



## Annual report 2010-2011

### Chair's report

Once again it is with pleasure that I have the privilege of presenting Rights of Women's annual report for 2010-2011. I was proud to chair sessions of our national conference in June 2010, celebrating our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and launching our major research report **Measuring up? UK compliance with international commitments on violence against women in England and Wales**. Held within weeks of the ink drying on the new Coalition Government's Agreement, this conference was an excellent opportunity for a range of women's rights advocates to come together to discuss what the future hold for the respect, protection and fulfilment of women's rights in the UK. As we know 2010 has been a year of great political and economic change, often carrying with it significant challenges both for women's rights and for Rights of Women itself. However, as you will see in the following pages Rights of Women has stood firm as a proudly feminist organisation providing women with vital legal services, continuing to be a formidable advocate for women's rights and ensuring our sustainability.

As this report shows our advice lines and information services continue to be in high demand. You will read the quotes from our service users who tell us that these services really are life lines, giving women much-needed capacity and confidence to make difficult decisions at some of the toughest times in their lives.

Our reputation for high quality training on women's legal rights, uniquely grounded by our experience as a service provider, has stood us in good stead despite the challenging economic times for many in the voluntary and public sector who access our training. We witnessed an increase in attendance of over 30% in our open training programme, our partnership training has continued to be an important area of development and we have seen growing demand for our in-house training services within both the public and voluntary sector. The testimonials from our broad range of training clients show the vital need for the services we are providing.

Rights of Women's profile and the visibility of our policy and public affairs work has continued to go from strength to strength, built on our unique ability to be both a grassroots service provider and legal experts. Within weeks of the new Government taking office, Rights of Women helped galvanise a campaign to stop plans which could have meant removing the anonymity afforded to survivors of rape. Access to justice has been a particular concern for us and we have been very active in responding Ministry of Justice's proposals for the reform of legal aid in England and Wales. We were able to carry out research with a range of women and groups which informed our policy and public affairs work on this issue, as well as being covered in the national press.

It is important to celebrate and consolidate our achievements, but in doing so we must also be mindful of the continued challenges. The political landscape has changed. There has been much cause for concern for women's rights, including in the areas of access to justice, immigration and family law. Our work to analyse the government's performance against human rights standards, continues to be a valuable tool for women's organisations and policy-makers alike, and in the current climate is helping work to prevent possible retrogressive steps in government policy.

Over the last year we also witnessed the true impact of the economic climate both for individual women and for those in the public, voluntary and community sector who provide the important services that women access. During 2010 Rights of Women dedicated a significant amount of time to challenging funding cuts. This was not only because of concerns about our own organisation but because of the devastating impact funding cuts are having across the sector, within our sister organisations, and the effect this ultimately has on women and their children. We will continue to work with others to show the importance of law, policy and services that recognise the rights and needs of women.

I would like to thank our funders for their support, and hope that we can continue to work together to ensure better outcomes for women. Moving forward Rights of Women will continue to advocate for the thousands of women who contact us everyday telling us that access to specialist women's services is not only what they want but what they need to be empowered to make safe choices for themselves and their children.

My second year as the Chair of Rights of Women's Management Committee continues to be an honour and a source of great inspiration. I would like to thank my colleagues on the Management Committee for their support and commitment. As this annual report testifies 2010-11 has been an incredibly challenging time at many levels, but through it all Rights of Women has continued to deliver high quality services and proved it is a force to be reckoned with in ensuring the State meets its obligations on women's rights. The talent, passion and commitment of our Director, staff team and volunteers makes Rights of Women an organisation which I am proud and privileged to Chair, and which literally changes and saves the lives of countless women throughout this country.

Looking forward to 2011 and beyond there will undoubtedly be significant challenges facing both Rights of Women and the protection of women's rights; but looking back over 2010 I am given hope that with the continued commitment of our staff, members, networks, partners, funders and others that Rights of Women will continue to achieve remarkable things.

**Sanchita Hosali**  
**Chair**

## Advice

Our advice lines continue to provide vital free and confidential legal advice to women who have experienced violence and relationship breakdown, including women who have an insecure immigration status. This year we have again increased the number of women we have supported on our two specialist telephone advice lines.

**"The advice I received was full, frank, and gave me a plan of action."** (Advice line caller)

Our family law advice line supported 1441 women on range of issues including domestic violence, child contact and relationship breakdown.

*Claire rang our advice line to seek advice about child contact. She had been informed that as she worked part-time she was not eligible for legal aid. Claire's former partner had made an application to the court for contact. Claire did not know what this meant for her but was concerned about her and her children's safety as her relationship with her former partner had ended a number of years ago because of domestic violence. Claire's children had not had any contact with their father since then and were afraid of seeing him again. Claire was also anxious as her former partner had tried to contact her a number of times, including ringing her mobile phone over 30 times in one day.*

*Claire was advised on how she could represent herself in the child contact proceedings and seek protection from her partner's harassment. The specific needs of her children were discussed and addressed and she was signposted to other organisations who could provide her with further support.*

**"It gave me the knowledge I needed to feel stronger in my current situation."** (Advice line caller)

Our sexual violence and immigration and asylum law advice line also supported a further 215 women. We saw a significant increase in the number of women seeking advice on immigration and asylum issues on this advice line from 11.3% in 2009-2010 to 37.2% in 2010-2011. This identified a real need for a separate and dedicated advice line which we have successfully fundraised for and which will be launched in 2011-2012.

*Sabah was given information about our advice line by the police officer supporting her. She had recently reported being raped by her boyfriend to the police, he had been violent towards her on a number of occasions but she had been unable to seek help before because he told her that if she sought help he could have her deported. Sabah is in the UK on a student visa. Sabah was happy with the police response but did not understand what would happen when the evidence collected in her case was passed on to the Crown Prosecution Service for a decision to charge. She was also concerned about the effects of her criminal case on her immigration status.*

*Sabah was advised about the investigative process, the roles of the police and CPS and how decisions to charge are made. She was told what protections she was entitled to if the case went to a trial and was signposted to other professional sources of advice and support. Sabah was reassured about her immigration position and given advice about other legal options available to her that might offer her protection from future incidents of violence.*

**“Clear, concise information – [the adviser] made sense of things the police have not explained over the last year. Good advice and I’m feeling much more confident about going to court.”** (Advice line caller)

These vital services for women have been staffed this year by our team of 3 Legal Officers with the continued support of our team of dedicated volunteer legal advisers. We have recruited and trained a further 28 women solicitors and barristers bringing our total number of active volunteer advisers to 42.

## **Training and events**

As the number of law firms and advice centres reduces, professionals from support services are increasingly called upon to provide advice and support to women. Our training services provide a vital resource to these professionals, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to do so.

**“[I] feel much more confident to support women through the legal process”**  
(Service user feedback)

In 2010-2011 we provided training to 292 professionals as part of our open training programme. Despite difficult financial times for our key audience this is an increase on 220 professionals in 2009-2010 identifying our courses as core to the needs of those supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged women.

We delivered 23 training courses throughout England and Wales on legal issues affecting women including **No recourse? EEA national? Overcoming the barriers, Protecting children from domestic violence: children and the law, Breaking the cycle: using civil and criminal remedies to protect women from violence, Forced marriage: gaining protection through the law, Seeking refuge? Claiming asylum and accessing financial support and Stop the traffic! Supporting women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation.**

We have also continued to work in partnership with the Poppy Project, ASAP and Asylum Aid combining our skills and expertise to deliver unique training courses to support professionals working with trafficked women and asylum seeking women.

**“Got all my questions answered – excellent opportunity to network and meet others working with vulnerable women and exchange useful information – an invaluable opportunity to learn from the experts”** (Service user feedback)

This year we have also seen our in-house training services grow in popularity and have provided 47 statutory and voluntary sector organisations with training for their staff. These included Women’s Housing Action Group, Southampton City Council and Safer Birmingham Partnership. We also worked with the UK Border Agency in providing training to their staff in Liverpool.

84.3% of participants on our training courses reported a significant or very significant increase in their awareness and understanding of the legal rights and remedies of their women service users. 75.8% reported a significant or very significant increase in their capacity to meet the needs of their women service users.

**“The information and knowledge gained today will be completely invaluable to the work I do, I would recommend anyone to come in order to better support vulnerable women”** (Service user feedback)

In June 2010 we held a national conference to celebrate our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to launch our major research report **Measuring up? UK compliance with international commitments on violence against women in England and Wales**. Speakers at the conference attended by 111 delegates from the voluntary and statutory sector included Baroness Gould, Chair of the Women’s National Commission, Eleanor Solo, head of the Coordination and Outreach Unit at the UN Division for the Advancement of Women and Heather Harvey, Stop Violence Against Women Campaign Manager at Amnesty International UK. There were also three expert-led panel discussions on rape and sexual violence, women with an insecure immigration status and civil law remedies for preventing and responding to violence.

**“Rights of Women’s conferences always have a clear purpose - you come away feeling you’ve learnt something and enthused to work harder on women’s rights”** (Delegate at our conference)

Following the conference, in February 2011 we published a toolkit **From Rights to Action: Using international rights and mechanisms on violence against women in the UK** and delivered 3 workshops at events coordinated by the Women’s Resource Centre and in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. 30 participants attended the workshops in Manchester, Newcastle and Birmingham during February 2011.

**“A highly informative, deeply provocative, impassioned event and a vital educational and development opportunity”** (Participant at our workshop)

Also as part of our policy work we delivered 3 workshops on women with no recourse to public funds, supporting domestic violence rule applicants and understanding the legal aid reforms and 3 seminars on sexual exploitation and prostitution, immigration and no recourse to public funds and the future of civil legal aid. These events were attended by 194 professionals from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

## **Publications**

Our legal publications have remained very popular resources for women in 2010-2011 and we have distributed over 1000 hard copies of our handbooks including our **Domestic Violence DIY Injunction Handbook, Child Contact Handbook** and **From Report to Court: a handbook for adult survivors of sexual violence**.

**“A very good book, easy to read and understand and explains everything fully”** (Service user feedback)

We have also added to our range of legal guides available in hardcopy and to download from the website including 2 new extended legal guides on **Trafficking, sexual exploitation and the law** and **Domestic violence, immigration law and ‘no recourse to public funds’**.

We have brought existing legal guides up to date including **A Guide to Child Support, Financial arrangements after marriage breakdown, Living Together and the Law** and **A Guide to Criminal Injuries Compensation**.

We are very pleased to also have published a further 2 legal guides for women prisoners in partnership with Action for Prisoner's Families, **Children and the law: when families can't agree** and **Children and the law: when social services are involved**, ensuring that this particularly vulnerable group of women has information enabling them to know their rights in respect of their children and maintain their relationships with them.

As part of our capacity building work with organisations supporting women affected by violence, in February 2011 we published a toolkit **From Rights to Action: Using international rights and mechanisms on violence against women in the UK**. We have distributed about 200 hard copies of the toolkit and more than 6,000 copies have been downloaded from our website.

Our website continues to be a first port of call for women and professionals seeking legal information and there were more than 225,000 downloads of our free legal information from the website in 2010-2011.

## **Policy and campaigning**

Ensuring that women's voices and experiences are heard and acknowledged by our law and policy makers is vital to ensuring justice and equality for all women. As legal experts and a provider of grassroots services we are in a unique position to ensure that the experiences of the women using our services are considered in developments in law and policy.

2010-2011 has seen a significant increase in the profile of Rights of Women's policy and public affairs work and we continued to build excellent networks which we have been able to call upon in our lobbying and campaigning work.

Our Women's Legal Policy Network has grown to 36 London based women's organisations and its regular meetings are a forum for sharing information and building the capacity of women's organisations to engage in policy work. We have continued to sit on the Home Office's Violence Against Women and Girls Stakeholder Group, domestic violence and no recourse to public funds stakeholder group, Foreign Office's Forced Marriage Stakeholders Group. The Director has attended the Home Secretary's Inter-Ministerial Group on Violence Against Women and Girls and we have attended and spoken at APPGs on domestic and sexual violence, legal aid, family law, migration and prostitution.

We have continued our membership of other stakeholder groups and networks such as the Crown Prosecution Service Violence Against Women External Consultation group, the Lilith Project's Sexual Violence Action and Awareness Network, the End Violence Against Women Coalition and the Women's National Commission's advisory forum. We have also continued to attend the WRC CEDAW working group.

These activities have ensured that Rights of Women has been active in various developments in law and policy affecting women. In 2010-2011 we have responded to a range of Government and other consultations on areas of law and policy affecting women including:-

- UKBA's 12 month review of the National Referral Mechanism (trafficking)
- Department of Health's Review of Access to the NHS for Foreign Nationals (immigration and NRPF)

- Ministry of Justice's Family Justice Review (family justice)
- The introduction of fee charges for appeals to the immigration and asylum chambers and Upper Tribunal (immigration and NRPF)
- CPS' consultation on CPS interim Guidance on Perverting the Course of Justice (rape and sexual violence)
- Department of Work and Pensions' Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility: the future of child maintenance (family justice)

As an organisation whose aim is to ensure women's access to justice we have been particularly active in responding to the Ministry of Justice's proposals for the reform of legal aid in England and Wales. The threat that these proposals mean to women was the subject of a research report published by us in January 2011 and timed to accompany our response to the Government's consultation.

**“The legal aid cuts will have the effect of restricting access to justice which means fewer women will seek legal protection. By cutting legal aid the government is silencing women.”** (Respondent to our survey on the legal aid reforms)

In addition to our workshop and seminar events and in order to ensure that others remain aware of and involved in developments in law and policy affecting women we have continued to publish our policy newsletter Focus on Women which has contained articles on and is distributed to an increased readership of over 1,000 professionals.

**“An excellent resource; full of useful information for those working in the womens' sector”** (Reader of Focus on Women)

### **Staff and volunteers**

The work of Rights of Women would not be possible without the dedication, skills and knowledge of the staff team. We are very pleased that in difficult financial times for women and their organisations we have been able to maintain existing staffing levels.

This year we have expanded our team of volunteer legal advisers with the recruitment of 28 new volunteer solicitors and barristers. The smooth running of the organisation has also been supported this year by our office volunteers and interns, Erika, Leah, Jennifer, Mehek, Meleri and Shahnaz.

We would like to express our very heartfelt thanks to all our staff and volunteers who give so freely of their expertise, dedication and energy to ensure that our services reach as many women as possible.

## **Fundraising and finances**

The difference that we make in the lives of women is only possible with the continuing support of our donors and funders and we remain indebted to their commitment and generosity towards our work.

In particular we would like to thank:-

**Comic Relief** for its' continued funding of our work with vulnerable asylum seeking women affected by violence.

**Feminist Review Trust** for their commitment to ensuring the participation of small women's organisations in our conference in June 2010.

**Garden Court Chambers** for their grant towards our core costs of the organisation.

**Henry Smith Charity** for their generous contribution to our core costs.

**Home Office Violent Crime Unit** for continuing to fund **From Report to Court: a handbook for adult survivors of sexual violence** and ensuring it is available to those affected by rape and sexual assault.

**London Councils** for continuing to commission our advice and information work with women across London affected by violence and also our capacity building work on legal policy with London women's organisations.

**Matrix Chambers** for their grant which supports the core costs of the organisation.

**Sigrid Rausing Trust** for funding our research project to assess the UK Government's compliance with international commitments on violence against women and also their generous contribution to our core costs.

**Sisters' Trust** for their contribution towards the salaries of our Legal Officers.

**Wates Foundation** for their grant to support the work of our legal advice and information services.

**Unbound Philanthropy** for their grant which will ensure the development of our work with women with an insecure immigration status.

We would also like to say a special thank you to those who sponsored our team in the London Legal Support Trust sponsored walk in May 2010 and to all our individual donors whose generosity and commitment to our work ensure that our vital work continues.

A Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet for the year ending 31 March 2011 are presented on the following pages. We would like to thank our auditor, Alison Ward, for her support, assistance and advice in the preparation of these accounts and her guidance in the implementation of our new financial systems. These accounts were approved at a meeting of the Management Committee held on 25 October 2011. A full set of the accounts is available from the Director, Rights of Women, 52-54 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8RT.

**RIGHTS OF WOMEN  
BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 31 MARCH 2011**

|   | £              | 2011<br>£        | 2010<br>£        |
|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>FIXED ASSETS</b>                                   |                |                  |                  |
| Tangible assets                                       |                | <u>11,227</u>    | 10,965           |
| <b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>                                 |                |                  |                  |
| Debtors   | 17,352         |                  | 25,301           |
| Cash at bank and in hand                              | <u>343,702</u> |                  | <u>403,238</u>   |
|   |                | <u>361,054</u>   | <u>428,539</u>   |
| <b>CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year</b> |                |                  |                  |
|   |                | <u>61,329</u>    | <u>75,446</u>    |
| <b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>                             |                | <u>299,725</u>   | <u>353,093</u>   |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                                     |                | <u>£ 310,952</u> | <u>£ 364,058</u> |
| <b>FINANCED BY:</b>                                   |                |                  |                  |
| Unrestricted funds                                    |                | 37,140           | -                |
| Restricted funds                                      |                | 94,842           | 185,088          |
| Designated funds                                      |                | <u>178,970</u>   | <u>178,970</u>   |
|   |                | <u>£ 310,952</u> | <u>£ 364,058</u> |

**RIGHTS OF WOMEN  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including the Income and  
Expenditure Account)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011**

|  | Unrestricted<br>Funds<br>£ | Restricted<br>Funds<br>£ | Designated<br>Funds<br>£ | Total<br>2011<br>£ | <i>Total<br/>2010<br/>£</i> |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Incoming Resources   |                            |                          |                          |                    |                             |
| Incoming resources from generated funds                    |                            |                          |                          |                    |                             |
| Voluntary income   | 88,569                     | 163,508                  | -                        | 252,077            | 275,038                     |
| Activities for generating funds                            | -                          | -                        | -                        | -                  | 3,090                       |
| Investment income  | 595                        | -                        | -                        | 595                | 558                         |
| <i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>       |                            |                          |                          |                    |                             |
|  | 53,192                     | -                        | -                        | 53,192             | 101,334                     |
| <b>Total Incoming Resources</b>                            | <u>142,356</u>             | <u>163,508</u>           | <u>-</u>                 | <u>305,864</u>     | <u>380,020</u>              |
| Resources Expended   |                            |                          |                          |                    |                             |
|  | 99,909                     | 228,158                  | -                        | 328,067            | 292,153                     |
| <i>Governance costs</i>                                    | 5,294                      | 86                       | -                        | 5,380              | 3,665                       |
| <i>Other resources expended - Grant returned to funder</i> | -                          | 25,523                   | -                        | 25,523             | -                           |
| <b>Total Resources Expended</b>                            | <u>105,203</u>             | <u>253,767</u>           | <u>-</u>                 | <u>358,970</u>     | <u>295,818</u>              |
| <b>Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources before Transfers</b>  | 37,153                     | (90,259)                 | -                        | (53,106)           | 84,202                      |
| Transfer between funds                                     | (13)                       | 13                       | -                        | -                  | -                           |
| <b>Net income</b>  | 37,140                     | (90,246)                 | -                        | (53,106)           | 84,202                      |
| Reconciliation of Funds                                    |                            |                          |                          |                    |                             |
| Total funds brought forward at 01 April 2010               | -                          | 185,088                  | 178,970                  | 364,058            | 279,856                     |
| <b>Total funds carried forward at 31 March 2011</b>        | <u>£ 37,140</u>            | <u>£ 94,842</u>          | <u>£ 178,970</u>         | <u>£ 310,952</u>   | <u>£ 364,058</u>            |

Rights of Women would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who have supported our work over the past year:-

### **Management Committee**

Sanchita Hosali  
Chair

Niamh Donnelly  
Vice Chair and Secretary

Susan Clydesdale-Cotter  
Treasurer (to October 2010)

Alison Lamb  
Amara Clark  
Elizabeth Walker (to October 2010)

### **Staff**

Emma Scott  
Director

Catherine Briddick  
Senior Legal Officer

Hannah Camplin  
Legal Officer

Ruth Tweedale  
Legal Officer

Katherine Perks  
Policy Officer

Mina Rai  
Officer Manager

Malinda Mukuma  
Training Officer

### **Volunteer legal advisers**

Alexandra Wilks  
Alison Vaughan  
Amalia Walker  
Ayesha Bhutta  
Barbara Mills  
Carolina Marin Pedreno  
Caroline Armstrong Mills  
Chikondi Mbewe  
Christina Franklin  
Devika Shangari  
Dina Rawal

Dorethea Gartland  
Elinor Feeny  
Faiza Hassan  
Fatima Desai  
Jagjeet Kaur Chatu  
Jenny Newton  
Juliette Skeates  
Laura Coyle  
Linda Lusingu  
Lisa Cutting

Lorna Cservenka  
Lorraine Collier  
Lucy Sparks  
Manisha Hurchurn  
Manveen Padda  
Maureen Chigboh-Anyadi  
Olayinka Magbedelo  
Pavinder Khela  
Priya Palanivel  
Rachel Donnison

Rahana Nargis  
Sarah Benhadj  
Sarah London  
Sarah Milligan  
Shahzadi Mughal  
Shahzea Tahir  
Susan Tilley  
Suzie Forgie  
Taranjit Chana

### **Office volunteers and interns**

Erika Gardiner  
Jennifer Smith  
Leah Muir Walters  
Mehek Zafar  
Meleri Roberts  
Shahnaz Shahabi

### **Auditor and Payroll Services**

Alison Ward  
Karen Warne

### **Funders and donors**

Comic Relief  
Feminist Review Trust  
Garden Court Chambers  
Home Office Violent Crime Unit  
London Councils  
Matrix Chambers  
Sigrid Rausing Trust  
Sisters Trust  
Wates Foundation  
Unbound Philanthropy

### **Others**

Aisha Gill, Roehampton University  
Alison Harvey, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)  
Anna van Heeswijk, Object  
Baroness Joyce Gould  
Baroness Vivien Stern CBE  
Carol Storer, LAPG  
Celia Radice  
Charlotte Gage, Women's Resource Centre  
Dave Gee, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)  
Davina James-Hanman, Against Violence and Abuse  
Debora Singer, Asylum Aid  
Deborah McIlveen, Women's Aid Federation of England  
Eleanor Solo, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women  
Fiona Mactaggart, Labour MP for Slough

Frances Brodrick, Eaves  
Gerry Hicky, ASAP  
Heather Harvey, Amnesty International UK  
Heather Rogers, Women's Resource Centre  
Henry Harris  
Jade Cochran, formerly Commonwealth Secretariat  
Jane Worsey, Legal Services Commission  
Jon Scott  
Kingsley Brown and Total Coverage  
Liz Barratt, Bindmans LLP  
Louise Jenkins, Eaves  
Louise Kelly, Stonewall  
Marai Larasi, Imkaan  
Nisha Marwaha, Fried Frank LLP  
Penny Daly, Red Ochre  
Rachael Maskell, Unite  
Rachel Woodd, Jones Nickolds  
Raggi Kotak, 1 Pump Court  
Rahni K. Binjie, Nottingham Asian Women's Aid  
Sally Montier, Eaves  
Sheena McCaffery, Fried Frank LLP  
Stephanie Cloete and Aldgate Press  
Sue Willman, Pierce Glynn Solicitors  
Tamera Howard and the Shine ALOUD group  
Thomas Mieskowski, Dechert LLP  
Tracey Wright, Dechert LLP

Finally we would like to thank all our members, donors and supporters for their continuing commitment to and support of the work of Rights of Women.