



The why women? campaign asks you to support women's voluntary and community organisations. Many people have no idea what women's organisations do or why they are needed. Yet without them, the world would be a much poorer place.

Women's organisations are not-for-profit groups that work specifically with women. These organisations include women's refuges, training projects, campaigning groups, counselling services and much more. Women's organisations provide free, and often life saving, services to women and lobby for better laws to promote equality for women. But the women's sector is under threat because it is not being supported with adequate funding.

This campaign affects everyone because stopping discrimination, inequality and violence against women benefits us all. To be able to achieve this, we need strong women's organisations that can provide effective solutions to complex problems.

We are calling on Government and funders to support women's organisations.

Valuable and much needed services for women are at risk of closure

Women's organisations have traditionally been under-valued and under-resourced. However, things are changing for the worse. We are seeing many large, well-established women's organisations, with decades of expertise, closing down. Why? Not through lack of need, but because the funding environment is changing, and preliminary evidence suggests that these changes will impact heavily on women's organisations.

Women used to be a priority for many funding criteria - today they rarely are. Funding is much harder to access for women's organisations now. This is because of the misperception that women's equality has been won, and so women's organisations are no longer needed. Women's organisations know from their work on the ground that neither is true. Without women's organisations we would see a greater drain on public services and more social and health problems. Women's organisations can prevent this from happening.

"The women's sector is absolutely vital and important because without it, there are so many women out there who will not be able to access services for their needs - it's vital that the sector remains." (Tower Hamlets Women's Aid)

"We are saving lives - that's the most important thing for us." (Iranian and Kurdish Women's Organisation)

support women's organisations to change lives

Support women's organisations...

...to
change
lives

Women's organisations work with some of the most forgotten and isolated women in our communities. Very often, these are the women whose needs are not being met by government agencies, or by other charities.

"I had a letter from a client who came to see us last year to say thank you. She said she had been sober now for nine months and that she'd become a trustee on a local parents organisation. She's now got a full-time job and just wanted to thank us because she remembers what was said in the groups and that the information was so useful."

(Women's Alcohol Centre, WRC research, 2006)

Without women's organisations, these women would not have the same opportunities to change their lives.

...to promote
equality
& human
rights

Women's organisations challenge discrimination and improve women's human rights. This can be difficult work, when the mainstream perception is that women have equality now. Women's organisations have fought hard for the freedoms, rights and protection women (and men) take for granted today. Yet, despite huge advances in equality over the last 30 years, women are still only paid 83% of men's full-time

wages; one in two women experiences sexual violence, domestic violence or stalking; and only 20% of MPs are women. It was only after decades of campaigning by women's organisations that rape in marriage became illegal in 1991.

Without women's organisations' campaigning and lobbying, human rights for women in the UK would be far behind.

...to change lives

Support women's organisations...

...to stop
violence
against
women

Women's organisations work to challenge the root causes of violence, and to support the huge number of women survivors of violence. But violence against women is still happening in epidemic proportions. In the last 20 years, convictions in rape cases have dropped from 24% to 5.3%. Every three days, a woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner.

"A woman who had been raped went to one of the larger mainstream organisations where she spoke to a male volunteer. He gave her half an hour of his time and told her she just had to 'get on with her life' – this was quite appalling." (Women's organisation, WRC research, 2006)

Without women's organisations, there would be a lack of appropriate advocacy and support for women survivors of violence.

...to stop
violence
against
women

Women's organisations provide safe, women-only spaces, where women feel they can talk openly, be comfortable, be understood, and feel safe. Many women, when given the choice, will choose women-only services to get support.

"In general, what we find is that women go from being timid, tearful and undermined and come back confident and emotionally strong. I can say without hesitation that many, many women who have been through the Women's Aid system get to that space."

(Barking and Dagenham's Women's Aid/Eaves Housing for Women, WRC research 2006)

Without women's organisations, there would be nowhere for women to go to access this kind of service and space.

...to change lives

Support women's organisations...

...to provide solutions to meet women's needs

Women's organisations have added value, in that they work in different ways to other services. They are different because they are independent services focused on meeting women's needs, they provide integrated services, they are specialists in their fields, they empower women through peer support and strong service user involvement and they reach the 'hard-to-reach' communities of women that fall through the gaps in other service provision.

"The women's sector is absolutely vital and important because without it, so many women would not be able to access services for their needs. It's vital that the sector gets recognition and proper funding to continue."
(Tower Hamlets Women's Aid, WRC research, 2006)

Without women's organisations, there would be a loss of expertise in how to meet women's needs.

...to provide value for money

Women's organisations provide essential, high quality, cost-effective and often life-saving services that are tailored to meet women's needs. Because they deliver support and services that women want and need, women's organisations are effective. Women's organisations prevent problems from happening or from escalating. Domestic violence is estimated to cost £22.9 billion per year, but this would be much more if it wasn't for women's organisations. This saves the government money and relieves the burden on public services (such as hospitals) through preventing situations and problems becoming chronic.

Without women's organisations, the economic and social costs to society and individual women would be much higher.

...to change lives

What needs to happen?

Despite the advances in equality for women, there is overwhelming evidence that there is still a long way to go. Women continue to face inequality and disadvantage despite the fact that discrimination and violence against women are unlawful. Public policy is an important instrument for achieving change but it must be reinforced by sustainably funded, appropriate services and support for individual women and communities. Women's organisations keep women safe and empower them to transform their lives.

Women's organisations are an integral part of the voluntary and community sector and work closely with other organisations to ensure that women, children and men have access to equal opportunities. They develop infrastructure in local communities through providing community facilities. The women's sector builds and sustains regenerated, safer, stronger and more cohesive communities for people to work and live in.

Women's organisations change lives, communities and society.

We call upon the Government to put gender back on the agenda by:

- Acknowledging the systematic disadvantage women face because of their gender, and
- Publicly recognising the essential services and expertise the women's sector provides to address this.

A list of specific recommendations to the Home Office, Treasury, DTI, other government departments and inspectorates is at www.whywomen.org.uk.

See www.whywomen.org.uk for more, including our short film, poster, postcards and research on women's organisations.

why women? is a Women's Resource Centre campaign

- Show your support for women's organisations by signing-up in support of the campaign
- Help women's organisations strengthen and thrive by becoming a volunteer or trustee
- Do our two minute survey and help us strengthen the case for sustainable funding
- Let others know about the why women? website and distribute our campaign resources

To find out more, visit www.whywomen.org.uk

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What
can you
do?