



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) WOMEN & GIRLS

WHAT BME WOMEN WANT - 10 KEY ACTIONS FOR A SAFER WORLD

In the Autumn of 2010 over 200 individuals and organisations attended events around the UK to discuss the need for coordinated government action to tackle and prevent violence against BME women and girls. Problems discussed include; multiple discrimination, poverty, immigration issues as well as different forms of violence/harmful traditional practices, discriminatory faith or culturally based approaches to violence against women and girls (VAWG), the use of mediation for the purposes of reconciliation, and non-intervention due to cultural or religious sensitivity. The following facts show why urgent action is needed:

- BME and migrant women have a disproportionate rate of domestic homicide (Mayor of London)
- Asian women are up to three times more likely to commit suicide than other women (Raleigh)
- 66,000 women in England & Wales are estimated to be living with female genital mutilation (Forward)
- In 2009 the Forced Marriage Unit dealt with 1682 cases, the majority were women and girls
- Just one in ten local authorities in Britain have specialist services for BME women (Map of Gaps)

Strategic policies have been developing around the UK, most recently with the publication of the Westminster Coalition Government's 'Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls'. An action plan will be published in the Spring. We are calling for governments to consider their obligations under the new Public Sector Equality Duty and to ensure issues affecting BME women and girls have a specific focus within these policies and not as an after-thought.

We believe that violence against women and girls can only be tackled effectively if policies, including prostitution and trafficking, are brought together in a single overarching strategy based on the principles of equality and human rights.

****Please use this leaflet to lobby local authorities, government departments, health authorities, social services, education authorities and professionals to create a safer world for BME women & girls.****

Safety for BME women and girls – action to prevent violence

1. We are calling for governments and public bodies to fund community and awareness-raising campaigns, akin to the 'drink driving' campaigns, to transform attitudes and cultures that accept and normalise violence against BME women. These should be developed in partnership with BME women's groups with a track record of dealing with VAWG.
2. Schools around the UK should ensure that work to tackle violence against BME women and girls is embedded into the curriculum. This should include training and support for teachers and be linked in to specialist BME women's services in the community.

Supporting BME women and girls – ensuring adequate provision for all

3. BME women and girls need specialist services to empower them and tackle issues around multiple discrimination, language, culture, religion and immigration at a local level. These services have been historically under-funded and require dedicated grant-based funding by national governments, local authorities and other local bodies to prevent further closures. We are also calling for funding for specialist provision within mainstream organisations, particularly in rural areas or where there is no existing or potential for specialist BME women's services.
4. It is crucial that there is a minimum standards framework based on equality and human rights principles for all organisations working on this issue and mandatory training for all teachers, social workers, police officers, health workers and other professionals.
5. We are calling for the Asylum Gender Guidelines to be properly implemented by UK Border Agency and a stop to the deportation, detention and criminalisation of vulnerable women and children who have experienced violence and abuse. We also want a review of existing and planned immigration and asylum laws and policies, including those on forced marriage, from a gender perspective with the aim of preventing and tackling violence against BME women and girls without increasing discrimination against migrant communities.
6. Reform the 'no recourse to public funds' and other benefit rules to exempt all victims/survivors of VAWG to ensure they have genuine access to benefits and public housing which allows women to leave abusive relationships. Pending this, interim measures to prevent destitution should remain.

Partnership between governments and BME organisations

7. Governments at all levels around the UK should work in genuine and meaningful consultation with BME women's organisations in accordance with the new Public Sector Equality Duty (GB). Governments must also ensure that BME women's groups that have expertise on tackling VAWG are able to fully participate in decision-making.

Reducing the risk of violence for BME women

8. We are calling for the Home Office and governments in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to establish an Independent Taskforce to look at VAWG in minority communities, examining the relationship between VAWG and mental health, suicide and self-harm; access to education; and the impact of cuts in public spending and legal aid on BME women and girls. It should also examine legal and statutory responses, including that of the police and social services, to demands for protection by BME women and children. This should report to relevant Ministerial Groups on VAWG.
9. We are calling for a review of all legal and social strategies, and policies and procedures so that they comply with international human rights standards and UN obligations (including under CEDAW) on VAWG, including violence against BME women and girls.
10. We are calling for national governments to set guidance and milestones for local bodies to use to tackle violence against BME women and girls, with robust enforcement and implementation mechanisms. This should include guidance on the necessity to collect and publish disaggregated data on VAWG in relation to BME women under the new Public Sector Equality Duty in Britain.

Further information available at:

Southall Black Sisters www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

End Violence Against Women Coalition www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

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