

Celebrating 35 years

1986-2021



PROJECT IBISCUS



ANNUAL REPORT



I am PRICELESS

Kick-Out

Trafficking in Persons
& Smuggling of Migrants

Trafficking And Child Labour Are Evil And Illegal
Report Cases To NAPTIP. Call

03 or 080CALLNAPTIP (08002255627)



for social justice

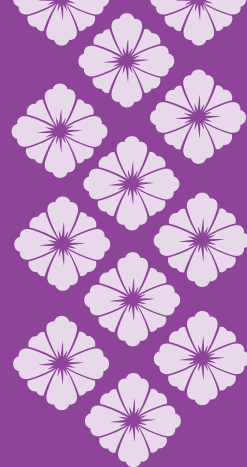
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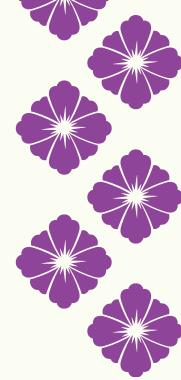


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WELCOME TO HIBISCUS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



Hibiscus enables marginalised migrant women trapped in the immigration and justice system to rebuild their lives.

OUR VISION

A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY

Where inequalities are eliminated for all from the criminal justice and immigration systems.

OUR VALUES

INTEGRITY

To be pro-active in our intentions, for our work and actions to reflect the values we hold as an organisation.

RESPECT

To respect our colleagues, stakeholders, and the women and families we support. Even when we disagree, to see each other as full human beings, with struggles and dreams.

LEARNING AND INNOVATION

To be curious. To invest in our staff to develop and grow. To find new and innovative ways of supporting migrant women to rebuild their lives. To reflect honestly when things haven't gone right.

INCLUSIVE

To center those with lived experience throughout what we do. Being an ally, co-producing services, research and articles. To be inclusive in a meaningful way, to support our staff and clients.

Celebrating 35 years of work

OUR VISION



IS FOR
A FAIR
AND JUST
SOCIETY

OUR STRATEGY - THE 5 R'S

RECOVERY

To recover from the pandemic and regain service capacity, aiming to reach the same number of clients before the pandemic.

RESILIENCE

To improve our systems and processes to become a more resilient organisation to better withstand the challenges of present and future, including the pandemic.

RECENTRE

To centre the migrant women we work with in our work, and in particular Black women. To become an anti-racism organisation. To increase our empowerment works.

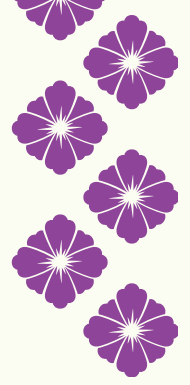
RECONNECT

To celebrate our 35th anniversary and re-connect to the reason and purpose for which Hibiscus was founded. To ensure the story of our founder, Olga Heavens, is still central to our work, and communicate our history, impact and achievement.

REIMAGINE

To clarify our purpose statement and develop our theory of change and new strategy. A new vision for the future of Hibiscus.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND THE CEO



Hibiscus has an unrivalled track record in delivering high-impact support to predominantly migrant women.

This year, as Hibiscus celebrates our 35th anniversary we have been reflecting on the impact we have had over the past three decades. In the past seven years alone, we have worked with over 12,000 migrant people from over 100 different countries, in prison, immigration detention centres and in the community. Our organisation is unique in being the only one in the UK that works with migrant women trapped in the immigration and criminal justice systems. Our work is driven by our values of integrity, respect, learning and innovation, and inclusivity.

In the past seven years alone, we have worked with over 12,000 migrant people from over 100 different countries.

Tackling racism experienced by the women that we support continues to be an important part of the work we do. We were founded to support Black and minoritised women and today, we continue to prioritise the importance of being a proactively anti-racist organisation with an anti-racism strategy. We aspire to centre the women we work with and their experiences in every aspect of our work, as this helps us to embed anti-oppression at the core of our work. Our diversity is our strength, as this enables us to provide specialist services to migrant women. 54% of our staff members, 80% of our senior leadership and 60% of our board identify as Black, Asian, and minoritised people. Among our staff we speak 24 different languages.

Over the past year, the pandemic has been a constant backdrop to the challenges faced by our clients in the community, prisons, and detention centres. To meet these challenges we had to adapt the way we deliver our services, including delivering online and increasing the number of resources we give through destitution funds to cover the basic costs of food, clothing and household bills; as well as increasing the provision of activities that promote mental wellbeing. Although many of our services have been stop-and-start depending on the rise and fall of Covid-19 infections which impacted access to prisons and detention centres, we are proud that we were able to support 996 people over the course of the year. Looking after staff well-being has also been important, as working from home and the deteriorating situations our clients have faced has put more pressure on our team. We provide clinical supervision to all our staff by partnering with Trauma Treatment International, as well as implementing a pay review, creating new pathways for staff progressions, and creating an in-house HR role.

New government policies which directly impact the people we work with have exacerbated conditions for migrant women. These include the expansion of both the prison and detention estates, including 500 new planned places for women in prison and a new women-only detention centre; Derwentside with 84 new places which opened in December 2021. Other barriers we have faced include the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act, which further marginalises and criminalises the women we work with. To break the barriers we have encountered we created a new department: Policy and Public Affairs. This was formed to ensure we have the

resources to challenge policies through producing reports, using our data and ensuring the voices of the women we work with are heard. The Double Disadvantage Action Plan launched in January 2021 is one such example of a report we produced working with partner organisations and women with lived experience. The plan sets out 10 actions that decision makers can take to reduce discrimination and inequality experienced by Black, Asian, Minoritised and Migrant women in the Criminal Justice System.

Many challenges remain on the horizon including the government plans to remove asylum seekers to Rwanda and the cost-of-living crisis – it can be difficult to feel hopeful. However, we believe that we must hold on to hope for any change to take place and as bell hooks said,

“hope is essential to any political struggle for radical change when the overall social climate promotes disillusionment and despair.”

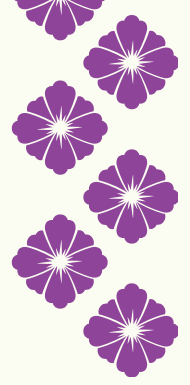
Next year as we develop a new strategy to meet these challenges, it is essential Hibiscus is focused and clear about the impact we are making to bring about change in migrant women’s lives. A strong staff team, a dynamic group of trustees, and robust governance will ensure our new strategy is a success.

Rachel Youngman,
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Marchu Girma,
CEO



OLGA HEAVEN'S LETTER, HIBISCUS' FOUNDER



I set up Hibiscus because I felt passionate about challenging the injustice experienced by so many...

I set up Hibiscus because I felt passionate about challenging the injustice experienced by so many Black women from West Africa and the Caribbean serving long prison sentences. It was clear to me that migrant women faced a multiplicity of inequalities that were compounded by the pain of imprisonment, which made their punishment cruel and inhumane. I started small, but soon Hibiscus began to grow to become the organisation that it is today, working in three prisons, five detention centres and a women's centre. Over the past three decades it has supported people from over 130 different countries.

In 1986, I began working to support Nigerian and Jamaican women at Holloway Prison. This was the decade where the overt racism of policies against Black people led to many riots across British cities. However, no one was talking about the injustice experienced by Black women in the Criminal Justice System, and in particular those women who were coerced into drug trafficking; the women that I came to work with. At that time, the drug trade was a universal phenomenon, however, it was specifically women from West Africa and the Caribbean who were prosecuted for being couriers and they served the longest sentences in the UK. Many of the women I met were mothers, who either left their children back home, or whose children were taken into care in the UK miles away from them after they were sentenced. A fifteen-year sentence for a woman who was the sole provider for 4 or 5 dependent children who remained in a country with no welfare system was very common.

Prison services, probation officers, social services, immigration officers, and other agencies, all had a responsibility for these women, but they were considered an inconvenience as they were 'foreign nationals' who would be deported at the end of their sentences. Our initial intervention focused on securing pre-sentencing reports and connecting women with their families, and if they had children, supporting the children while the mothers served their sentences. Pre-sentence reports really helped to change the length of sentences received, and it meant women were able to go back and reunite with their families much earlier.

**We knew we had to do something different.
We started to double our efforts to raise awareness.**

Ten years after starting our work, the disproportionality was still staggering. In June 1996, 21.3% of the total number of female British nationals in prison were sentenced for drug offences, compared to 52.4% of foreign nationals. We knew we had to do something different. We started to double our efforts to raise awareness about drug trafficking and how women were being used as 'mules'. In 1996 we worked with the writer Winsome Pinnock and the organisation Clean Break to develop a play called 'Mules'.



The highlight of achievement during my leadership at Hibiscus was the international campaign to deter women becoming victims of drug traffickers. Hibiscus created a media campaign, 'Eva Goes to Foreign' with an animated film, posters, stickers and comics to raise awareness among women and children in West Africa and the Caribbean of the dangers and impact of drug smuggling. This campaign started in Nigeria in 2002-3, Jamaica in 2005, and Ghana and Trinidad in 2006-7. This new way of working had a huge impact in reducing women being used as 'mules' to transport drugs to the UK.

By 2012, we started working at Yarl's Wood detention centre, as we believed it was important to help women return with dignity to their home countries for resettlement. We saw a new trend arising, in human trafficking. Vulnerable women from Nigeria as well as some Eastern European and Asian countries were being brought to the UK for sex and labour exploitation. We developed an award-winning animation in 2012 to raise awareness about this issue.

Hibiscus has won many awards in the past three decades for the work we do.

Hibiscus has won many awards in the past three decades for the work we do. Over the years, one of the things I have learnt is the importance of change and following the trend of what is happening for migrant women. Hibiscus continues to thrive as an organisation because it continues to provide services that are much needed and support the most marginalised women in our society. Our 35th anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on Hibiscus' past achievements, to look at what has worked, and to recommit to our vision, to build a fair and just society where inequalities are eliminated from the criminal justice and immigration systems.

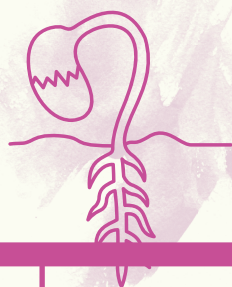
35 YEARS OF WORK



1980's

{seed planting}

In 1986, Olga Heaven set up Hibiscus and started to work with Nigerian and Jamaican women inside Holloway and Cookham Wood Prisons. Hibiscus quickly connected with networks in Nigeria and Jamaica and helped to reduce women's lengthy prison sentences through providing pre-sentence reports. Hibiscus supported children and families while their mothers were imprisoned.



1990's

{germination}

Hibiscus received Lottery funding in 1994. This grant allowed us to get an office space in London where women were welcomed to receive community support.

The number of women being trafficked for drug purposes continued to increase. Hibiscus worked to raise awareness through plays such as 'Mules 1996'.



2000's

{sprouting}

Hibiscus also started working at HMP Bronzefield in 2004 and later expanded to HMP Peterborough and Downview.

Hibiscus launched our most impactful campaign 'Eva Goes to Foreign' with an animated film, posters, stickers and comics to raise awareness among women and children in West Africa and the Caribbean of the dangers and impact of drug smuggling. This campaign started in Nigeria in 2002-3, Jamaica in 2005, and Ghana and Trinidad in 2006-7.



2010-15

{growing}

Hibiscus obtained a contract to work inside immigration removal centres in 2012, offering resettlement support to women and men, including a Specialist Welfare Service for vulnerable women and tailored support for families at the Pre-Departure Accommodation.

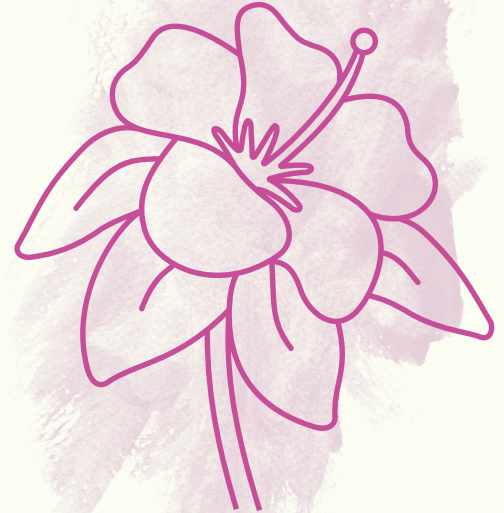


2016-21

{budding}

In 2016 the Women's Centre, a women-only safe space where activities and workshops are run, opened its doors with the financial support of the Big Lottery Fund.

New projects have been developed at Hibiscus in recent years such as supporting women at courts, the WrapAround and Diversion projects, the Cultural Mediation project and the anti-trafficking work.



2022

{flowering}

In 2021, Hibiscus celebrated its 35th Anniversary. Our work remains vital for migrant women, which is why a new strategy is being developed to continue the incredible work done over the years.

ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 2021

BAKE SALE

Melek Erdal organised a bake sale at the Margot Bakery in East Finchley to support Hibiscus Initiatives and raise awareness about the work we do.

MICHELLE ESHKERI
SPASIA DINKOVSKI
TARUNIMA SINHA
MELEK ERDAL

Art by Manoli Dinkovski

PLACE:
for all who are displaced but not placeless

A Bake Sale
SUNDAY 25 APRIL
10-2
Margot Bakery N2 0SZ

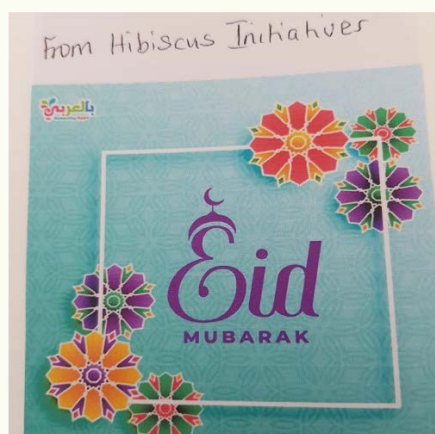
A place of women, migration & the baking traditions that have migrated with them; connecting us to each other, to place & to home



MAY 2021

EID CELEBRATIONS

Hibiscus celebrated Eid with clients in IRCs and handed out gifts such as chocolates, scarfs, art therapy books, and coloring pencils. Those who did not wish to participate were given wellbeing packs as a gift.



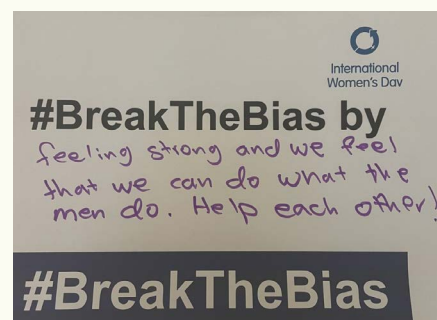
JUNE 2021

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE WEEK

International Refugee Week was promoted by holding a drawing and painting activity for the clients in the IRCs. Additionally, a poetry competition was held, allowing clients to share their experiences through poetry.

NEW CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Hibiscus introduced Salesforce, a new database and case management system that serves our front-line work needs and help us measure our impact more effectively.



JULY 2021

NATIONAL FRIENDSHIP DAY

The IRC team conducted a face-to-face workshop to celebrate National Friendship Day. We provided the clients with materials to make colorful friendship bracelets and decorated jewellery boxes.

STORIES WITH PURPOSE

Hibiscus ran a 'Stories with a Purpose' course in partnership with Ginger Leadership Communications. 9 women took part in the 3-session course, learning and practising how to tell their stories with purpose and how to speak out to make positive change.

AUGUST 2021

POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Our new Policy and Public Affairs department was set up, with the purpose of enabling women with lived experience to become agents of change to reduce inequalities in the immigration and criminal justice systems. As well as to support co-design and co-production of services, policy and training.

'THE WRITER INSIDE' FILM SCREENING

Women in the community worked with professional actors and script writers to write and film 'The Writer Inside', a series of short creative stories. On 26th August we held a film screening in the Women's Centre with friends and family to view their work.

SEPTEMBER 2021

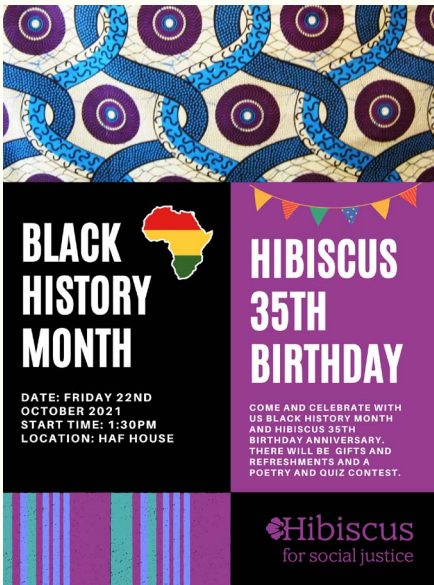
TRIP TO KEW GARDENS

The Community Team and the women took a trip to Kew Gardens. Women were able to see the gardens before the autumn and interact with each other outside the centre and the office.



"Thank you so much for yesterday, I really appreciate your kindness, I am so excited and overwhelmed, it's a thing of joy that I felt like a woman, you really wipe away my tears, I enjoy the outings and the lovely photos for the remembrance purposes about Kew Gardens"

- Tara (Hibiscus' client)



OCTOBER 2021

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

We celebrated Black History Month and Hibiscus' 35th Birthday across all teams and projects with different activities and events.

In Prisons, specialist workshops led by Sistah Space and Black Poppy Rose were run where women discussed issues such as Domestic Abuse and race.

INTERNATIONAL TRIP TO ALBANIA

Hibiscus spent a week in Albania meeting international organisations and former clients to understand their resettlement needs and the support available to them.

NOVEMBER 2021

WIG-MAKING WORKSHOP

We held a two-day wig-making course with Re-Routing Initiatives.

DIWALI CELEBRATIONS

We prepared packs for our clients to celebrate Diwali and asked our clients to choose 'One Kind

Word' and formed a collage of all the words shared.

DECEMBER 2021

WOMEN'S CENTRE WINTER CELEBRATION

This year we worked with several organisations to make the events special: we partnered up with Lush who provided gifts for clients and with Salvation Army who provided toys to children for a second year in a row.

Women made festive and winter postcards and gifted them to each other in prisons and IRCs. We also had a singing session where everyone sang different festive songs from all over the world.

JANUARY 2022

NEW PURPOSE STATEMENT

We revitalised our purpose statement:

Hibiscus enables marginalised migrant women trapped in the immigration and justice system to rebuild their lives.

DOUBLE DISADVANTAGE ACTION PLAN LAUNCH

Hibiscus presented a 10-point action plan designed to tackle persistent inequalities experienced by Black, Asian, minoritised, and migrant women in the criminal justice system.

FEBRUARY 2022

VALENTINE'S DAY

Inside the IRCs, our clients received Valentine's Day packs with kits to decorate notebooks that would fit into an envelope and then be sent or posted to a loved one.



MARCH 2022

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hibiscus hosted a celebration at the Women's Centre. The first session was run by a community client, who facilitated a pottery painting workshop. We were then joined by the iconic 'Lady Unchained' (Brenda Birungi), whose life work is dedicated to proving there is 'life after prison'. Brenda has been through criminal justice system herself and found strength through poetry. Brenda ran a poetry workshop for Hibiscus clients which focused on themes of womanhood and marginalisation. We were treated to a performance by Brenda, and from clients who had written their own inspired pieces. Client's performed poems including 'I am Woman' taking influence from the powerful speech 'Ain't I a Woman' by Sojourner Truth and bringing their own voice, meaning and power to their poetry.

In Prisons, we celebrated IWD with the guest speaker and certified empowerment coach Michelle Jones.

In IRCs, the clients shared inspirational women figures from their country. The photos of these inspiring women were made into ironable transfers and given to the ladies to iron onto t-shirts.

HIBISCUS STORIES



OVERCOMING

INEQUALITY

In its 35-year history, Hibiscus has supported many women who found themselves at the intersection of the immigration and criminal justice systems.

We have provided them with resources to fight their cases, advocate for their rights, access support, enhance their skills, resettle in their communities, and ultimately regain control over their lives. Hibiscus has worked inside prisons from the beginning where support for Black women was needed, and later expanded its work to reach more women in the community and inside immigration removal centers where the support was also crucial.

At Hibiscus, we work together as a team to provide the best possible support, tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of our clients. Over the years, we have listened to many empowering stories of strength and battling for what is right. The courage of the people we encounter gives us the passion to continue doing our work. Fighting for a more egalitarian and just society where our clients have the same opportunities as any other person is a goal worth fighting for.

The following stories give an insight into the scenarios and situations that Black, minoritised and migrant women go through on a daily basis, and the work Hibiscus does to help them fight those obstacles and overcome the inequalities.

MARIANNE

Marianne is a Jamaican national who was trafficked to the UK in the late 90's. She came here under the promise of work and was forced into criminality immediately on arrival to repay her debt.

Marianne was forced to sell drugs and give the money to her traffickers. She has also disclosed sexual exploitation.

Marianne was able to leave this situation with the help of her boyfriend. However, he was abusive and forced her to sell drugs like her traffickers had. Marianne became pregnant and they had a child together. He coerced her with false promises of marriage and getting legal status in the UK whilst continuing to exploit and abuse her. Marianne was in and out of prison due to the forced criminality, and she formed an alcohol dependency trying to self-medicate her depression.

Marianne first encountered Hibiscus whilst serving a 10-year drug related prison sentence. The prison keyworker supported Marianne in finding an immigration solicitor, making an asylum application, and applying for NASS accommodation as her release date was coming up. At this stage, Marianne had never spoken about her trafficking experience but was receiving emotional and practical support from Hibiscus. She was anxious about her release and worried she may turn back to alcohol as she had been abstinent for so long. She was looking forward to seeing her children and mother and hopeful for a positive future. Probation referred Marianne to the Hibiscus WrapAround project for continued support in the community, and the keyworker arranged an introductory call with Marianne the week before her release from HMP Bronzefield, to ensure she would be supported, and discuss her worries and hopes.

Marianne's NASS accommodation application was refused, and she was released from prison to a friends' address where she stayed temporarily.



Probation had not allowed Marianne to live with her mother as the accommodation was too small. Hibiscus supported Marianne in appealing the Home Office's decision by signposting to ASAP (Asylum Support Appeals Project) and supporting her to compile the required evidence. This was an emotional process for Marianne as she was required to provide an accommodation timeline, including the properties where she experienced exploitation. Marianne's appeal was successful, and Hibiscus wrote to the Home Office to request single occupancy NASS accommodation in London. Marianne needed space to heal from her trauma. She had recently become the primary carer for her elderly mother who was suffering from dementia. It was also important for Marianne to continue receiving Hibiscus support, due to her later disclosure of trafficking to our service, and the high risk of future exploitation. Marianne was granted NASS accommodation in London.

Hibiscus referred Marianne to the National Referral Mechanism following her disclosure of trafficking. She was granted Positive Reasonable Grounds and is receiving specialist counselling for her trauma for the first time since her arrival in the UK. She is independent, and although her transition from prison to the community has been difficult but she has showed strength and perseverance. She has not turned to alcohol as she feared, and she is making positive progress with her mental health and confidence. Her asylum and NRM applications are still pending.

YANG

Yang is a client with refugee status who was detained under the Immigration Act in early 2020, just before the pandemic began. Yang had very specific mental health requirements that needed to be addressed and we worked with her to develop her confidence and independence.

While she was in detention, she met Hibiscus and asked for support. She received specialist support from our Specialist Welfare Services project worker in the form of emotional and wellbeing support.

In April, she was finally released into the community, where Hibiscus continued to provide her with support in the form of food vouchers and signposted to other specialised organisations in the community. Yang was referred by Hibiscus for urgent local support including food banks, counselling services and the British Red Cross.



Regarding her asylum application, Yang had to attend her asylum interview if she wanted to continue with her case, and she was anxious and nervous about it. Hibiscus supported her to prepare for it. This included planning her journey to the interview, checking train schedules, purchasing tickets, and practising breathing techniques that the Hibiscus project worker empowered her with during the interview. Whilst Yang awaited her asylum decision, she wanted to do something with her spare time and loved learning new skills and educating herself, so Hibiscus helped her secure a place in an online course. Fortunately, earlier this year, Yang successfully got her asylum status approved and received permission to stay in the UK. She was over the moon and very thankful when she informed us!

After gaining her Leave to Remain, Hibiscus helped Yang sign up for Universal Credit so she could have some income to support herself until she could find a job. Yang also secured a place on a higher education course to study English and Maths. Thanks to this, she was then able to secure a part-time job placement working as a Carer. Yang has now completed another course and works full-time at a care home. She also continues to have regular counselling sessions to take care of her mental health. Little by little, Yang is regaining control of her life and is building a home away from danger. She continues to stay in touch with Hibiscus and has recently started learning how to bake at home, always sending beautiful photos of her cake creations.

“Thank you very much Hibiscus for your support, I am grateful and really appreciate it. Now I feel a bit relieved. I always pray for you for making me feel loved.”



DALILAH

Dalilah is a woman who came to the UK in search of better opportunities in life, but was detained at Yarl's Wood in 2017.

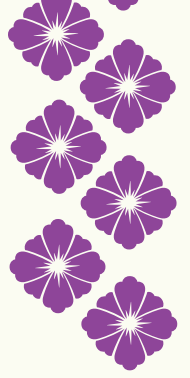
Here, a Hibiscus project worker established a relationship with her whilst she was detained and offered her onward travel support so that she could be reunited with her family in Brazil. Once Dalilah was settled in Brazil, she contacted us again to request support to open her own driving school. Hibiscus contributed towards buying her first car and she successfully opened the business. With the money generated, she was able to pay for her university studies as she wanted to be a primary school teacher in the future.

Dalilah has stayed in contact with Hibiscus ever since and has sent many photos of the driving school. The driving school has had its ups and downs over the years, having many difficulties during the pandemic. We recently found out that one of the main cars she uses for the driving classes broke down, which was straining the financial future of the business. Hibiscus was able to provide some further financial support to repair the car and get it back up and running.

Dalilah is now preparing for her final university exams and is very close to finishing her degree. She will soon become a teacher where she can pass on her knowledge and learning to young people in her community, which has been her dream for a many years.

"I will never forget you coz you were so kind to me and helped me to realise who I was. I have settled well and my driving school is doing well. Right now I'm busy with my assignments, I'm studying, my wish is to be a teacher. My children are also happy to have me back home."

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS



Figures are from Hibiscus' database for the period April 2021 to March 2022.

Hibiscus supported
a total of:

996
CLIENTS

across all teams and projects from
April 2021 to March 2022

167
**CLIENTS WITH
TRAFFICKING CONCERNS**

were supported across the organisation,
including clients referred to
National Referral Mechanism,
with Positive or Negative
Conclusive Grounds

141
**REFUGEES AND ASYLUM
SEEKERS**

were supported across community,
prisons and IRCs



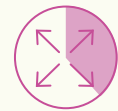
97

**IN
COMMUNITY**



6

**IN
PRISONS**



64

**IN
IMMIGRATION
REMOVAL
CENTRES**

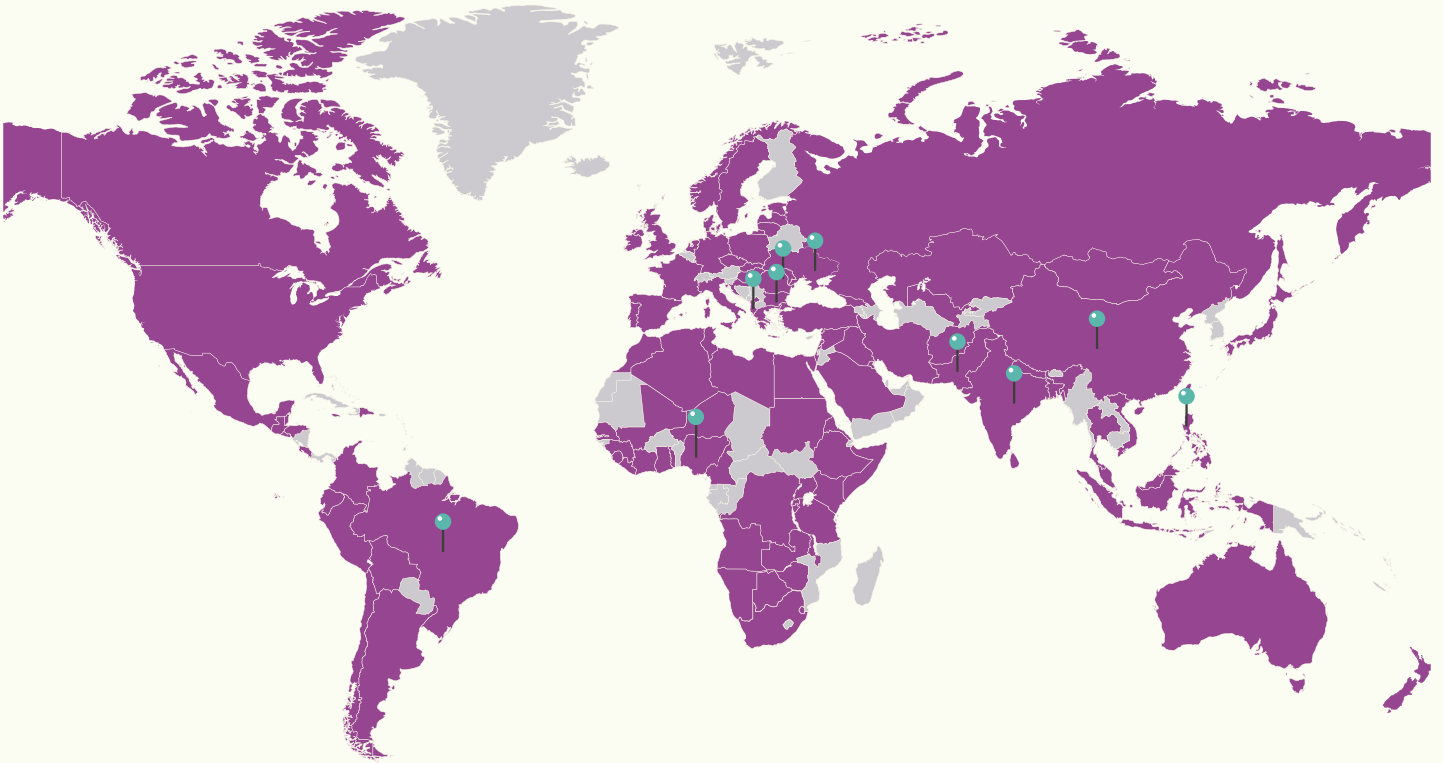
192
**ACTIVITIES AND
WORKSHOPS**

were held with
A TOTAL OF 1,062 PARTICIPANTS
to help them learn new skills,
improve their well-being, and work on their
agency and empowerment

OVER THE PAST 7 YEARS
Hibiscus Initiatives has worked
with more than

12,000
CLIENTS

including people at courts, women in the
community, families at the Pre-Departure
Accommodation, men and women in detention
and prison, and women receiving specialist
welfare support



WHERE OUR CLIENTS ARE FROM:



ALBANIA
15%



BRAZIL
9%



ROMANIA
8%



NIGERIA
7%



INDIA
5%



POLAND
4%



PAKISTAN
4%



VIETNAM
4%



JAMAICA
3%



SOMALIA
2%

OTHER NATIONALITIES
39%

WOMEN'S VOICES

POEMS WRITTEN BY HIBISCUS' CLIENTS

WITHOUT SKY

Why only me,
A clandestine,
I always run and run
But cannot find a sky to fly.

Why only me,
I keep knocking on closed doors
Again, and again.

Why only me is waiting endlessly for a glimmer of light.
Don't cry,
I said, and suddenly,
I smiled at my destiny.

Perhaps tomorrow, a new hope will be born
I still believe in acceptance,
I still believe in colours drawn on asphalt,
I still believe and
I'm just a woman.

WE CANNOT WALK ALONE

My journey of life
Let me explore the world!
Let me touch the sky!
Let me scape the misery.

To feel the bright colors of life
I need to escape the clutches of cruelty
Being held captive, bring tears to my eyes
The one thing I know
"Freedom is priceless"

I AM WOMAN

I am woman, hear me roar
I am a woman I roar for freedom
I roar for right because it has been taken away from me
You can kill me with your powers, but I rise with courage

Ain't I a woman
Can't you see my face like yours
My legs like yours we use to walk
Can't you feel pain as human

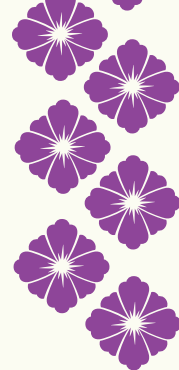
Same blood flows in our body
Same time we share
Same air we breathe
Ain't I a woman, because of my skin colour.

“Your support has been very uplifting to me especially during the pandemic when you call just to check up on us also advising me and recommending law firms to assist me is priceless. At times I had no one to assist me but you, thanks again, your support has been and still is appreciated.”

“Hi Hibiscus project worker, I’m writing to appreciate you for your amazing ways of making life easier for us here; especially for the celebration you organised yesterday to remember Women’s Day. It was simply phenomenal and just to let you know you are amazing; keep up the good work, sending you much love.”

“Honestly, thank you so much. I’ve changed the perception that I had about myself. For the first time in a long time, I am feeling weightless. Having people like you has helped me to survive through all this. I would have not done it without you. I want to set up my own charity in the future. I want to be there for others like you were here for me.”

HIBISCUS WOMEN'S CENTRE 5TH ANNIVERSARY



THE PROJECT IN NUMBERS

SUPPORTED

442

WOMEN FROM

64

COUNTRIES

OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT

30%

CLIENTS IDENTIFIED AS BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH - AFRICAN;

5% as Black or Black British - Caribbean; and 40% as White - Other

WOMEN CAME TO US FROM

41

REFERRAL PARTNERS

including local voluntary organisations, probation, prisons, local authorities, health services and other Hibiscus projects

DELIVERED

1,198 ACTIVITIES

for women including educational classes (384), workshops (505), and group or individual sessions (309) such as counselling and cultural mediation

Five years ago, Hibiscus Women's Centre established as a safe, women's only space for migrant women. The Women's Centre officially opened in December 2016, in a newly refurbished space at Resource for London, Holloway Road. Many of the women Hibiscus supports have experienced multiple and compounding traumas, including 56% who are survivors of trafficking; so a welcoming women's only space is an essential starting point in feeling safe to engage with the service.

During the enforced transition to remote delivery during the final 18 months of the project, many women told us how much they missed being able to come to Women's Centre:

"Well the only thing I'm up to [looking forward to] is like to be comfortable and be safe so I can bring my daughter [to Hibiscus]. To play with kids ... with other moms to have a conversation to learn new things. Because I'm a mom, obviously. I know I'm home [at Hibiscus]. Just to have a good few hours a week to spend with other people and my baby playing because being an asylum seeker, you don't get many chances to go and take your daughter somewhere."

- Hibiscus client

Offering long-term support to women who may have to wait and fight for years to regularise their immigration status is a key feature of our service, with clients receiving on average between 18-24 months of individual casework support before exiting the service or transitioning to attend activities only. Another key element of the support is our culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approach. We ensure that we keep in mind that the women attending our Centre are at critical stages of their lives, with many experiencing ongoing difficulties with their immigration status, housing conditions, mental and physical health.

"They are empathetic, there is no judgement. The connection with them is a big help for me."

Over the course of five years Hibiscus has grown ever more strongly embedded in the local landscape of provision for women in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) across London. We are recognised as a vital specialist service for migrant women trapped in the CJS, and have been commissioned as a specialist provider for this client group in multiple partnership contracts. Referrals from these sources increased from 13% in year 2, up to 58% in year 5.

“Once Hibiscus became known to sentencers at Westminster Magistrates Court and the Probation Service, it was invaluable to have a member of the Hibiscus team speak to defendants in their own language on a one-to-one basis. This was in terms of defendants building up a level of trust with someone who had an understanding of cultural issues and potentially knew of the situation in their own country. [...]”

- Referral partner

Particular successes include the award-winning Protea Clinic partnership with King’s Legal Clinic and Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre; and the recent partnership with the Maya Centre to provide intercultural therapy to women Hibiscus supports, which we are now developing to offer a Black women’s psychoeducation group for Hibiscus and Maya Centre clients, based at Hibiscus Women’s Centre.

Women attending the Women’s Centre have been involved throughout the project in sharing their views and experiences, both within Hibiscus and with wider stakeholders. Notable examples include;

1. **“I AM A ROMA WOMAN” VIDEO**
Co-produced with Roma clients and professional filmmakers, about their experience of living in London (2017).
2. **“STILL NO WAY OUT” REPORT**
Hibiscus and PRT joint publication on the experiences of migrant women in the CJS (2018). Women took part in focus groups to inform the research, and in external events to publicise the findings, including a roundtable discussion at the House of Commons.
3. **“CLOSED DOORS” REPORT**
Report into the experiences of women in asylum accommodation, in partnership with Commonweal Housing (2020). Women contributed to the research, and shared their experiences at the report launch event and in national media coverage.
4. **“ROUNDTABLE” WITH LYN BROWN MP, A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR SHADOW JUSTICE TEAM**
Roundtable organised to inform on the obstacles and disadvantages experienced by Black, minoritised and migrant women in the Criminal Justice System, and the action plan to achieve change.



ANTI-RACISM WORK



At Hibiscus, we strive to become an anti-racist organisation.

We are an organisation committed to social justice and to providing specialised services to Black, minority ethnic and migrant women affected by the criminal justice and immigration systems.

We frequently see the impact of systemic racism experienced by Black individuals and communities in the UK, from policing and prisons to housing, education and the immigration system. Hibiscus was set up in 1986 to address these inequalities, in recognition of the levels of isolation, poor treatment and the lack of access to justice and services Black migrant women in HMP Holloway were experiencing. During the past 35 years, this

has been and remains core to our mission and, as the Black Lives Matter movement has shown, the need to pursue this work continues to be as urgent now as it was in 1986.

Hibiscus has developed an anti-racism intersectional action plan to address and tackle racism, and this was a collaborative work between Hibiscus staff, trustees and external consultants Marai Larasi and Dorett Johns.

Hibiscus is a signatory of to the anti-racism charter developed by EVAW (End Violence Against Women), and is committed to achieving actions set out including, centring anti-racism in our work, representative leadership and governance, and disrupting power and influence.

Hibiscus anti-racism intersectional action plan; some of the main points:



ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS

To ensure that the Hibiscus community (including people using the service, staff members, trustees and other stakeholders) are aware of the organisation's anti-racist roots and history.



STRATEGIC EMPHASIS

To actively re-centre Black African, Caribbean, and African heritage women within Hibiscus Initiatives work.



INTERSECTIONAL GAPS

To identify gaps in our policy and practice.



HR MATTERS

To review HR practices to ensure they are intersectional and anti-oppressive.



COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

To develop an internal communication strategy which sets agreed parameters including anti-oppressive communication, 'calling in' and 'calling out' and pathways for resolving challenges.



CENTRING ANTI-RACISM IN OUR WORK

To hold those in power accountable by raising issues of racism and intersectionality in the work we do.

INFLUENCE AND CHANGE

TACKLING DOUBLE DISADVANTAGE – 10 POINT ACTION PLAN FOR CHANGE



AIM

Hibiscus Initiatives, Agenda, Zahid Mubarek Trust, Muslim Women In Prison, Women In Prison and Criminal Justice Alliance have come together to drive progress in improving outcomes and reducing inequalities and discrimination against Black, minority, ethnic and migrant women in contact with the criminal justice system.

OBJECTIVE

Our partnership has worked together to develop an action plan with practical steps needed for meaningful change. This action plan has been created through direct engagement with women with lived experience in a series of thematic seminars exploring in-depth the challenges they face at different stages of the criminal justice system, from victimisation and policing in the community, to courts and sentencing, to prison, to probation and re-entering the community. The plan builds on the findings of the 2017 Double Disadvantage report, which was delivered by Agenda and Women in Prison as part of the Lammy Inquiry and Counted Out (Prison Reform Trust). The action plan also builds on the commitments of the Government’s Female Offender Strategy, to understand and meet the needs of women in prison.

ACTION ONE	ACTION TWO	ACTION THREE
<p>Train criminal justice staff on culture, ethnicity, race, faith, gender, and anti-racism to meet the multiple and intersecting needs of Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women.</p> <p>Women with lived experience:</p> <p><i>“So much shame and dishonour on my family for just being there”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t know whether it’s the colour of my skin or that I’m Muslim that I was treated differently”</i></p> <p><i>“I was treated like a dog!”</i></p> <p><i>“Training eliminates systematic racism in all sectors of the CJS”</i></p> <p><i>“Training needs to be consistent over all prisons”</i></p>	<p>Develop practical resources and guides for HO and MoJ staff on the rights of Black, Asian, minoritised, migrant women who have language barriers and require support in different languages or in easy read to incorporate their needs and ensure sentencers take into consideration their experiences throughout each stage of the CJS.</p> <p>Women with lived experience:</p> <p><i>“I didn’t get the chance to tell my story”</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of the ladies who are sentenced do not know what a pre-sentence report is”</i></p> <p><i>“Just not understanding the language of the solicitors and barristers”</i></p>	<p>Recruit Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women with lived experience in the CJS to become peer mentors and cultural mediators across the whole system.</p> <p>Women with lived experience:</p> <p><i>“Nobody was talking to me; I couldn’t understand what was going on”</i></p> <p><i>“The Officers don’t even want to speak to you because of the way you look”</i></p> <p><i>“We are not drug users, or drink alcohol so I was just left to it”</i></p> <p><i>“Should cover a range of complex needs”</i></p>

ACTION FOUR

In its annual report on 'Women in the Criminal Justice System', Ministry of Justice to identify and analyse in greater depth the key racial disparities in women's level and type of contact with the criminal justice system and experiences within the criminal justice system.

Women with lived experience:

"If I was white, I would be treated differently" "We get treated differently to white women in prison"

"Because I was dressed as a Muslim woman, I was treated differently"

"Our colour really matters in all situations" "When you're black it's like being a poison in the prison system"

ACTION FIVE

Ministry of Justice to end the use of disproportionate remands and custodial sentencing on Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women.

Women with lived experience:

"When you're on remand you have limited access to what's going on outside"

"I pleaded guilty to something I didn't do"

"I was in prison for four months for a crime I didn't know I committed, then I was released because of a lack of evidence"

ACTION SEVEN

Improve the effectiveness of current external scrutiny bodies to identify and challenge direct and indirect race, sex and religious discrimination.

Women with lived experience:

"I didn't know if I was allowed to practice my religion"

"I use my faith as a rehabilitation tool"

"Women are prayer on towels instead of headscarves"

ACTION NINE

Ensure accessibility of funding and commissioning mechanisms and procedures in all parts of the criminal justice system to achieve the wide participation of small and medium-sized, voluntary and specialist sector organisations.

Women with lived experience:

"Without the help of the specialist organisations, I wouldn't know my rights and what to do"

ACTION SIX

Identify gaps in the probation services for Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women with insecure immigration statuses.

Women with lived experience:

"If they have listened to me at the beginning, things would've been different"

"If the immigration system want to assassinate you, the probation system works to support this"

"Without the help of the specialist organisations, I wouldn't know my rights and what to do"

ACTION EIGHT

Ensure Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women and their individual circumstances are properly taken into consideration both by effective legal representation and Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs).

Women with lived experience:

"I didn't know how the system worked"

"I was not allowed to get in touch with my family"

"Each time the solicitor would talk to me they'll say, I'll speak to your family members"

ACTION TEN

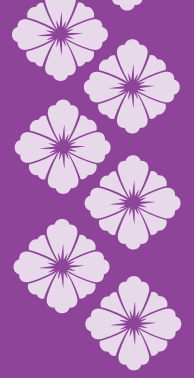
Address issues identified in the Farmer Review around strengthening family relationships (including with children) in prison and community to address the impact on Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women and their families and their specific needs around contact, mediation, and risk.

Women with lived experience:

"So much shame and dishonour on my family for just being there, so much pressure on me"

"They arrested my mum who had nothing to do with the case! Once they arrested my mum it broke me"

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM GROUP



In October 2021, Hibiscus launched an Intersectional Feminism Group at the Women’s Centre. The group was set to run every two weeks, and our clients responded with enthusiasm to this new initiative.

The Intersectional Feminism Group became very popular due to the themes that were centred in the discussion. Subjects such as the Nationality and Borders Bill and its effects on asylum seekers and refugees, education, disability, and mental health were among other topics discussed. At the beginning of the year, the session was focusing on the importance of making new resolutions to ask ourselves to reflect, improve, and change something about our lives, and more importantly, to keep us focused on our goals.



One particular subject that really engaged clients was mental health struggles during the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 6 workshops were organised around this theme. Our clients shared their experiences during the pandemic and the lockdown, and how difficult it was for many of them to cope. Issues such as isolation, abandonment, fear, loneliness, uncertainties about immigration cases (many court cases were postponed during lockdown), and the escalating and recrudescence of domestic abuse were recurrent challenges faced by Hibiscus clients. One client stated:

“I have never been so scared of losing my life than during the lockdown. I was subject to physical and emotional abuse by my partner. At some point, I was so exhausted that I was contemplating suicide.”

Nevertheless, group members shared that they felt supported and cared for during that unprecedented time. Hibiscus Initiatives staff organised quickly to support them with practical assistance such as phone top ups and food vouchers, and online activities and remote casework started taking place. Hibiscus also referred clients to different organisations for counselling and mental health support. The client mentioned earlier said: “within a week of my caseworker learning about my situation, I was moved to a refuge accommodation where for the first time during the pandemic, I felt safe and looked after. She was consistently ringing me to see how I was emotionally and physically. I can’t thank her enough”. However, some of the clients highlighted that they would have been happy to receive more information about the Covid-19 virus to avoid the disinformation they were exposed to from different sources such as on social media.

The success of this group means it will be a continuing feature on the Hibiscus Women’s Centre schedule, with trips to Parliament planned for next year, and the facilitation of client meetings with local MPs to discuss the challenges faced by migrant women in the UK today.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING WORK

HIBISCUS ANTI-TRAFFICKING GOAL 2024:

To contribute to the prevention of human trafficking across the globe and to be recognised nationally and internationally for our expertise and practical work with survivors of trafficking.

Relaunch of the Anti-Trafficking Steering Group at Hibiscus

The aim of the Anti-Trafficking Steering Group (ATSG) is to ensure that the different departments at Hibiscus work together and coordinate their response against Human Trafficking. The group will work towards these 5 lines of action:

1. PROVIDE A SPECIALISED SERVICE
2. DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
3. ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE
4. ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE
5. CENTRING WOMEN'S VOICES

Training resources/information

The ATSG has created a tailored training package for use internally at Hibiscus, as well as external organisations and government agencies to increase awareness, expertise, and knowledge about human trafficking and support for survivors of trafficking. It has information and specific details on indicators and types of exploitation, case studies of real stories, and support and help available.

Centering the voices of those with lived experience

A primary focus of this group is ensuring that we inform our work with the voices and experiences of the clients we work with.



NATIONALITY AND BORDERS BILL RALLY OCTOBER 2021

We facilitated a session for women to prepare posters and come together to be present at the rally, stand united in a position against the bill, and provide lived-experience testimony to the speakers.

FOCUS GROUP ON THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

A focus group facilitated for women who have experienced the NRM process. It provided a space for women to share their knowledge and the challenges and/or support they experienced while going through the National Referral Mechanism. There will be more focus group as participants expressed that they had more to share on this.

The insights from these focus groups will be taken forward by the policy team to provide feedback and answer calls for evidence by partner organisations and the government.

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS



Hibiscus Initiatives undertakes regular trips abroad to increase our understanding of the countries our clients are returning to and, to foster links and partnerships with organisations which can provide support to clients on their return with regards to resettlement and reintegration.

ALBANIA

Albania is currently trending as one of the main nationalities we are working with in Yarl's Wood and Heathrow Immigration Removal Centres. Hibiscus planned the trip with the idea of gaining deeper knowledge of the reasons Albanian people come to the UK and the resettlement issues they face on their return.

During our stay in Albania, Hibiscus met with the following organisations: AWEN, Caritas, IOM Albania, Vatra, Tjeter Vizion NGO, Different and Equal, Quendra Fokus, Mary Ward Foundation, AWS, Children's Human Rights Centre and The British Embassy. Hibiscus also met former clients who had already returned to Albania and listened to their stories and struggles.

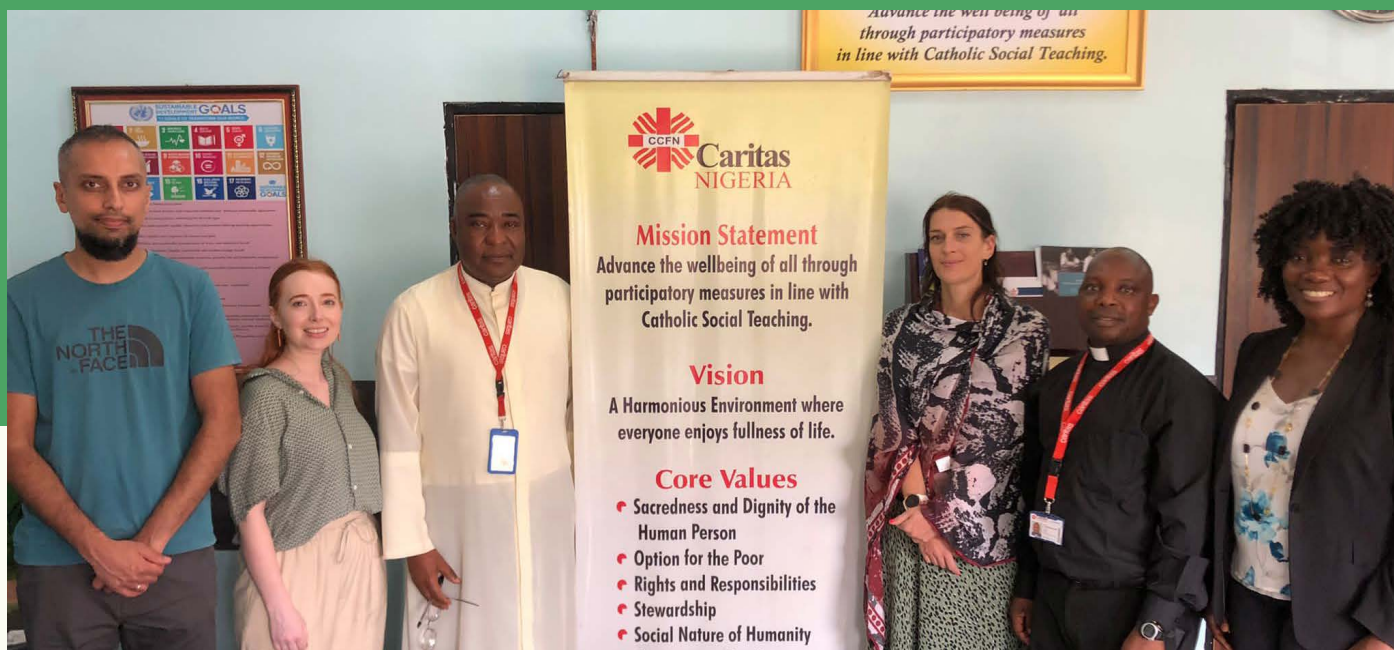
The conversations with clients and organisations working on the ground shed light on the scale of the trafficking issue in the country and the considerable risks faced by those returning to Albania having been trafficked. It also gave understanding on the familial and community stigma that often led to the rejection and isolation of returnees, and the serious mental and physical impacts of the trauma inherent to experiences of trafficking and the continual financial debt owed to traffickers. These risks were articulated by one client who told us;



“The things I have seen in British prison, I grew up by 10 years. I never want to see them again. I never want to go back. I should have never witnessed it. I was forced into cannabis farming, and I cannot unsee it. I am traumatised and no one understands.”

The widespread fear and concern of trafficking and modern-day slavery are palpable across communities and individuals in Albania. Yet, a promise of a better life or opportunities continues to present an appealing alternative to many. Education about the realities, dangers, and nature of deception inherent to trafficking was voiced by all as a critical need.

Many of the agencies and clients Hibiscus encountered, felt strongly that a safe and legal migration and work route would provide the most feasible solution to disentangling the trafficking cycles between the UK and Albania.



NIGERIA

Hibiscus organised a trip in March 2022 to explore the dynamics of 'push and pull' that our clients encounter between Nigeria and the UK. We also aimed to establish relationships with specialist resettlement organisations and support providers. Further, we wanted to reconnect with Nigeria as this is where Olga Heaven, Hibiscus' founder, began internationally working, supporting Nigerian nationals both there and in the UK.

Nigerian nationals traditionally constitute one of the top 5 nationalities in Hibiscus' International Resettlement project. Between April 2017 and June 2018, our International Resettlement team supported approximately 100 Nigerian clients. During our stay in Nigeria, we contacted many organisations and people including: The Centre of Youth Integrated Development, Web of Hearts Foundation, N.A.M.E Foundation, Idia Renaissance, Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons, The British High Commission, National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and Caritas Nigeria.

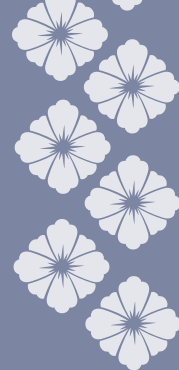
In our conversations and meetings with many organisations, it became apparent that many viewed Europe as a place to make money for their families. Most people are driven by 'the need for more' and are influenced by seeing others who return wealthy. In subsequence to this, many fear the huge stigma they may experience when returning home without financial success.

Human trafficking was and still is very prominent. For those unfortunate individuals who are lured by traffickers, they are often bound by 'debts' to the traffickers. Nosa Erhunmwunsee, the N.A.M.E Foundation director, gave examples of women owing \$30,000 (US) and taking 8 years to pay off the debt. Also, issues of overcoming trauma and feelings of isolation and abandonment need to be addressed to improve returnees' chances of successfully resettling.

Nevertheless, out of the myriad of problems surrounding returning and human trafficking, we saw some promising resettlement initiatives developing in Nigeria. Skills training centres are being opened and the provision of safe accommodation for women is being advanced. The resettlement of Nigerian returnees is high on the Nigerian Government's agenda, and the collaboration between NGOs and statutory agencies to tackle the issue is encouraging.



TRAINING AT HIBISCUS



Hibiscus has a long history of providing training to stakeholders and institutions. The primary goal of these trainings is to provide practitioners and professionals with an understanding of how to support migrant people at the intersection of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Systems.

The primary goal is to provide an understanding of how to support migrant people.

These training packages raise awareness about the experiences of migrant people, and how individuals can support them through the systems they are going through.

We believe by skilling up professionals, we can improve the experiences of migrant people. In the past year we have provided various training to women's center organization in the community, prison and immigration officers.

We have developed these trainings in consultation with women with lived experience of the Immigration and Criminal Justice System. Our trainings are interactive and combine practical activities with real case studies, valuable information and tools to implement at work. They provide a variety of resources and materials that can be put into practice in different settings.

Our training provide learning about:

- 1 THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND HOW IT IMPACTS MIGRANT PEOPLE**
- 2 HOW BEST TO SUPPORT RACIALLY MINORITISED AND MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS**
- 3 CULTURAL MEDIATION AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT IN THE WORK YOU DO**
- 4 MODERN SLAVERY AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING**

OUR PEOPLE

OUR STAFF MEMBERS

Abdul Ahmed, Amanda Williams, Amy Mills, Andrea Dodd, Divya Emmi, Elena Brihan, Esther Oke, Evgenia Lliadou, Faye Naylor, Isaac Quaye, Izabela Ignatowska, Joanne Potter, Julie-Anne Ntege, Julie Shaw, Kanika Phillip, Kerry Smith, Lashan Steadman, Liezel Kühn Keyser, Mercy Chieza, Monica Ortiz, Priscille Manga, Purdy Sutcliffe, Rakie Ceesay, Seika Aziz, Silvia Berastegui, Simona Blaj and Valbona Mejzini.



OUR TRUSTEES

Rachel Youngman (Chair), Michael Greenwood (Treasurer), Anne Langton, Anne Stephens, Annette So, Erika-Maria Szasz, Klara Skrivankova, Liz Hogarth, Louise Swan, Margaret Crisell, Rosalyn Akar, Roz Morrison and Sara Khan.



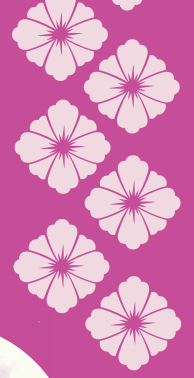
OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Marchu Girma (CEO), Mufeedah Bustin (Director of Operations), Hazel Alcraft (Head of Community & Prison Services), Ghadah Alnasseri (Head of Policy and Public Affairs) and Waseem Saghir (Head of International Resettlement & Detention Services)



Special mention to former staff members who contributed to Hibiscus work between April 2021 and March 2022: Blodina Rakovica, Chloe Geoghegan, Justė Marcinkevičiūtė, Katrina Struthers, Keira Johnson, Kelly O'Sullivan, Louise Hatch and Shmailish Anwar.

LOOKING AT THE FUTURE



35

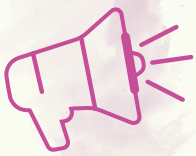
Hibiscus will continue to celebrate our 35th anniversary, through our heritage project and a celebratory event in October 2022.



We will launch our new website and a new animation to increase awareness about the work Hibiscus does, and to demonstrate the new direction of our strategy and work for the next five years.



We will finalise our strategy, theory of change and share with our stakeholders, and look to become a much more impact led organisation, with centring lived experience at the heart of the work we do.



We will work collaboratively with existing and new partners to develop our policy work, including sharing our data, developing new research, and ensuring the voices of migrant women are at the centre.



We will make progress on actioning our 'Intersectional anti-racism action plan'.



We will strengthen our impact measurement, by focusing on collecting data that demonstrates our impact. We will work with Trust Impact to support this process.



We will revitalise our operations department through investing in financial experts.



We plan to undertake an international trip to Ghana, to build our networks of charities that can support those who are being returned to Ghana.

5Rs

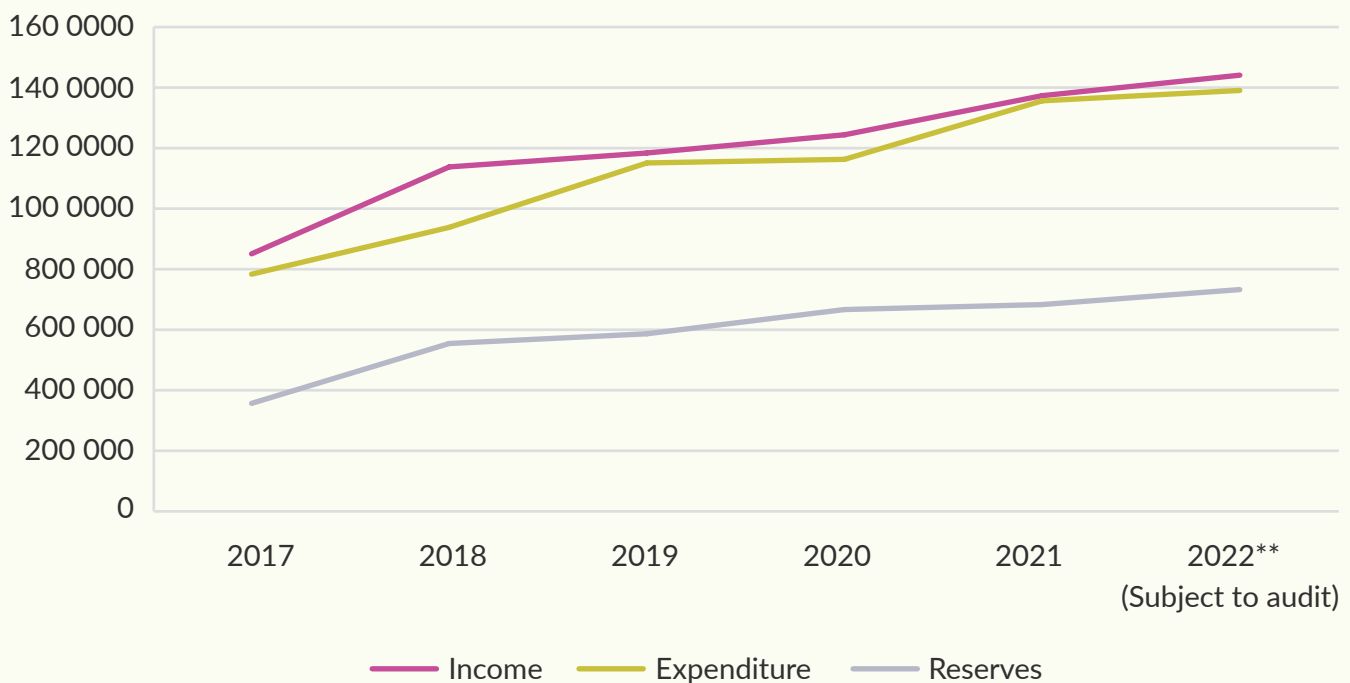
We will reflect on our 5R strategic themes, Recovery, Resilience, Reconnect, Reimagine, as it comes to an end, and share our achievements.

FINANCES

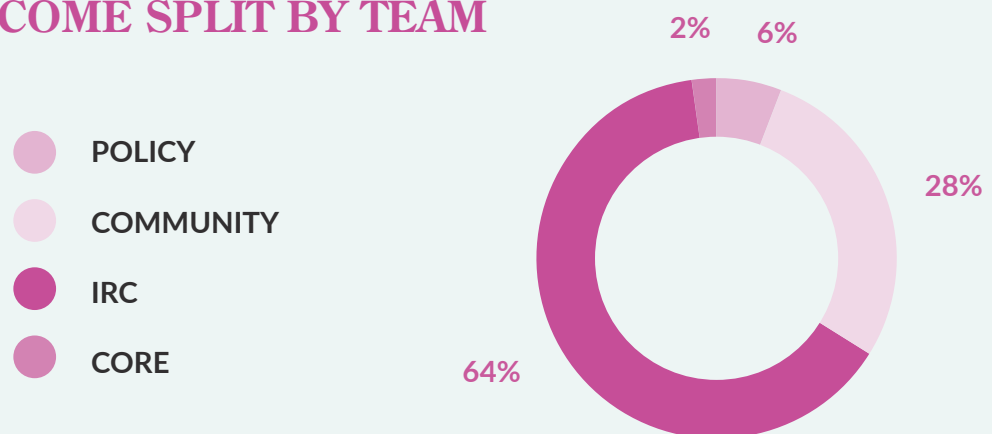
Our financial year ends on 31st March 2022 and, at the time of publication, our Report & Accounts had not been finalised. Subject to audit, we anticipate reporting an income and expenditure of £1.4M, with a reserve position of £700K for 2021-22.

The graphs below show how our income has grown in the last 5 years, and the income for our services in the last financial year divided by teams.

5 YEAR INCOME GROWTH



2021-22** INCOME SPLIT BY TEAM



Our annual accounts are available online with the Charities Commission and Companies House, and our 2021-22 Report & Accounts will be published there in due course.

We would like to extend a thank you to our funders for their continuous support.

