freedom and safety'.<sup>2</sup> 90% said that they felt empowered by the support they received at NAWP's refuges. and had developed better coping strategies including safety planning to help them move on to independent lives free from violence and harm.

100% said that they were more aware of support services that they could access thus breaking down isolation and other barriers and they said that the service overall had a positive impact on their lives, generally feeling better about future prospects.

The casework model and general housing related supported provided by NAWP was positively assessed as good practice by the local authority which translated as sustainability of contract but more crucially, consolidation of a revenue model which supports core costs enabling NAWP to strengthen its infrastructure.

84% said that their decision-making around household matters and issues relating to their children had improved with an equal percent saying that their confidence and self-esteem had improved as a result of the support they received. For a significant proportion of women, their first decisions about their lives were made when they accessed the refuge giving them a sense of control and self-worth.

## Future Plans

In last financial year 38 women could not be accommodated in NAWP's refuges due to the lack of bedspaces. NAWP will consider ways to address need locally through accommodation provision. Analysis suggests that demand is likely to increase due to the reduction of bedspace capacity of women's refuges nationally and insufficient supply of affordable housing.

In terms of the above, NAWP will be publishing a Housing Strategy to meet women's housing needs in markets where there is a reduced supply of affordable housing. The strategy will be considered alongside the strategic imperative that women's housing needs are recognised as priority in order to reduce repeat victimisation and homelessness.

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<sup>2</sup> NAWP (2012) From Violence to Freedom and Safety: A Photographic Journey of Women. The title of the book produced by NAWP was taken from a quote by a service user who described her experience of violence and exploitation as a journey to freedom and safety, having arrived at NAWP's refuge and moving on to independent housing and safety from harm. The book was produced to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of organisation.

## Advice Service – Protecting Women’s Rights

NAWP’s Legal Advice Service is funded by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Fund. The service provides women who have limited access to community based legal advice and information with individualised casework support around their rights in the areas such as welfare, housing, issues relating to children (custody/protection), forced marriage, honour-based violence, family law and domestic violence. The aim of the service is to improve access of women to legal services and raise their awareness of their own rights so that they can take control of their lives and break away from the barriers that are imposed on them.



A critical element of provision is free access without which, many women who use services will have no access to rights-based support. Over the recent years, women’s services have been disproportionately affected by cuts in funding however community-based legal services have been specifically targeted thus denying women at risk of or fleeing domestic and sexual violence, access to vital community-based legal advice and information services. As a community-based provision NAWP’s service is able to link to needs in the community that lack a platform and representation to the economy of provision.

### Key Achievements

In financial year 2013 to 2014 the service supported 1,119 women with legal advice and information delivering 542 surgery hours.

In 85% of cases, women remained in violent relationships for a period of more than 12 months before they sought support. Prior to accessing NAWP’s service, women had unsuccessful previous interventions extending the length of time they remained in relationships before they got the support they needed.

Poverty was a critical factor in denying women support. Cases involving an element of welfare advice, support with financial issues and housing increased by 5% from previous year identifying a strong correlation between the need for accessible advice and information services for women at risk of or fleeing domestic and sexual violence.

NAWP’s service was able to disrupt the vicious cycle of violence and poverty by providing community-based support and reaching out to women who faced additional barriers to support.

## Key Achievements

84% of women who accessed support said that their self-esteem and confidence had improved after having received an advice service from NAWP.

90% of women said that they were coping better using the advice they received to build up their own capacities and resources.

92% of women said they were making better decision for their lives using knowledge gained about legal rights to make dramatic changes to the course of their lives.

96% of women said that they no longer felt isolated as they were equipped with vital information to positively affect the course of their lives.

92% of women said there were long lasting improvement to their mental and emotional health which had positive outcomes in other aspects of their lives.

## Future Plans

The service was accredited in 2014 by the Advice Quality Standard in the thematic areas of Housing and Women. In the years to come, the service will develop these areas under a specialist casework model and work towards accredited outcomes based on casework specialism.

The service is developing a social change model for advice and advocacy using the existing work as foundation. Under an empowerment framework this approach will help to create community enablers and facilitators under a co-production model.

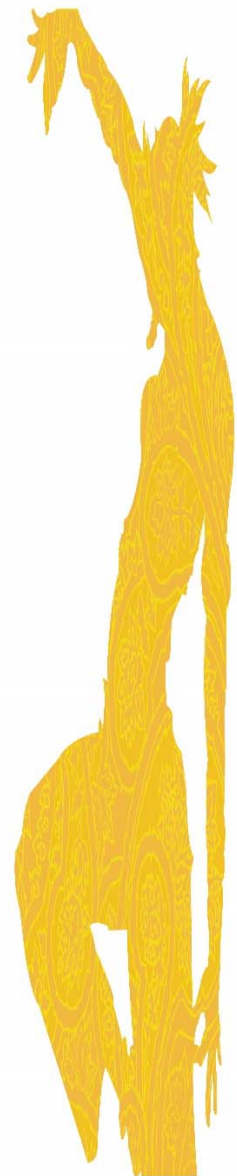
The service will use specialist knowledge in key areas to further develop capacity, contribute to sector-wide learning and good practice, consolidate the casework approach, and use underpinning knowledge in developing the service under a social change framework.

## Zindaagi - Project Life

The Zindaagi service is delivered under two projects: (1) the early intervention and prevention project and the (2) therapeutic support project. The early intervention and prevention project is funded by Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Public Health, Integrated Youth Services Strategy (IYSS), the Paul Hamlyn Funded Right Here project (to deliver a BMER focused awareness raising project addressing stigma around mental health) and Comic Relief (to deliver a dedicated domestic and sexual abuse project). Esmee Fairbairn funding was achieved in 2014. The project provides services to young BMER women and girls aged 8 to 25 and offers the following services: therapeutic support and youth counselling, youth groups, mental health advocacy, 1:1 casework support, issues-based workshops, the schools' programme and residential programmes.

The aim of Zindaagi is to work with young women and girls in youth-led space using empowerment approaches. In day to day delivery, the project provides safe space to explore issues affecting young women and girls such as self-harm, mental health and wellbeing, forced marriage, domestic and sexual violence, relationship issues, honour-based violence and women's status and equality. Tools such as confidence building, coping and resilience are used to help break down barriers, challenge myths and misconceptions about women's value and re-build lives.

The adult counselling service was set up in 1997 to provide community language counselling to adult women aged 18+. The purpose of the service is to offer one-to-one counselling covering the following languages: Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu and English. All counsellors are BACP accredited. The service is prioritised to BMER women living in Newham who suffer domestic violence, self-harm and/or are at risk of suicide, and to women residing in NAWP's refuges. The client group may include those who may or may not have a psychiatric history, sufferers of psychosomatic illness, anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness among other issues. The service is offered completely independent of any other professionals involved with the client/user thus, intending to ensure that the service operates with a Confidentiality Policy, and is perceived as such by the user group.



## Key Achievements

Over 500 young women and girls accessed the project. Just under 100 women accessed the adult counselling service.

The following support was provided to young women and girls: advocacy, 1:1 casework support requiring intensive intervention, and support groups.

The schools based workshops delivered the following programme: Self harm and coping, family conflict and resolution, domestic violence, bullying, gender myths, self-esteem and relationships, how to be a good friend, body image, raising awareness of dangerous situations, intimate relationships, 'getting on and falling out' positive relationship building, and early warning signs.

The casework model is proving effective with both counselling and advocacy elements. Most of the work continues to demonstrate that advocacy support can facilitate a young woman's access and engagement with therapeutic support. Without advocacy, engagement with other services falls.

## Future Plans

A key objective of the service moving forward is consolidation of support models considering issues such as repeat victimisation, the impact of historical abuse on young women and girls, DSV evidence gathering, case documentation in areas of grooming and sexual harassment and sexting. The approach is needs-based encompasses case management, risk assessment, gender violence, and safeguarding and protection. Specific models of support and intervention underpinning good practice service delivery and policy development will emerge from the focused delivery.

**Newham Asian Women's Project**  
**Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)**

**For the year ended 31 March 2013**

	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2013 Total £	2012 Total £
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income	-	3,576	<b>3,576</b>	15,814
Investment income	-	211	<b>211</b>	192
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Safe accommodation and housing support	20,000	565,879	<b>585,879</b>	616,905
Legal advice	97,029	-	<b>97,029</b>	72,471
Mental health services	39,125	91,667	<b>130,792</b>	138,500
Paul Hamlyn Foundation - Right Here Bid	4,500	-	<b>4,500</b>	38,518
TEENS (early intervention and prevention)	13,708	-	<b>13,708</b>	33,334
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>174,362</b>	<b>661,333</b>	<b>835,695</b>	<b>915,734</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Cost of generating funds				
Fundraising and publicity	-	20,920	<b>20,920</b>	13,097
Charitable activities				
Safe accommodation and housing support	20,000	522,998	<b>542,998</b>	538,928
Legal advice	101,616	-	<b>101,616</b>	70,002
Mental health services	35,141	127,807	<b>162,948</b>	127,163
Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Right Here Bid	10,396	-	<b>10,396</b>	39,696
Research	-	-	-	20,677
TEENS (early intervention and prevention)	15,710	-	<b>15,710</b>	22,057
Governance costs	-	20,236	<b>20,236</b>	20,985
Total resources expended	<b>182,863</b>	<b>691,961</b>	<b>874,824</b>	<b>852,605</b>
Net incoming/resources before transfers	<b>(8,501)</b>	<b>30,628</b>	<b>39,129</b>	<b>63,129</b>
Transfers between funds	<b>8,014</b>	<b>(8,104)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Net movement in funds	<b>(487)</b>	<b>(38,642)</b>	<b>(39,129)</b>	<b>63,129</b>
Funds brought forward	<b>32,447</b>	<b>311,894</b>	<b>344,341</b>	<b>281,212</b>
Funds carried forward	<b>31,960</b>	<b>273,252</b>	<b>305,212</b>	<b>344,341</b>

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movement in funds are disclosed in note 12 to the financial statements.



Anjum Mouj  
 Chair of NAWP

## NAWP Staff and Management Team

### Management Committee

Chair	Anjum Mouj
Vice Chair	Surriya Ahmad
Treasurer	Rena Pathak
Secretary	Saika Alam
Members	Palvinder Kudhail Prity Patel Bedia

### NAWP Staff

Director	Baljit Banga
Senior Management Team	Fatima Seedat Kaveri Sharma
Central Services	Shahina Begum Radhiyyah Chowdhury Riffat Jabeen Pushpa Patel
Advice	Zohra Adam Amena Khanom Pavanjit Pattar
Refuge	Mina Khanam Farah Mian Shabana Sharif Syrina Salam
Zindaagi	Nadia Baksh Poppy Banerjee Prem Soobul Zephyr Devon Husnara Kabir Abigail Owusu

Newham Asian Women's Project thank all of its funders: BBC Children in Need, Public Health, Comic Relief, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, East London NHS Foundation Trust, London Borough of Haringey, London Borough of Newham, and Reaching Communities Big Lottery Fund.



Newham Asian Women's Project thank all of its friends, volunteers and supporters who have collaborated with us and offered their guidance working towards the common goal of ending violence against women and girls and creating a future of safety and freedom.

## Open Letter from RR, a Zindaagi Service User

I regularly attend and participate in the youth sessions which are available through the Young Women's Service (Zindaagi) at NAWP and I have been doing so for over two years. I feel confident in the fact that these have given me the opportunity, as well as the space to grow and develop as person, enabling me to explore aspects of mental health, domestic violence and gender inequality which I would not have necessarily felt comfortable discussing beforehand. I enjoy being part of Newham Asian Women's Project in particular because we are able to incorporate the work of the charity in terms of preventing violence against women, into sessions and use this in order to break down the barriers that are often associated with discussing what are commonly thought of as 'taboo' subjects. As a young person I feel that it is vital that the upcoming generation feel aware and equipped with the knowledge, as this is the only way to ensure that we are able to live happy and successful lives which are free from abuse and oppression.

I was also provided with the opportunity to have 1-1 support something which I believe has been paramount in giving me the confidence to work towards my goal of a future in politics. They have supported me without judgement and have been my first point of call when I have needed support and advice.

The range of workshops that I have been able to attend have also equipped me with vital skills - all of which are essential in ensuring a successful future and which I have been able to utilise when working towards achieving particular goals; whether this be academically, personally or through extra-curricular activities. The service also provides an extremely important space in which I feel supported and able to take a break from the stresses of everyday school life.

Cultural sensitivity does not mean turning a blind eye, accepting the unacceptable or tolerating the intolerable. Abuse is not ok, regardless of culture, religion or ethnicity and I feel extremely proud to be part of an organisation which strives to not only challenge these stereotypes, but also help women and girls live lives that are free from violence and oppression and are instead filled with hope and opportunities.



*working for women,  
working against violence*

NEWHAM ASIAN WOMEN'S PROJECT