2025/ 2026 Annual Report

WiRL
Women in Refugee Law

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Who we are

Women in Refugee Law (WiRL)

A network to centre refugee women in international law, policy and practice

Women in Refugee Law (WiRL) is a global network of over 400 members in 50 countries that brings together refugee women, scholars, practitioners, judges, policymakers, and activists to re-centre the experiences and rights of women within refugee law, policy and practice. Founded in 2021 by Dr Christel Querton (UWE Bristol) and Dr Moira Dustin (University of Sussex), the initiative challenges the assumption that legal and policy changes in the last 30 years have displaced the need for continued research and advocacy efforts. WiRL aims to safeguard advances, and to identify and address contemporary obstacles to the protection of refugee women globally.

*In this report we include all asylum claiming and displaced women and girls in the category of 'refugee women'

Our values and objectives

DIVERSITY

we are a diverse membership in respect to gender, sector, discipline and region

KNOWLEDGE

we work collaboratively to advance the network's objectives

COLLABORATION

at the centre of the network is knowledge production and sharing

The broad objectives of the network are:

- **Refocusing attention on the needs and experiences of refugee women in all their diversity.**
- **Providing a platform for refugee and asylum-claiming women to contribute to refugee policy and law.**
- **Ensuring that women's voices and interests are included in academic and policy discourse relating to refugee protection.**
- **Reviewing the state of protection in domestic jurisdictions, regionally and internationally.**
- **Identifying unrecognised setbacks to adequate protection.**
- **Creating new knowledge to improve the quality of protection for refugee women.**
- **Highlighting gender diversity in refugee protection and incorporating the views of women and men.**
- **Creating opportunities for collaborative work to address new and persistent challenges.**
- **Supporting the development of young and early career scholars and practitioners, especially women.**
- **Building an open and inclusive global network to take forward all of the above objectives.**

What we do

The WiRL network challenges and informs law, policy and practice relating to the protection of refugee women. It provides a forum to share knowledge, expertise and ideas and collaborate in activities that advance refugee women's rights at international, regional and national levels. WiRL builds capacity within the asylum sector to support and implement gender-sensitivity throughout asylum process whilst ensuring experts by experience are involved in conversations and decisions that affect them.

"Thank you to the Women in Refugee Law network for their critically important work in seeking to centre refugee women in international law, policy and practice – it's more needed now than ever"

Dr Madeline Garlick
Chief of the Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section in the Division of International Protection, UNHCR

Our team

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Ms Nicola Robbins
Project Coordinator
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Steering group

WiRL's activities are guided by an expert and diverse Steering Group made up of scholars, lawyers, activists and experts by experience from around the world. The Steering Group ensures WiRL's activities help take forward our strategy and meet our vision, whilst individual members support WiRL throughout the year in light of their particular area of expertise and interests. The Steering Group's work is guided by Terms of Reference.

Professor Deborah Anker *(2022 - Present)*
Harvard University

Gabriella Bettiga *(2023 - Present)*
MGBe Legal

Dr Skye Tinevimbo Chirape *(2025- Present)*
Independent

Dr Moira Dustin *(2022 - Present)*
University of Sussex

Professor Kate Jastram *(2024 - Present)*
University of California

Professor Liliana Jubilut *(2022 - Present)*
Catholic University of Santos

Hüseyin Ali Kudret *(2025- Present)*
Independent

Dr Sara L McKinnon *(2022 - Present)*
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Maggy Moyo *(2022 - Present)*
Right to Remain

Loraine Masiya Mponela *(2022 - Present)*
Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group (CARAG)

Professor Karen Musalo *(2022 - Present)*
University of California

Kama Petruczenko *(2026- Present)*
Independent

Dr Christel Querton *(2022 - Present)*
University of the West of England

Dr Lore Roels *(2022 - Present)*
University of Ghent

Shaden Sabouni *(2025- Present)*
Independent

Professor Sibel Safi *(2022 - Present)*
Dokuz Eylul University

Dr Kalyango Ronald Sebba *(2022 - Present)*
Kyambogo University/ Makerere University

Professor Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso *(2022 - Present)*
Brandeis University

Natasha Yacoub *(2022 - Present)*
University of New South Wales

Our activities and achievements

This report covers the period from September 2025 to August 2026. Below are just some of the network's activities, please contact us if you would like further information on a specific project or a broader view of the network's outputs.

Creating and supporting an inclusive global network

- WiRL has grown to more than 400 members who include academics from 180-plus institutions, women with direct experience of claiming international protection, community group and NGO representatives, legal practitioners, judges, and policy-makers. The network's membership now spans more than 50 countries.
- WiRL's Kitchen Tables – our quarterly members' meetings – are central to the network's identity. They provide a supportive space for discussion and knowledge-sharing, the development of new working relationships between people and organisations with a commitment to refugee women's rights. This year's Kitchen Tables covered UNHCR's work to address gender-based violence, with input from New Women Connectors; research on moving away from extractive, Western-centric methodologies toward co-production; and, the Danish Refugee Council's perspective on the gendered implications of the EU Pact on Migration. Regular members' updates are a space for talking about new developments, whether by academic researchers or small NGOs, and for new members to introduce themselves.
- WiRL continues to share content relating to refugee women on LinkedIn, where we have more than 4000 followers.
- We continue to provide a platform for knowledge exchange on our website. The WiRL database now contains more than 600 database items relating to refugee women, including research, legal cases, NGO reports and other resources.

Capacity building within the asylum sector

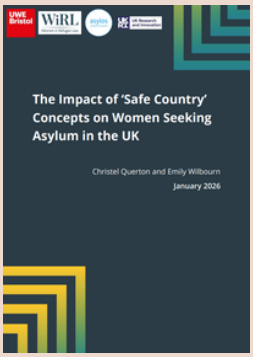
- In February 2026, WiRL collaborated with the Global Strategic Litigation Council to deliver legal training for more than 20 East Africa-based asylum and immigration practitioners and advocates. During the session expert trainers provided a holistic view of how to effectively prepare complex gender-based violence asylum claims. This training and resources are now available on WiRL's website.
- In June 2026, WiRL ran its third workshop on 'Gender Sensitivity in Asylum Interviews'. Experts from academia and the field of sexual and gender-based violence shared knowledge with participants, including: advocates and caseworkers who work with asylum-claiming and refugee women survivors of GBV; women with lived experience of the asylum interview process; researchers; and campaigners.

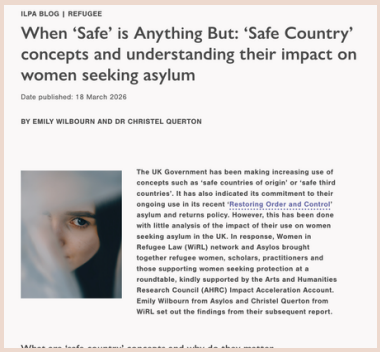


Influencing law, policy and practice

- In September 2025, WiRL collaborated with Asylos to design and deliver activities to facilitate coproduction and knowledge-exchange alongside experts by experience. Insight from refugee women, scholars, practitioners and those supporting women seeking protection was brought together in 'The Impact of 'Safe Country' Concepts on Women Seeking Asylum in the UK', a report outlining the use of safe country concepts in the UK, highlighting concerns about the impact on women seeking protection from gender-based harms, examining the role of country of origin information, and making a range of important recommendations. This research also informed a blog post for Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA): 'When 'Safe' is Anything But: 'Safe Country' concepts and understanding their impact on women seeking asylum'.
- In January 2026, WiRL responded to the call for input from the UN Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. In our submission, we highlighted the violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) refugee women. The Independent Expert's subsequent report for the 62nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council in June recognised the concern raised by WiRL members that LBQ refugee women are 'falling between different rights frameworks'.
- In April 2026, WiRL submitted a response to the UK Government call for evidence on the creation of a new Independent Appeals Body, raising concerns about the implications of the proposal for women's right to international protection and a fair appeal hearing.







Setting research agendas and generating knowledge and debate

This year, WiRL ran two public events on the theme of 'Refuge in a Cold Climate: The Impact on Women'. The series draws on WiRL's global membership to apply a gendered lens in analysing the impact of increasing hostility to refugees in different states and contexts. The events were online panel discussions, available and accessible to anyone whose work relates to refugee or asylum-claiming women or with an interest in their needs and experiences, and attracting between 40-70 attendees.

- In November 2025, we held a seminar that explored penalties against women claiming (international) protection.
- In April 2026, expert panellists spoke about the Global Compact on Refugees, international protection and refugee participation from a gendered perspective.

Videos and resources from these seminars are available on WiRL's website.

Our financials

This year, WiRL has been supported by: Socio-Legal Studies Association, University of Sussex Knowledge Exchange Policy Fellowship, and University of the West of England AHRC Impact Acceleration Account. We would like to thank our funders for their financial support and support in kind that have helped the development of the WiRL network.

How we have used our funding

During this year 80% of our funding went to staffing and 20% to our website

Going forward

In 2026-2027, WiRL will continue to build on this past year's activities, including holding regular Kitchen Tables for members, public seminars, further legal training and workshops. We will seek further opportunities to contribute to international, regional and national refugee law to ensure that the needs and voices of refugee women are recognised. We will continue to update our database with resources for and about refugee women globally – please do send us suggestions for new items.

To find out more about items in this report or about WiRL membership and activities, please do reach out.

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