



Dear Friends,

Welcome to spring, and the second CSEL e-news of 2011 – the three months since the last e-news at the start of the year seem to have passed in the blink of an eye... It's only when I look back at the last few months and take stock of how much has happened that I start to believe that we really have got one quarter of the way through the year.

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The **Dissemination Project for Refugee Women** has reached the end of its second funded year, and we've reported to Comic Relief, once again we've managed to go beyond our targets for the number of people who've received training, and sketched out a plan for the last year of the project based on the networking we've done so far, and the needs we've identified from feedback from workshop participants.

In February, I went to Cardiff for the Dissemination Project to train a mixed group of case workers, legal representatives and therapists supporting women seeking asylum in Wales. It was a great training session, with some interesting issues raised, especially around interpreting (there were two interpreters participating in the workshop) and the need for collective self-care support for those who work on their own, such as volunteer counsellors and interpreters. In March I was back in Manchester to run a training session for Medical Foundation doctors and counsellors, and Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit legal representatives.

In February I was also invited to give a workshop at the AGM of Rape Crisis England and Wales – [read my blog post here](#). The workshop was great, and for me really underlined the need to bring RCOs (refugee community organisations) and VAW (violence against women) organisations together to share knowledge and work out how they can work together or cross-refer to ensure refugee women get the support they need. I hope to be able to do some work on developing these links during the last year of the Dissemination Project.

In the next few months we'll be running training sessions in London for members of [Imkaan](#) - a second tier organisation supporting BME women's VAW organisations; in Glasgow and Sheffield for mixed groups of locally-based workers and volunteers supporting traumatised women seeking asylum; and in Bedford for the Yarl's Wood Befrienders. I'm looking forward to learning a lot from all the different people I'll meet at the workshops! If you want to find out more about any of these, get in touch or see the website for updates.

Latest on Discrepancies II research

We're coming to the end of interviewing for our project on the factors that influence inconsistencies in accounts of traumatic experiences (funded by the Big Lottery Fund Research Programme). The next job is to get all the data coded and collated, ready for analysis. Many people have been very generous with their time and their energy in contributing to the project: Jane Herlihy plans to reflect further in a future newsletter on how the recruitment went (from both sides!), and to thank the

many people and organisations with whom she's built great working relationships around this research.

Training with the Office of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

In February Jane travelled to Poland with barrister Raggi Kotak of 1, Pump Court Chambers (founding member of ATLeP, the Anti-Trafficking Legal Project) to deliver training to lawyers and caseworkers of Halina Niec, a Polish NGO. Halina Niec had received funding from the Office of Democratic and International Human Rights, an OSCE organisation, to identify and advise victims of trafficking detained in Poland.

Strengthening relationships with influential researchers & decision makers

At the start of April, Jane travelled to Edinburgh Law School to take part in a symposium on Issues in the Production and Assessment of Evidence During Asylum Claims. She presented CSEL's work, and heard some fascinating presentations from Professor Vanessa Munroe, sharing early data from a legal analysis of the treatment of rape claims in asylum interviews; Rebecca Wallace, Director of the Centre for Rural Childhood, and an Immigration Judge; Robert Thomas, author of Administrative Justice and [Asylum Appeals: A study of tribunal adjudication](#); [Professor Anthony Good](#); and Sarah Aspinall of UKBA, who presented the Early Legal Advice Project. Sharon Cowan and Toby Kelly from the University of Edinburgh had organised the day to allow for plenty of time for lively discussion between practitioners, decision makers and academics about the pressures, difficulties and aspirations of a humane yet efficient asylum system.

Fundraising

In February Jane attended a day's training with Panikos Efthimiou of the Charities Aid Foundation, looking at ways of raising money from individuals to support the core aspects of our work. Of course everyone is chasing money at the moment, but we are fairly confident that we can find funding for our research projects. However, we do need to raise money so that CSEL can support these projects, and ensure that our findings continue to be read and understood by those working in the field, whether making decisions, or advocating for people applying for protection.

Every little helps! And you can do this most easily by pressing the Big Give "Donate Now" button on our website: http://www.csel.org.uk/get_involved.html!

In other news related to CSEL's work:

Asylum Aid published their groundbreaking report '[Unsustainable](#)' investigating the implementation of the UK Border Agency's gender guidelines in decision making under the New Asylum Model. [New UKBA gender guidance](#) had been published in September 2010. The report refers to two CSEL papers; it's great to see that our research is helping other organisations to analyse the areas where asylum decision making shows a lack of understanding of psychological knowledge. Asylum Aid's research found that 50% of decisions on the cases of vulnerable women seeking asylum were overturned at tribunal – a high rate that could be reduced through better understanding playing a part at an earlier stage in the process.

Good news: ex-RMJ staff have set up the Migrants' Law Project <http://themigrantslawproject.org> -

to offer training, online information and partnership with Migrants Rights Network for groups working with refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Kathleen Commons from MLP says: "We use the law to help such organisations negotiate with government, and, if appropriate, will help them to take cases that can change unfair law and policy. We also seek, in the absence of capacity to take on a high volume of casework, to provide public legal education to asylum seekers and migrants, and to groups that work with them, ensuring that they are able to understand how law and policy affects them, and to use such knowledge to protect their rights." The project is up and running, based at Islington Law Centre, and is keen to hear from you!

UNHCR has supported a proposed new Convention on preventing and combating violence against women put forward by the Council of Europe Ad Hoc Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (CAHVIO). UNHCR issued comments on the draft version in which it “pointed out that gender-based violence may not solely or automatically fall within the ground of ‘membership of a particular social group’, but may amount to persecution linked to other Convention grounds, thus requiring scrutiny of whether one of these other grounds might apply”. For the full story, see [the article in February’s Women’s Asylum News](#).

And finally, with every sector of society affected by public spending cuts, Runnymede’s winter bulletin carries [an article by Julie Gibbs of ICAR about how refugees and asylum seekers will be affected by cuts](#) to both services and support.

CSEL is a registered charity that aims to contribute to the development of fair legal processes that take psychological information into account. CSEL carries out empirical research into psychological aspects relevant to legal processes; and disseminates the findings through peer-researched journals, professional training, academic knowledge-sharing, and networking. CSEL is not partisan, except in favour of science and evidence-based information.

Please let me know if you do not wish to receive this quarterly newsletter.

Thank you.

Clare Cochrane
Women's Research Dissemination Worker, CSEL
<http://www.csel.org.uk>
020 7920 6489

Royal London House
22-25 Finsbury Square
London EC2A 1DX

I usually work Wednesdays and Thursdays