

# Ubuntu Women Shelter

Biennial Report 2018 - 2020



*The womxn we support  
are not statistics on a page,  
they are not represented  
by numbers and graphs.*

*We intend to share their stories  
through the lens of our work,  
wit(h)nessing their experiences  
that are too often ignored.*

## **Acknowledgements**

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Edited & produced by Loa Pour Mirza, Sumac McEwan Antezana, Aimee Skelton & Nico Novatore



## **Shaun Mitchell**

(26/4/1980 – 21/4/2020)

We mourn you: our comrade, our friend, our fellow warrior.

You fought the good fight.

Your infinite kindness, the memory of your deep laughter, your wisdom beyond time and your beautiful voice mark your passing with a flight of a rare 'blues' butterfly.





## Aims, Ethos & Mission Statement

We are a womxn\*-centred feminist organization 'led by and for' womxn who have experienced the injustice and violence of border regimes

*We provide practical support and offer unconditional support* for destitute womxn who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and insecure immigration status in Scotland

*We challenge and resist* policy and institutional practices that perpetuate disbelief, deny and erase the continuing harm and trauma of slavery and colonization

*We stand witness* to the continuing state violence against womxn with NRPF through the structural denial of their human rights to work, education, safe housing, autonomy and dignity

*We redirect, disrupt, and destabilize* material flows that legitimize the extraction of economic value from womxn with NRPF, as reparations for historical harms and trauma

**\*womxn: inclusive of natal/cis womxn, trans women, non-binary people, people outside of gender categorization, intersex people, and other identifications that are non-cis-male, butch womxn and womxn who define themselves as 'masculine' - this is not definitive and will be reviewed regularly.**



## Chair's Statement

We salute the memory of our friend Adnan Olben from Syria who we lost two weeks ago. The impact of the government's response to COVID-19 on people of colour reveals unspoken truths that we will need years to tell.

Initially, we were concerned by the insidious appeal to 'social' rather than 'physical distancing' by the UK government. We expected differential impacts on visible people of colour, marked out as the cause of everything wrong in the lives of the poor in estates and closes across Glasgow. We knew that the most severe consequences would fall on womxn with no recourse to public funds. We thought we were prepared. With some deft planning and no fanfare we launched our COVID hot food and basic necessities frontline delivery service two weeks after lockdown was announced. In the process of delivering food and toiletries across the city, we were shocked by the speed with which COVID-19 unravelled the pretense of civilization.


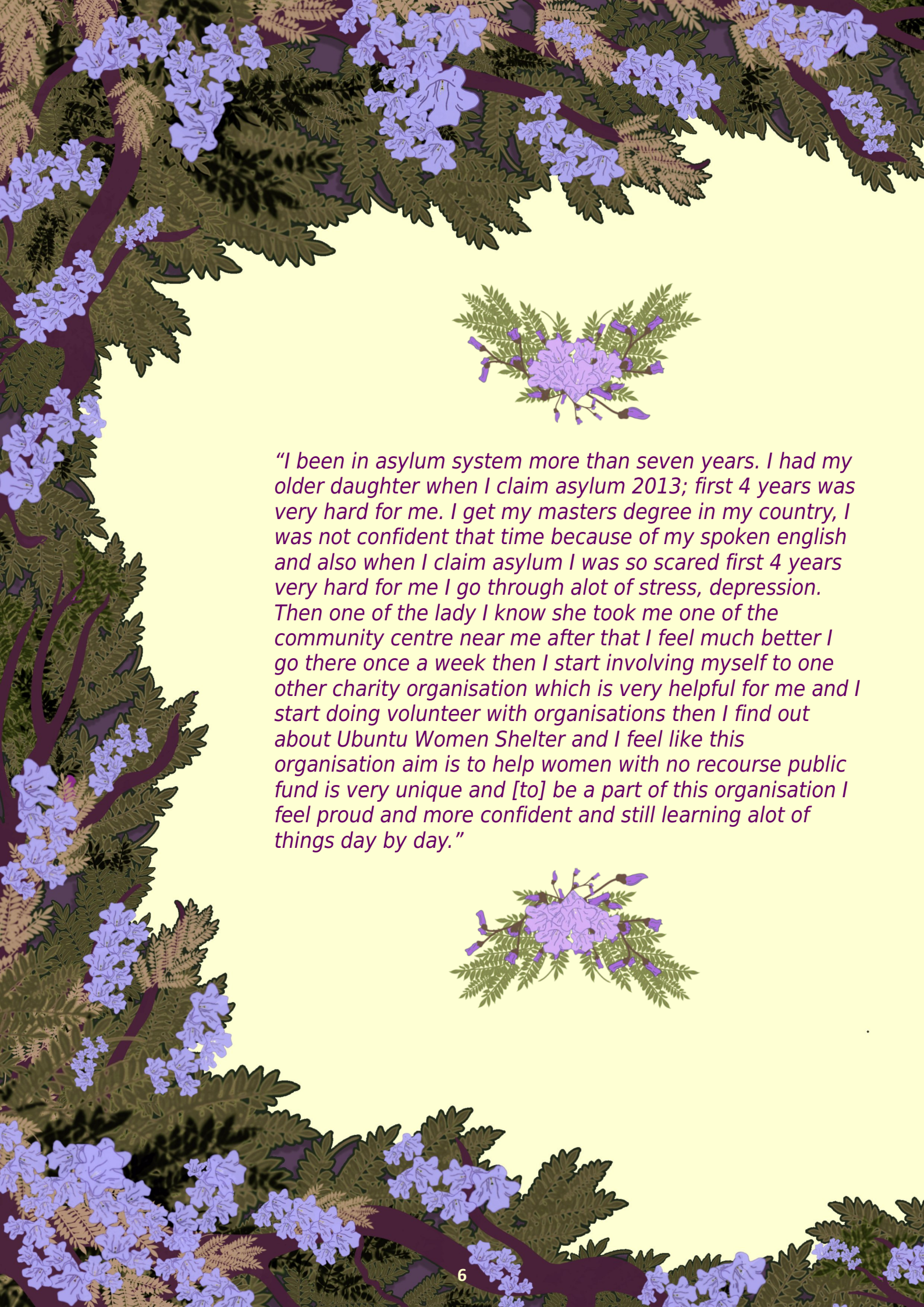
In the sixth richest country of the planet, we saw families starving and young mothers with no baby food or nappies. We learned that poverty as state violence has an inexorable stench and dampness that tarnishes the underclasses hiding in plain sight. We see how centuries of denial of racial dehumanisation, and a refusal to repair historical harms has come full

circle. This denial deafens, silences, blinds us to deprivation: on the council estates, precarious lives that are hidden behind sterile Euclidean geometry, the morbid aesthetic of pastel colored cladding. What we see in our rounds is the meticulously precise, racially blind, circular logic of widespread and deep intergenerational poverty. The rot of slavery and colonisation designed to demean, dehumanize and mark out black and brown people was unsheathing in our city. All the while we were oblivious. Our buying frenzies oiled conveyor belts that magicked up shiny new commodities while we fed on Deliveroo delights. As expected, we mimed elaborate, virtual, social interaction; unconsciously keeping the underpaid black and brown bodies from our carefully curated performances of productivity.


Yet, like sage smoke cutting through the stench, we also see resistance, survival, resilience and strength. Our hearts etched with pictures of bright yellow suns and blue skies, we rush masked and gloved as lullabies from distant lands echo through the winding stairways of empty closes as old as time. Womxn everywhere, offering clarity in chaos, unflinchingly gazing into the abyss, teach us over and over again the simple truth of being human.







*"I been in asylum system more than seven years. I had my older daughter when I claim asylum 2013; first 4 years was very hard for me. I get my masters degree in my country, I was not confident that time because of my spoken english and also when I claim asylum I was so scared first 4 years very hard for me I go through alot of stress, depression. Then one of the lady I know she took me one of the community centre near me after that I feel much better I go there once a week then I start involving myself to one other charity organisation which is very helpful for me and I start doing volunteer with organisations then I find out about Ubuntu Women Shelter and I feel like this organisation aim is to help women with no recourse public fund is very unique and [to] be a part of this organisation I feel proud and more confident and still learning alot of things day by day."*



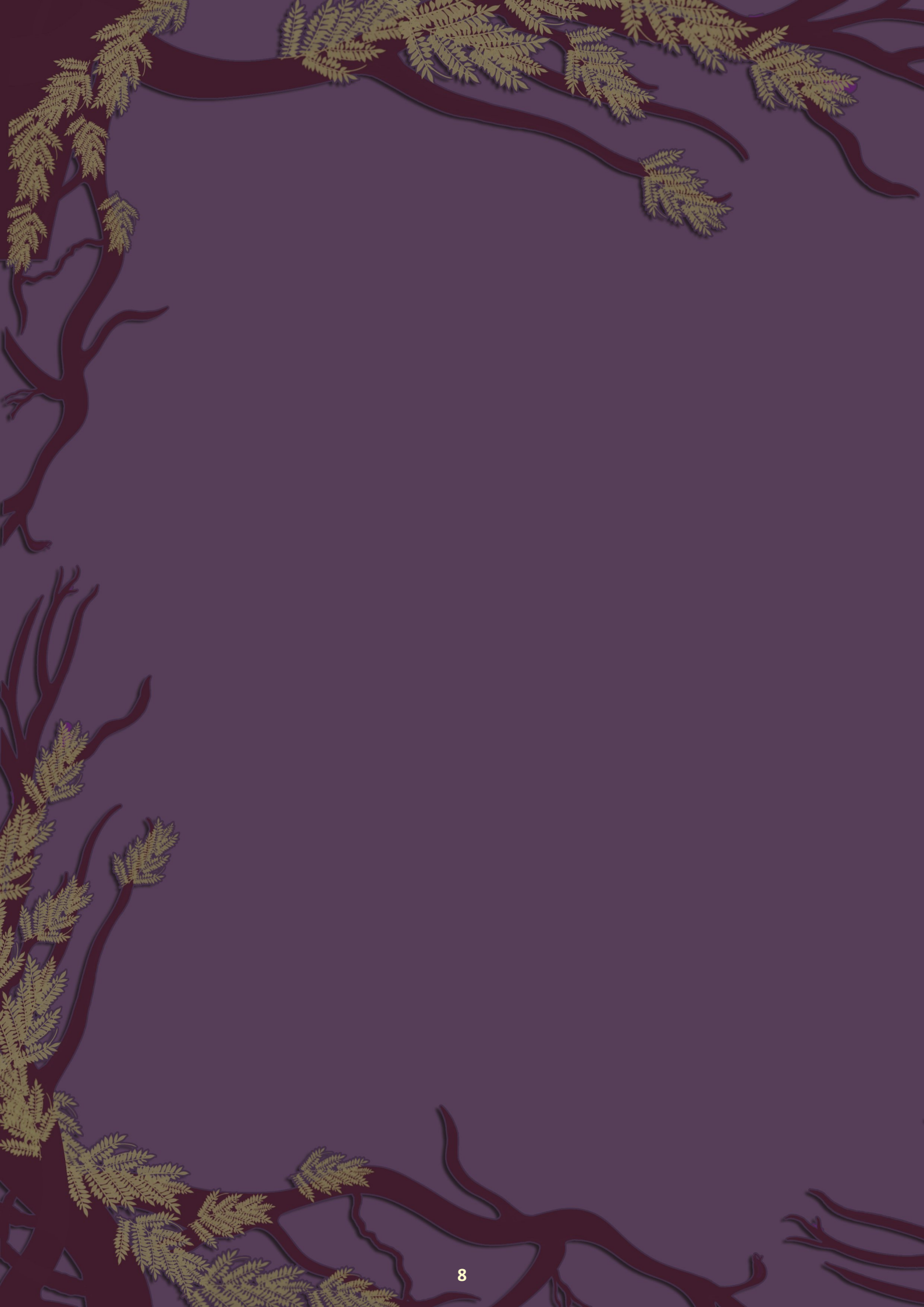


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# The Ubuntu Team





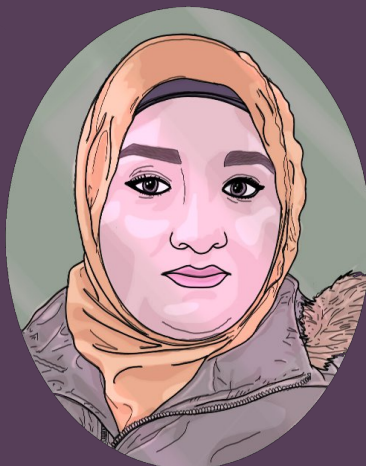
## Trustees

As trustees, Dania, Fatou, and Rosie's role is first and foremost to be the 'guardians of purpose', ensuring that all decisions put the needs of the beneficiaries at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to safeguard the charity's assets: both physical (like property), and intangible (like reputation). We ensure long-term financial sustainability and the achievement of our vision.



## Casework Coach

Janice provides some practical destitution support in Otjiherero and English. She trains our volunteers, reimburses their costs, and holds the drop-in space as needed.



## Operations Officer

Loa is responsible for the management of staff, team building, guiding the team through the restructuring with a focus on technical/ programmatic requirements, compliance with applicable policies and regulations, and administrative tasks.



## Community Development Lead

Aleena brings to life our gatherings, events, and meetings for the womxn in our care and our community. She also provides destitution support in both Urdu and English.





### Caseworkers

Sumac and Lorna provide both emergency destitution support and longer-term psychosocial wrap-around services for womxn in Ubuntu's care.

### UNTIED Coordinator

Jude is currently developing this program to provide 1-to-1 counselling for womxn with experience of destitution. She is a BACP certified counsellor and has over seven years counselling experience working predominantly in the field of perinatal depression with new parents, including asylum seekers and refugees learning English.



### Volunteers

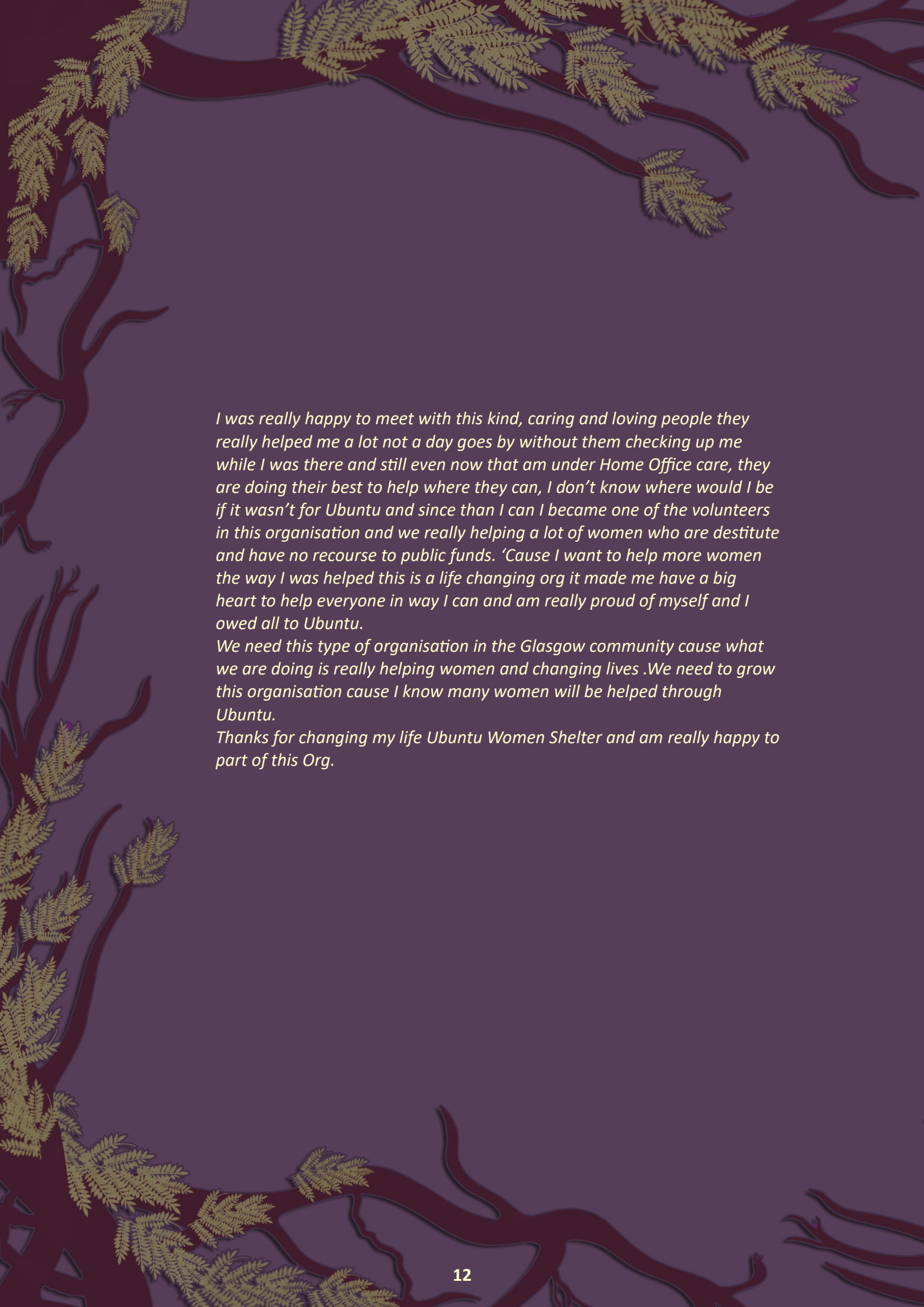
Our volunteers, Nico, Aimee and Kirsten have been instrumental in coordinating our food and essential items delivery during the period of lockdown, in addition to their usual social media presence and community engagement.



### Web Developer

Nosheen played a vital role in setting up our emails, designing and updating our website.





*I was really happy to meet with this kind, caring and loving people they really helped me a lot not a day goes by without them checking up me while I was there and still even now that am under Home Office care, they are doing their best to help where they can, I don't know where would I be if it wasn't for Ubuntu and since than I can I became one of the volunteers in this organisation and we really helping a lot of women who are destitute and have no recourse to public funds. 'Cause I want to help more women the way I was helped this is a life changing org it made me have a big heart to help everyone in way I can and am really proud of myself and I owed all to Ubuntu.*

*We need this type of organisation in the Glasgow community cause what we are doing is really helping women and changing lives .We need to grow this organisation cause I know many women will be helped through Ubuntu.*


*Thanks for changing my life Ubuntu Women Shelter and am really happy to part of this Org.*



# Who We Are







Our name is derived from the Nguni Bantu term meaning "I am because we are", and we use the word 'shelter' as a *verb* – thus no apostrophe. Ubuntu Women Shelter (Ubuntu for short) is a charity led and managed by womxn of color and our allies who have experienced asylum, migration and destitution. We are all trained asylum, immigration and destitution support case workers. **We have proudly developed a specialist, non-judgmental, self-referral emergency destitution support service.** We manage an office and a shelter (called Shaun's Home) as safe spaces to accommodate womxn whose needs are not being met by state agencies and existing non-specialist charities.

Ubuntu's core service is the provision of short-term emergency accommodation in Shaun's Home, an asset we have acquired, refurbished and maintained for the needs for the following:

- Non-EEA womxn with limited leave to remain, including students, womxn on spouse visas fleeing domestic violence and abuse, and womxn pending final resolution of their asylum/immigration claims
- Womxn with regular migration status (including EEA womxn) who face delays in accessing housing benefits and welfare services
- Non- binary folks and all womxn (cis and trans) including sex workers
- Womxn of all faiths, spiritual and religious persuasions

Since our registration, we have supported 42 women **directly** (accommodation, lawyer and court support, emotional and psychosocial support, support letters) and 62 women **indirectly** (social events, artist residencies, monthly free community meals, resilience training, yoga, herbal and bodywork interventions).

We regret that we do not have any permanent staff. We currently have 6 trained freelancers (including some on hourly paid contracts), an external accountant, and a pair of hands-on SCIO board members. Over the last two years, our board has benefitted from the input of a wide range of experts with relevant life experience: an economics professor, a social worker, community activists, campaigners, professional artists, and our Chair who is a former lawyer and presently a law academic.

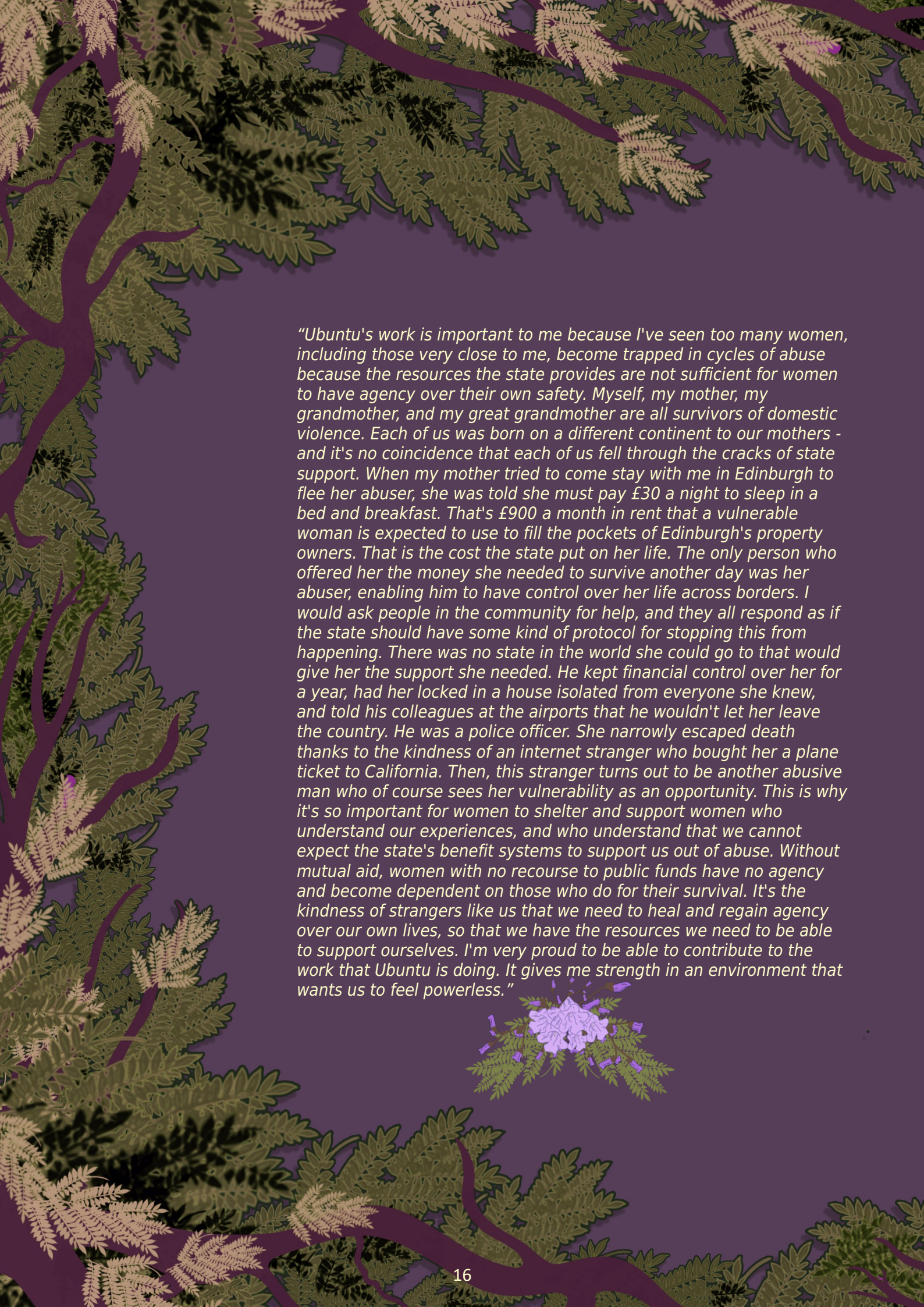
We recently recruited three volunteers to focus on supplementing our social media, direct support, campaigning, awareness raising and community development. We also

have a BACP certified, in-house counsellor developing a trauma-informed destitution counselling initiative to be rolled out in autumn.

We are a No Borders organisation and have successfully raised funds via private donors who are impressed by our work. Spending is prioritized thusly: first, to sustain our safe space (fixed and running costs of maintaining Shaun's Home and office) and second, to build up internal capacity through training and support. Our outreach and community building activities are sustained by local partners such as the Unity Centre, Radical Herbal Network, CCA, the Art School, Arika and the Transmission Gallery. We are part of the Northern Black Feminist Network of solidarity and support.








*“Ubuntu's work is important to me because I've seen too many women, including those very close to me, become trapped in cycles of abuse because the resources the state provides are not sufficient for women to have agency over their own safety. Myself, my mother, my grandmother, and my great grandmother are all survivors of domestic violence. Each of us was born on a different continent to our mothers - and it's no coincidence that each of us fell through the cracks of state support. When my mother tried to come stay with me in Edinburgh to flee her abuser, she was told she must pay £30 a night to sleep in a bed and breakfast. That's £900 a month in rent that a vulnerable woman is expected to use to fill the pockets of Edinburgh's property owners. That is the cost the state put on her life. The only person who offered her the money she needed to survive another day was her abuser, enabling him to have control over her life across borders. I would ask people in the community for help, and they all respond as if the state should have some kind of protocol for stopping this from happening. There was no state in the world she could go to that would give her the support she needed. He kept financial control over her for a year, had her locked in a house isolated from everyone she knew, and told his colleagues at the airports that he wouldn't let her leave the country. He was a police officer. She narrowly escaped death thanks to the kindness of an internet stranger who bought her a plane ticket to California. Then, this stranger turns out to be another abusive man who of course sees her vulnerability as an opportunity. This is why it's so important for women to shelter and support women who understand our experiences, and who understand that we cannot expect the state's benefit systems to support us out of abuse. Without mutual aid, women with no recourse to public funds have no agency and become dependent on those who do for their survival. It's the kindness of strangers like us that we need to heal and regain agency over our own lives, so that we have the resources we need to be able to support ourselves. I'm very proud to be able to contribute to the work that Ubuntu is doing. It gives me strength in an environment that wants us to feel powerless.”*



# The Ubuntu Story







Like all life-affirming and sustaining ideas, Ubuntu was conceived around a kitchen table. An examination as to why there was no designated shelter for destitute<sup>1</sup> womxn with no recourse to public funds<sup>2</sup> (NRPF) and unclear immigration status was conducted by a group of friends around a pot of hot curry and rice. We knew then, as we find continuously in our present work, that many migrant womxn are not allowed to work in the UK and have no access to housing and benefits. There are those in the asylum process who have lost access to Home Office support and housing, and are left without signposting to the relief and care available from charities, family, or more informal groups. This could be due to errors in the processing of claims, claimants having their appeal rights exhausted, poor legal representation, or extended periods of time between the rejection of an asylum claim and the submission of a fresh one. It was no coincidence that we met frequently around that dinner table in 2017 as the 'hostile environment' was being enforced across the UK and austerity was ravaging womxn's shelters across the country.

It is also no coincidence that we, former and current members of the Unity Centre, found ourselves gathered in the second largest dispersal city outside of London. Glasgow's grassroots activism has long been germinating, unknown to the surveillance state or the extractive, outsourced private sector. We found ourselves among comrades who, over the years, not only witnessed the brutalising impact of immigration

1. The definition used here is that of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. A person is destitute if: 'a. he does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his other essential living needs are met); or b. he has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his other essential living needs.' ('How to improve support and services for destitute migrants' by Heather Petch, John Perry and Sue Lukes. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, July 2015 [www.irf.org.uk](http://www.irf.org.uk))

In immigration law there are 5 categories of destitute people with 'no recourse to public funds' these are: Non EEA with limited leave to remain. For example students, spouses of UK nationals, tourists; most asylum seekers pending a final resolution of their asylum claims (they are excluded from accessing homelessness services, welfare services and access to housing). Once refugee status is granted, individuals are no longer NRPF but there are considerable delays in accessing benefits leaving them temporarily destitute); Undocumented migrants who have no evidence regarding their status and are thus classified as NRPF by default; UK citizens who are similarly undocumented and finally persons with leave to remain but who have lost access to housing benefits and welfare. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015)



control first-hand but also developed grounded, invaluable strategies of resistance and subversion. These are networks that continue to sustain and nourish us.

What left a bad taste in our mouths was that existing destitution services in Glasgow do not provide user-led services that cater to the intersectional needs of womxn categorised as NRPF. Challenges in starting up a specialist service from scratch arose from the milieu of collective amnesia around reparations to address the historical harms of slavery and colonisation. As a group of migrant womxn, we were expected to 'slot in', and become grist for the mill of capitalist accumulation and dispossession. The mills grind efficiently, silently generating surplus value at the intersection where the invisible poor rub up against visible economies of production. The hostile environment is designed to direct black and ethnic minority migrants into this intersection. People fleeing persecution and violence are funneled into generating GDP for new economies of visible production, proliferating as detention centres, deportations and other Home Office subcontracts. We witnessed inter-racial suspicion, aggression, fear and violence to our work. To subvert it, we chose to perceive this historical erasure and oversight of intergenerational poverty as an opportunity for new alliances to branch out into estates across Glasgow.

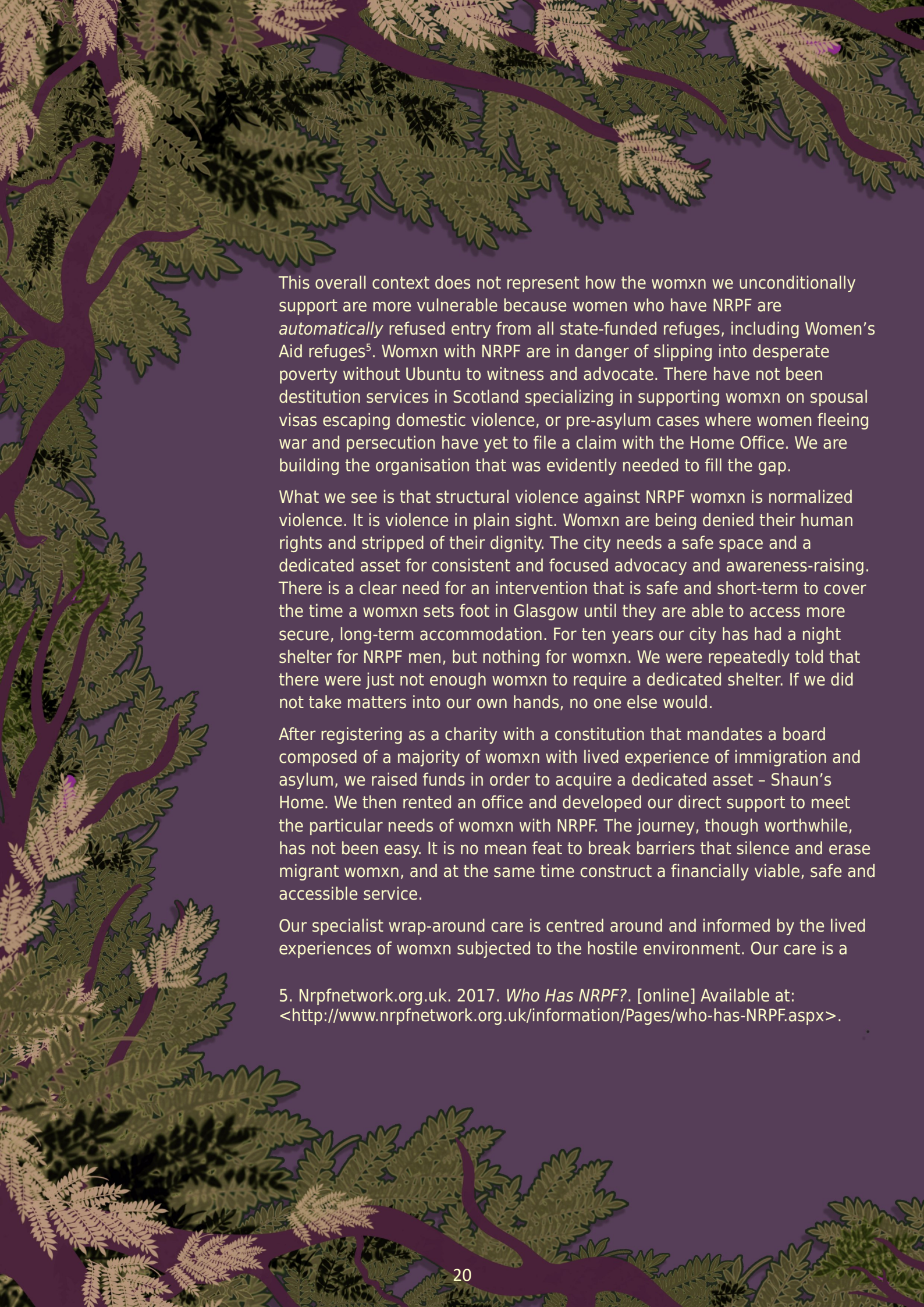
All our endeavors are occurring at a point in the UK when funding to women's services have been cut by over £7 million since 2010<sup>3</sup>, with the majority of local authorities cutting funding to women's services. BAME women's refuges have disproportionately been impacted by these cuts, forcing many to close. On just one day in 2017, 94 women and 90 children were turned away from refuges<sup>4</sup>. 60% of all referrals to refuges were declined in 2016-17, normally due to a lack of available space<sup>4</sup>.

3. Grierson, J., 2018. Council Funding For Women's Refuges Cut By Nearly £7M Since 2010. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/mar/23/council-funding-womens-refuges-cut-since-2010-england-wales-scotland>>.

4. Women's Aid, 2017. Briefing On Supported Housing Reforms. SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives Campaign. [online] Bristol: Women's Aid Federation of England. Available at: <<https://1q7dqy2unor827bjlls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SOS-Supported-Housing-Briefing-November-2017-1.pdf>>.







This overall context does not represent how the womxn we unconditionally support are more vulnerable because women who have NRPF are *automatically* refused entry from all state-funded refuges, including Women's Aid refuges<sup>5</sup>. Womxn with NRPF are in danger of slipping into desperate poverty without Ubuntu to witness and advocate. There have not been destitution services in Scotland specializing in supporting womxn on spousal visas escaping domestic violence, or pre-asylum cases where women fleeing war and persecution have yet to file a claim with the Home Office. We are building the organisation that was evidently needed to fill the gap.

What we see is that structural violence against NRPF womxn is normalized violence. It is violence in plain sight. Womxn are being denied their human rights and stripped of their dignity. The city needs a safe space and a dedicated asset for consistent and focused advocacy and awareness-raising. There is a clear need for an intervention that is safe and short-term to cover the time a womxn sets foot in Glasgow until they are able to access more secure, long-term accommodation. For ten years our city has had a night shelter for NRPF men, but nothing for womxn. We were repeatedly told that there were just not enough womxn to require a dedicated shelter. If we did not take matters into our own hands, no one else would.

After registering as a charity with a constitution that mandates a board composed of a majority of womxn with lived experience of immigration and asylum, we raised funds in order to acquire a dedicated asset – Shaun's Home. We then rented an office and developed our direct support to meet the particular needs of womxn with NRPF. The journey, though worthwhile, has not been easy. It is no mean feat to break barriers that silence and erase migrant womxn, and at the same time construct a financially viable, safe and accessible service.

Our specialist wrap-around care is centred around and informed by the lived experiences of womxn subjected to the hostile environment. Our care is a

5. Nrpfnetwork.org.uk. 2017. *Who Has NRPF?*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information/Pages/who-has-NRPF.aspx>>.



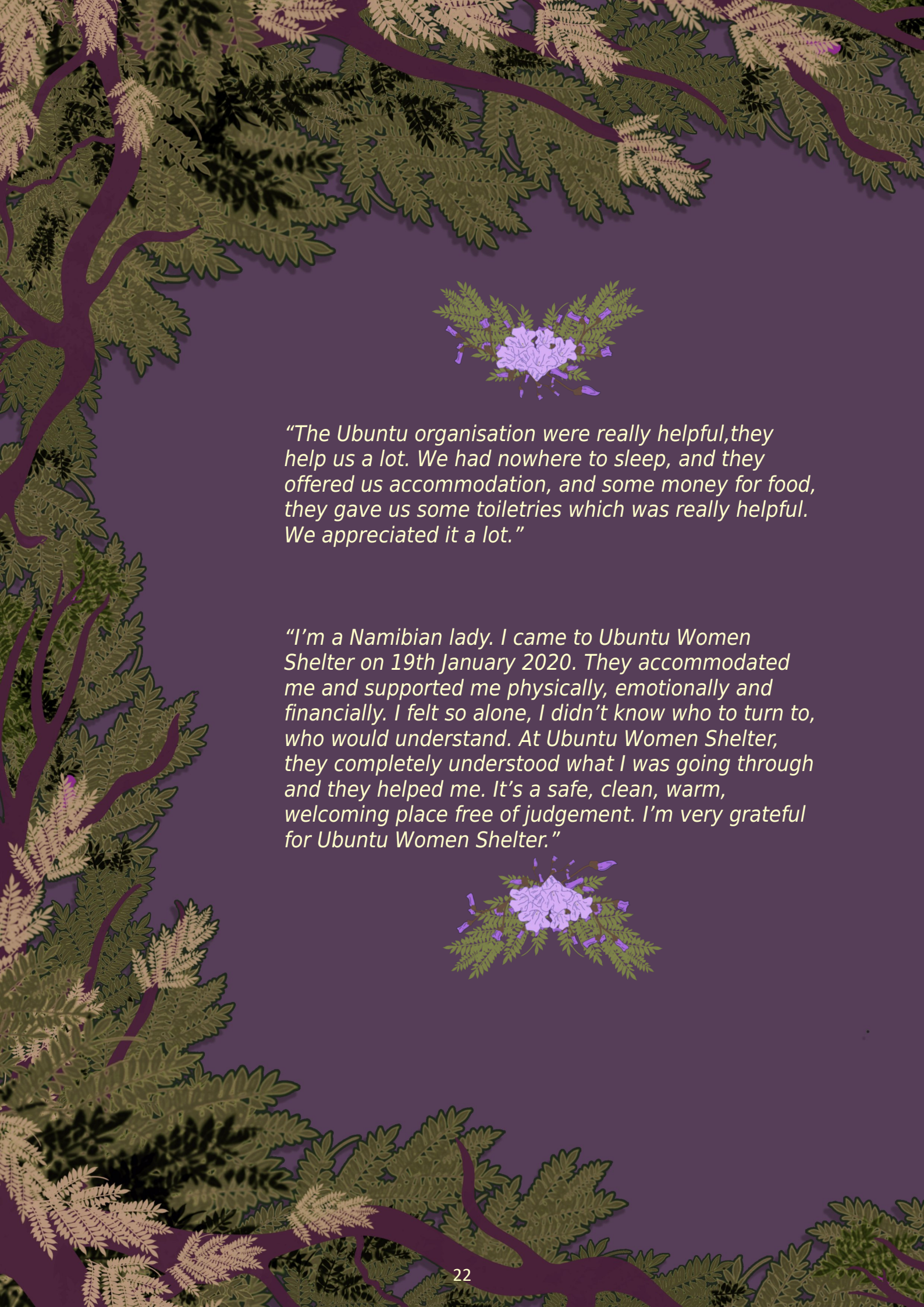
form of constructive, ongoing solidarity and subversion of poverty resulting from UK government policies. In our work we focus on the four main pillars of the hostile environment – *immigration destitution*, the *NRPF stipulation*, *indefinite detention* and *exclusionary labour-market restrictions*.



From 'Let Me Hold You' Residency







*“The Ubuntu organisation were really helpful, they help us a lot. We had nowhere to sleep, and they offered us accommodation, and some money for food, they gave us some toiletries which was really helpful. We appreciated it a lot.”*

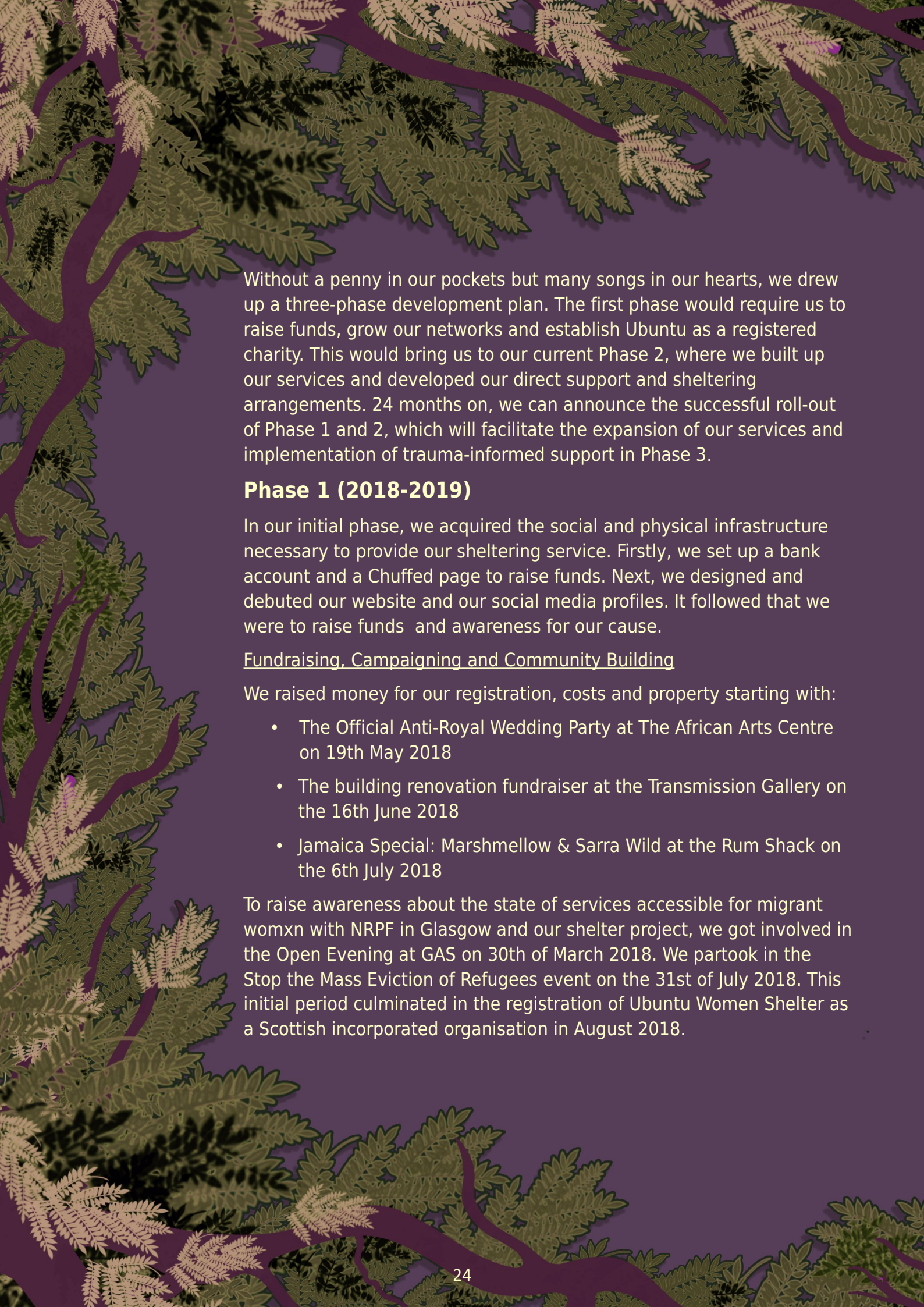
*“I’m a Namibian lady. I came to Ubuntu Women Shelter on 19th January 2020. They accommodated me and supported me physically, emotionally and financially. I felt so alone, I didn’t know who to turn to, who would understand. At Ubuntu Women Shelter, they completely understood what I was going through and they helped me. It’s a safe, clean, warm, welcoming place free of judgement. I’m very grateful for Ubuntu Women Shelter.”*



# What We Have Achieved So Far







Without a penny in our pockets but many songs in our hearts, we drew up a three-phase development plan. The first phase would require us to raise funds, grow our networks and establish Ubuntu as a registered charity. This would bring us to our current Phase 2, where we built up our services and developed our direct support and sheltering arrangements. 24 months on, we can announce the successful roll-out of Phase 1 and 2, which will facilitate the expansion of our services and implementation of trauma-informed support in Phase 3.

### **Phase 1 (2018-2019)**

In our initial phase, we acquired the social and physical infrastructure necessary to provide our sheltering service. Firstly, we set up a bank account and a Chuffed page to raise funds. Next, we designed and debuted our website and our social media profiles. It followed that we were to raise funds and awareness for our cause.

#### Fundraising, Campaigning and Community Building

We raised money for our registration, costs and property starting with:

- The Official Anti-Royal Wedding Party at The African Arts Centre on 19th May 2018
- The building renovation fundraiser at the Transmission Gallery on the 16th June 2018
- Jamaica Special: Marshmellow & Sarra Wild at the Rum Shack on the 6th July 2018

To raise awareness about the state of services accessible for migrant womxn with NRPF in Glasgow and our shelter project, we got involved in the Open Evening at GAS on 30th of March 2018. We partook in the Stop the Mass Eviction of Refugees event on the 31st of July 2018. This initial period culminated in the registration of Ubuntu Women Shelter as a Scottish incorporated organisation in August 2018.



Glasgow Refugee and Asylum Seeker Solidarity (GRASS) raised money for us through their fundraiser 'Shake It' at Broadcast on the 1st of November 2018. The South Lanarkshire & East Renfrewshire Women's Aid also hosted a fundraising event on the 9th of December 2018 (as a part of the 16 Days of Activism) with all proceeds going to us. On November 23rd 2018, Ubuntu Women Shelter took part in 'Fight For the Night,' a campaign in solidarity with survivors of rape and sexual assault demanding action to make our streets safer. At the event, Ubuntu Women Shelter volunteers Sumaira and Nabuweya White led talks on the brutal effects of NRPF on womxn, and we hosted a stall at Strathclyde University Union to raise awareness and fundraise. On 6th May 2019, Gryffe High School secured £3,000 from the YPI Grant for Ubuntu Women Shelter. The students raised awareness and fostered conversation surrounding asylum and the immigration system with their peers and their community to collect donations.





We hosted a stall at the Garnethill Village Gaitherin' on 26th of May 2019 to discuss the work that we do and ways in which the community can support us. The wide variety of events that we partake in is a reflection of commitment in engaging with Glasgow's society about how the hostile environment impacts womxn with NRPF.



Further examples of our advocacy work are our recurring community meals, where we invite womxn from the community to join us for a hot meal and conversation. These have taken place at the Art School and more recently, at the West End Community Centre in collaboration with the Scotland-Zambia partnership. The purpose of these meals is to reduce the isolation that many new arrivals feel by creating a space whereby the womxn we support can meet other people in the community and extend their social networks.



## **'Let Me Hold You' at Transmission Gallery**

From the 24th-30th March 2019, Ubuntu Women Shelter held a week-long residency as part of Transmission Gallery's with resident artist Raman Mundair: an Indian born, queer, British Asian intersectional feminist and activist. She is the award winning author of *Lovers, Liars, Conjurors and Thieves*, *A Choreographer's Cartography*, *The Algebra of Freedom* and editor for *incoming - Some Shetland Voices*.



For this residency, we transformed the space into an informal shared studio for Ubuntu members and invited allies to use as they wish. Mundair facilitated on behalf of Ubuntu. Ubuntu womxn made work, adorned and took up the space in power. The residency also featured a panel on Sexuality and Religion, featuring a film and discussion around a TED talk about the experiences of a gay Muslim lawyer, followed by a discussion of 'Workers!' by Petra Bauer in collaboration with Scot-Pep'.







## **Acquisition of a dedicated asset**

We eventually acquired the flat we have named Shaun's Home in July 2019, after fundraising independently for 25 months. We believe that this is the only asset dedicated to meeting the needs of destitute womxn with NRPF in Scotland. The idea of acquiring our own property asset, instead of relying on state funding, was informed by our No Borders ethos and our experience of how continuing fears of deportation, indefinite detention<sup>6</sup> and data-sharing between social service providers and the Home Office pushes womxn further into destitution.

We wanted Shaun's Home to be a space that offers our guests a chance to safely rest and recover, and also reach local support networks through which their dignity, humanity and faith are witnessed and nourished. We chose a ground floor flat so womxn with mild to moderate mobility restrictions could access it. We chose our location according to our budget but also amenities one could reach on foot. We furnished the flat with help from donors and volunteers.

## **Dedicated office space**

We rent an office in East Glasgow due to the concentration of migrants and asylum seekers in the area. We operate from an office furnished to comfort our guests when they first meet us, including access to our wifi. Our open-door policy reflects our womxn centred ethos: while this is a drop-in space for womxn, men must be invited. We were donated 2 tabletop PCs for our administrative and online tasks, and 2 laptops for any other work.

We created our extensive database of formal services (lawyers, food

6. The UK remains the only country in Europe to have a regime of indefinite detention. Bellisario, C., Schulkind, R., and Clarke, C. 2019. "*Nothing Good Comes From Detention*": *Voices From Detention*. [online] London: Bail for Immigration Detainees, pp.23-25. Available at: <[http://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/biduk/redactor2\\_assets/files/799/Voices\\_from\\_Detention\\_2019.pdf](http://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/biduk/redactor2_assets/files/799/Voices_from_Detention_2019.pdf)>



banks referral agencies) and informal services (our inhouse events) as well as support networks like faith groups, charities and private providers. We created a spreadsheet of this information as well as a physical binder containing information leaflets and business cards that womxn can take with them.

We agreed to operate on an Unconditional Trust policy. With this approach we designed our casework forms to take basic and essential information, to ensure that our guests are safe while we are supporting them as a priority. From experience, we tailor our service to our guests so they do not require any evidence to 'prove' their needs or migration status. Our volunteers created a welcome that every womxn we shelter is entitled to. 'In addition, we have run our 24- hour emergency phone line support since late 2018.

We realize that what we do is a drop in the ocean but to us, even one womxn supported is enough. What we have also realized during the course of our Phase I work was that we had an opportunity to further inform our needs assessment so our guests will have more opportunities to escape the continuing danger of slipping into social isolation and poverty.







## Phase 2 (2019-2021)

Once we had our property, we deepened our roots in our surrounding neighbourhoods by connecting with local groups and services, attending events and holding lectures and conversations. We developed our direct support service, our groundwork for volunteers and students, and expanded our skills. We are in the midst of this phase and have had to adjust our capacities to the lockdown and the pandemic.

### Guest Lectures in Further Education

For the past two years we have been invited to deliver guest lectures to fourth year Social Work students at the University of West of Scotland. These are to give a basic introduction to the asylum system and the NRPF stipulation to students, and run real help-seeking scenarios past them to teach how supporting womxn with NRPF cannot rely on the state-funded services one would usually turn to.

One student's feedback:

*"If I'm honest, my opinion on Immigration and asylum/refuge in the UK wasn't one to be desired. I took the stance of 'its our country, we need to help our own before we can help another'. My opinion was purely based on what I have read in the media and other people's opinions - after the lectures on Tuesday my opinion was completely flipped. I didn't realise the extent of hardship and destitution for the minority. Nor did I realise the near impossibility of being granted asylum/refuge in the UK. Throughout the afternoon lecture I imagined putting myself in the scenarios that were given to us and I felt such sadness and torment as well as sincere shame on my previous narrow-minded view. I absolutely applaud Ubuntu for the commitment and care for the women they support, their empathy and vision was clear throughout."*



## Direct Support

Before the lockdown, our office was open 3 days a week. Womxn facing destitution call the emergency line, and come to our office if they can. They will usually meet at least two of our direct support providers and a trustee. Each woman with NRPF we support is entitled to an individual welcome pack (toiletries and sanitary products) and an unconditional cash grant of £50. If a womxn discloses that she lacks a safe place to sleep we do our best to accommodate her, in the style the womxn prefers. We start by conducting a semi-structured needs assessment. Once completed, we share with her our safety briefing. This process often takes place over a hot meal. We follow an unconditional solidarity support protocol which includes:


- Immediate, emergency, short term accommodation if needed
- Cash grants
- Offers of provisions and toiletries
- A quiet space where women can rest without fear of state violence

In a situation where we have a guest with needs we cannot meet, we will reach out to available hosts who can provide customized support. If we can safely provide 2 weeks of accommodation, we do. We drive our resident to the shelter and supply her with clean linens and fresh towels. As part of our approach, we enable our residents' autonomy by equipping Shaun's Home with a well-stocked kitchen where they can cook and eat as they please. Our guests are offered counselling sessions (as available) and are invited to all our events, such as our community meals.

In the two weeks our guests are staying with us, we facilitate access to specialist support. We are seeing the immediate and long lasting consequences of our few and direct interventions - in a safe space, our guests have total control over their papers and belongings, they meet lawyers and access legal aid, and encounter services that address their mental health and psychosocial needs. Our guests can visit our Glasgow office as and when they need, usually stopping for a chat and a cup of tea.







We have provided 42 letters to evidence destitution and violence addressed to the Home Office, GP surgeries and health clinics. We regularly attend lawyers' appointments and court hearings. The womxn we support are informed of their rights and advocacy is not taken 'on behalf' of womxn, but *beside* womxn, centering the compassionate 'we' of collective resistance. We aid as needed through legal cases, court support at tribunals and appeals. So far, we have supported three women in court and acted as witnesses for another in a situation where family members were not able to for fear of reprisal from her husband's family. We have provided more than 20 cash grants through Fund for Human Need and the Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund, ranging from £60-450. We have equipped our guests with five donated laptops and two donated smartphones. We have recruited and trained numerous volunteers at a series of training sessions which took place at GAS and our office, resisting white leadership to align with our organisational values.

### **Skill-building**

What we were seeing in our work was that papers were a necessary but not sufficient condition for womxn who have NRPF to improve their chances in the labour market. While there are many organisations that provide English language proficiency classes, precious few even entertain the possibility of such womxn being given the space to acquire the skills and training deemed necessary for professional office settings. Our guests are actively encouraged to join our team of volunteers, and our on-the-job training and skill-building ethos is explained and demonstrated within parameters of confidentiality. We are pleased that some of our current work leads started out as residents. This was a necessary intervention for the womxn we support to avoid the purgatory of the invisible black economy.



Some of our trainings occurred as follows:

- Rosie of the Angelou Centre facilitated our creating ethos, values, aims and objectives at Shaun's Home on the 6th of December 2019.
- On the 11th of January 2020, 5 staff members and volunteers attended a NHS Mental Health First Aid training session



- On the 11th March 2020, 7 staff members and volunteers attended Resilience Training with Shamshad Khan, where we worked on tapping into resourcefulness to navigate difficult situations.
- “ In a series of workshops in 2018/19 we co-developed “In our hands” a practical bodywork guide and resource with the Radical Herbal Network and Unity Herbal;





We intend to continue and improve in-house training to include sessions on office administration, campaigning, event management, and first aid so our guests are building up their marketable skills for after they get their papers. We look forward to hosting more sessions that provide certification, or coping skills such as mindfulness and bodywork. We particularly want to learn more about trauma and stress to inform our direct support.

### **Public Talks, Outreach and Campaigning**

Over the last 2 years, Ubuntu Women Shelter has hosted, led and taken part in over 15 public talks and campaigns. These are central to deepening our connections and raising awareness of our political vision to a wide scope of communities. All our outreach and community events are supported with childcare and travel costs for those who wouldn't be able to attend otherwise.

In collaboration with the Racial Justice Network, we hosted an event called 'Colonial Legacies : Immigration Control and The Hostile Environment' at The African Arts on the 22nd of September 2018 . The purpose of this event was to analyse the government's migration policies which are rooted in colonialism and which continues to harm black and brown people. We collectively shared knowledge and resources on ways of resisting and organising.





On the 2nd of March 2019, Ubuntu Women Shelter co-hosted 'Decolonising 'A No Borders Manifesto'' at Glasgow Autonomous Space and the Unity Centre. The discussions and writing were introduced by Dania. A subsequent panel discussion was facilitated by Sisters Uncut at the GAS Book Fair.

We have been involved in exchange consultations with Docs Not Cops, the Angelou Centre in Newcastle, Southall Black Sisters, where we co-hosted the Domestic Violence Concession Workshop with the Unity Centre at Glasgow Womens Library.

In 2019, we created proposals to repeal the Hostile Environment, which were submitted to fill out and improve the Labour Party's immigration and asylum policy with Jeremy Corbyn during his time as leader of the Labour Party, and the former Leader of Scottish Labour, Mr. Richard Leonard, in separate meetings.

On the 22nd February 2020, Ubuntu Women Shelter took part in an event hosted by Global Justice Now Scotland at GAS. Dania spoke on the panel alongside other inspiring community campaigners to discuss how to work together in our communities to tackle corporate power

## **COVID-19 Support**

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and consequent lockdown, we have organised a purpose-built emergency response and implemented it across Glasgow. This response has been informed by needs communicated to us by the families we support, their friends, and new referrals. Thanks to our multiple benefactors and guardian angels Winnie, Hannah and Janice, we raised enough funds to resource our direct support service for the 2-month lockdown period, and a further three months in order to safeguard against the uncertainty we face in the lifting of lockdown.





## Hot Meal Delivery

In the months of April and May 2020, with the support of two brilliant chefs Aysha and Ashley from the Flower Cafe, we delivered over 560 hot, nutritious meals to the individuals and families we are supporting. These meals are specific to the dietary requirements of the people we support and are delivered weekly by Ubuntu team members and our generous drivers Winnie and Hannah.



## Mother and child support

17 mothers and 24 children have received weekly deliveries according to their needs; these deliveries include nappies, baby wipes, baby food, food for specific dietary needs, toys, clothes and other equipment such as prams, car seats and baskets. These are delivered by volunteers Kirsten and Hannah, with the support of individuals and local organisations such as Glasgow East Women's Aid, The Wayside Club, Glasgow North Baby Bank and Paisley Foodbank.

### Testimonials from mothers:

*"I really appreciate your organisation for the support, God bless you people. God will continue blessing and providing for your organisation."*

*"Thanks very much once again for the delicious food and everything you have provided for us. May God bless and reward you."*

*"I would like to thank you for the baby staff I got today, I really appreciate it... May God bless you"*



*"I would like to sincerely thank you for the amazing clothes, toys, food and baby accessories you delivered to me. I am extremely thankful and overjoyed, your kindness has overwhelmed me. My son will benefit immensely from the precious items you have so kindly gifted us. We remain deeply grateful and cannot say thank you enough. May God bless you richly."*

## **Counselling**

Jude Stewart, Ubuntu's Trauma-Informed Destitution Support (UNTIED) Coordinator, has been offering remote one-to-one counselling sessions for womxn Ubuntu supports. We wish to fund the service and the supervision Jude requires to sustain it.

## **Referrals**

We have referred 32 families across Glasgow to organisations in their local area for weekly deliveries of groceries and toiletries. These organisations include Refuweegee, G20 Youth Festival, Kinning Park Complex, FARE Scotland, Springburn Parish Church Foodhub and Achieve More Scotland.


## **Cash Grants**

We are also providing £10-50 cash grants every week as needed to the womxn we support with NRPF, and one-off grants to families depending on their household needs. This is being done alongside topping up phone credit and purchasing of other essential items.

We have developed a protocol to collect feedback which enables us to assess the needs of the womxn we support and the effectiveness of our service provisions.







*"I have joined Ubuntu in 2018 in September. Ubuntu is a women's shelter for every women whether you are black or white. It's for young and old women. Ubuntu has been my home ever since. I have experienced a lot how to treat another person with love and dignity. Ubuntu's work to me is very important because I have experienced how to welcome women who have been homeless and been in abuse, and discriminated against in life. I felt to offer my hand whenever to welcome them if they need Ubuntu help. I got all the talents from Ubuntu organisers and volunteers through learning from others. Sharing ideas and we have women's gatherings every month where we have meals, invite other women's organisations to join us and we share our ideas with them. We have volunteering work during the week, e.g. sharing your skills with others and helping others to build their confidence, and we have yoga classes which are very helpful for our health and mental wellbeing. It's an organisation/ shelter for every young black woman to join anytime, anyday"*



# Where We Go From Here







## Phase 3 - Part 1 (2021-23)

This Phase highlights the key services and structural changes that we hope to implement. They are as follows:

1. Dedicated and trained staff which will include at least two full time paid staff and volunteers will ensure that the womxn we support have the training they need to gain the experience and the skills required to ensure they get a fair and equitable start in the job market when they get their papers.
2. The development of UNTIED, our in-house trauma-informed counselling service
3. Transport in the form of a dedicated carrier/bus to drive womxn to their court dates, solicitor and doctor appointments. We plan to fund driving lessons and testing fees for womxn.

### **Ubuntu's New Trauma-Informed Destitution support (UNTIED)**

We have seen first-hand how the absence of sustained, trauma-informed support compounds the trauma of womxn already hurt by state violence in their home countries, who are then re-traumatised by the inhumane asylum system and its engrained racialized logic that enforced destitution will incentivize voluntary returns<sup>7</sup>. What we witness is womxn, who come here seeking refuge and to claim their human rights in international law, being exposed to further harm and violence through rape and sexual abuse either by partners that they are forced into unwanted relationships with or by being pushed on to the streets and forced into sex-work in extremely precarious working conditions. What we witness is womxn, who come here seeking refuge and to claim their human rights in international law, being exposed to further harm and violence through rape and sexual abuse either by

7. Dudhia, P., 2020. Will I Ever Be Safe? Asylum-Seeking Women Made Destitute In The UK. [online] London: Women for Refugee Women. Available at: <<https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WRW-Will-I-ever-be-safe-web.pdf>>.



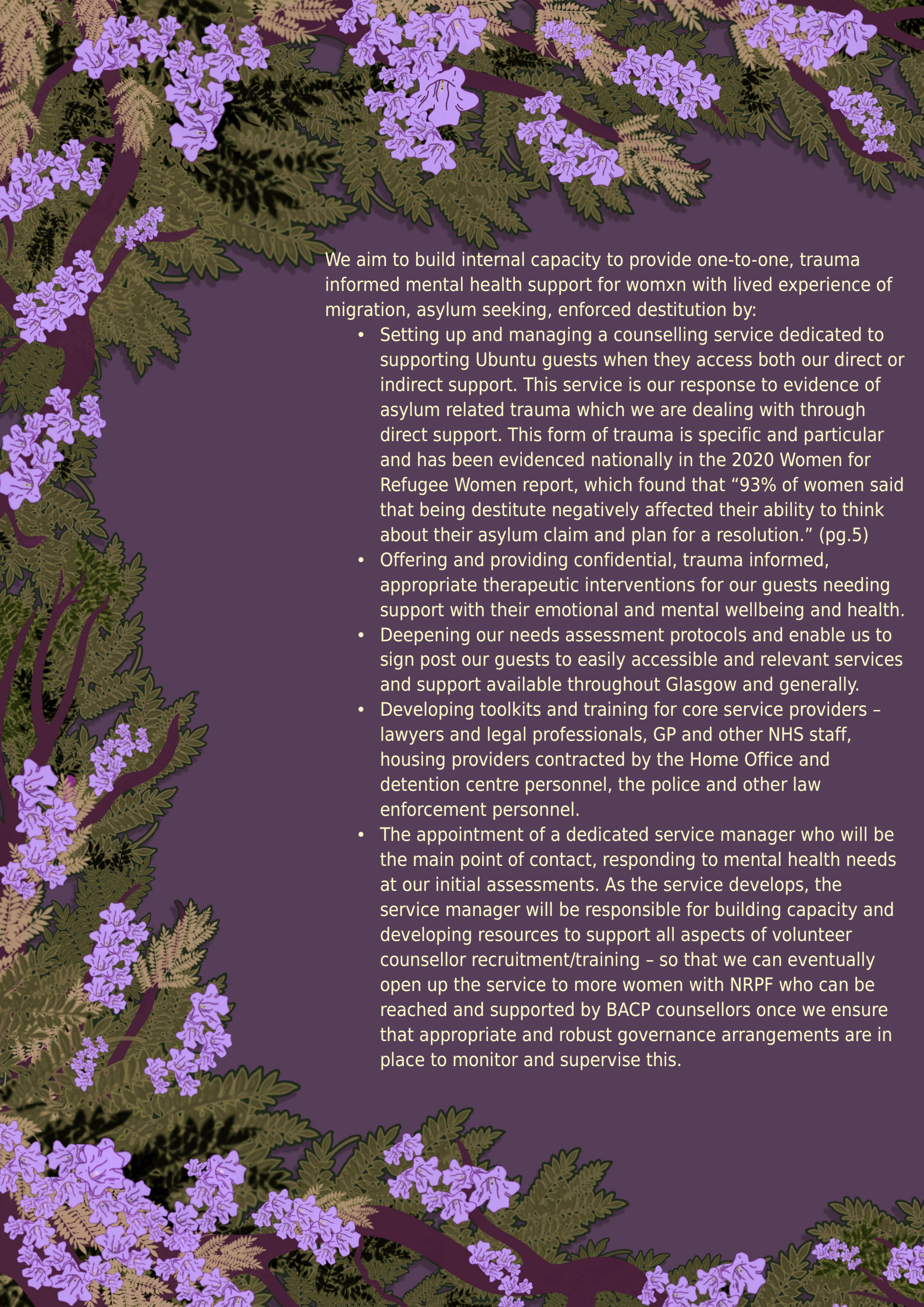
partners that they are forced into unwanted relationships with or by being pushed on to the streets and forced into sex-work in extremely precarious working conditions<sup>7</sup>. Our collaborations with sex worker organisations Scot-PEP and Umbrella Lane reveal that once womxn in this group slide into this end of the labour market, not only is it almost impossible to reach out to them but, in a criminalized sex-work framework, state violence increases manifold.

In our direct support we have witnessed signs of asylum process related trauma. We see repeated, anecdotal evidence of: self-harm, suicidal ideation and behaviour, poor social functioning and adaptation, PTSD, evidence of depression, continual fear of imminent and indefinite detention, social isolation, language barriers, deterioration in language competency, destruction of work skills, failure of aspirations for the future and the inability to articulate life goals and plans.

We believe this is part of a complex and multifaceted individual response and reaction to their life situations, and it is largely attributable to an asylum process designed to question their credibility and undermine their lived experience at every stage<sup>7</sup>. For instance, the asylum claim is itself premised on repeated denial and rejection of the traumatic events they have experienced in the countries they have fled, the trauma of their journey's here and the trauma of enforced destitution, racism, sexual exploitation and violence during the asylum process. We have witnessed how this trauma is exacerbated by the absence of culturally relevant and trauma-informed approaches adopted by critical service providers such as GP surgeries, health professionals, housing providers, lawyers and other legal professionals. There is a shortage of materials, resources and training that communicate the particular and unique needs of women who have NRPF.







We aim to build internal capacity to provide one-to-one, trauma informed mental health support for womxn with lived experience of migration, asylum seeking, enforced destitution by:

- Setting up and managing a counselling service dedicated to supporting Ubuntu guests when they access both our direct or indirect support. This service is our response to evidence of asylum related trauma which we are dealing with through direct support. This form of trauma is specific and particular and has been evidenced nationally in the 2020 Women for Refugee Women report, which found that “93% of women said that being destitute negatively affected their ability to think about their asylum claim and plan for a resolution.” (pg.5)
- Offering and providing confidential, trauma informed, appropriate therapeutic interventions for our guests needing support with their emotional and mental wellbeing and health.
- Deepening our needs assessment protocols and enable us to sign post our guests to easily accessible and relevant services and support available throughout Glasgow and generally.
- Developing toolkits and training for core service providers – lawyers and legal professionals, GP and other NHS staff, housing providers contracted by the Home Office and detention centre personnel, the police and other law enforcement personnel.
- The appointment of a dedicated service manager who will be the main point of contact, responding to mental health needs at our initial assessments. As the service develops, the service manager will be responsible for building capacity and developing resources to support all aspects of volunteer counsellor recruitment/training – so that we can eventually open up the service to more women with NRPf who can be reached and supported by BACP counsellors once we ensure that appropriate and robust governance arrangements are in place to monitor and supervise this.



## Phase 3 - Part 2 (2023 onwards)

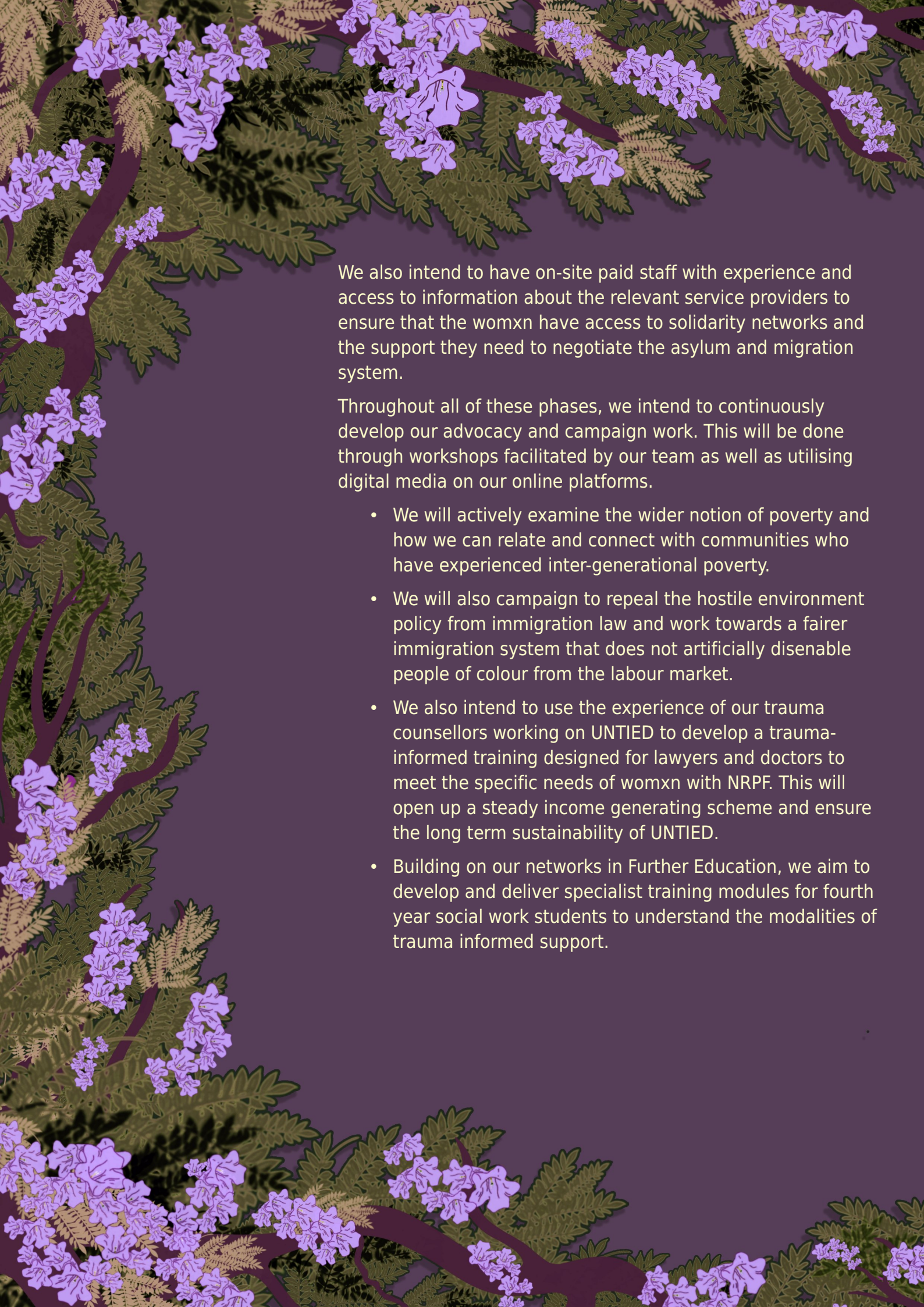
In the second half of Phase 3, we envision a change in all three aspects of our direct support provision with some significant add-ons which will be provided by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. We will offer two distinct types of accommodation depending on the needs of womxn who come to us. The first is our existing hosting and shelter accommodation we have developed in Phase I and II to accommodate up to 4 womxn. In Phase III we envision a second acquisition which will enable us to add on further forms of accommodation support.

This new accommodation will serve multiple purposes. Firstly, it will be a night shelter that is open every night from 8:00pm to 8:00am every day throughout the year. Shelter users will be provided with a warm meal on arrival and breakfast before the night shelter closes. In addition to this, the shelter will also provide long term but temporary accommodation for up to 6 destitute women who are assessed by trained staff as being particularly vulnerable. There will be separate rooms available for womxn with severe mental health, womxn fleeing domestic violence and mothers with children. We envision that this second accommodation will be run and managed as far as possible by former guests of the shelter. To this end, all our guests will be offered certified in-house training and support to acquire relevant administrative and professional qualifications and skills including asylum and immigration case-work support. We intend for the shelter to have the following facilities:

- In-house washing and laundry service
- 24/7 access to TV, internet, computer, fax and printers
- Development of a garden which will be managed and run by the residents of the shelter
- Fully functional kitchen, providing freshly prepared meals with organic produced sourced from the garden







We also intend to have on-site paid staff with experience and access to information about the relevant service providers to ensure that the womxn have access to solidarity networks and the support they need to negotiate the asylum and migration system.

Throughout all of these phases, we intend to continuously develop our advocacy and campaign work. This will be done through workshops facilitated by our team as well as utilising digital media on our online platforms.

- We will actively examine the wider notion of poverty and how we can relate and connect with communities who have experienced inter-generational poverty.
- We will also campaign to repeal the hostile environment policy from immigration law and work towards a fairer immigration system that does not artificially disenable people of colour from the labour market.
- We also intend to use the experience of our trauma counsellors working on UNTIED to develop a trauma-informed training designed for lawyers and doctors to meet the specific needs of womxn with NRPF. This will open up a steady income generating scheme and ensure the long term sustainability of UNTIED.
- Building on our networks in Further Education, we aim to develop and deliver specialist training modules for fourth year social work students to understand the modalities of trauma informed support.



## We would like to thank:

Racial Justice Network  
Funderbirds  
Southall Black Sisters  
Tatoo Circus  
NHS Glenkirk Centre, Drum Chapel  
Arika  
Coventry Peace House  
Anderston Community TRust  
Regen Carnwath and Benjamin Nunn,  
Rannock  
The Unity Centre  
Radical Herbal Network  
Brasseye  
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SCOTPeP  
Yon Afro  
Kidist Tekle  
Salomo  
Transmission Gallery  
Thulani Rachia  
Alaya Ang  
Jeanette Findlay  
Bashir  
Patrick Boase  
Raman Mundair  
Leonna O'Neil  
Nachinji Mumba  
Jeremy Millar  
Marion Bryans  
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The Angelou Centre  
Marix  
Bolange  
Woman's Library  
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Akasa Pradhan  
Sara Bowers  
Juthik Ghosal  
Azania Thomas  
Mahalatchmee Thomas  
UCU Glasgow  
Edge Fund  
Docs Not Cops







## Shelter

Our care moves, Shifts  
We are not confined to a place  
We are not defined by a wage  
Our care carries that cup of warmth to your lips,  
Our care lays out a clean pillow, sheets and draws the curtains  
Our care is permissible disarray  
Scattered fresh ginger root and pungent chillies  
and the sound of thick maize porridge stir  
Our care is a pot and a spoon stirring spice  
memories of home smuggled across borders  
Your hair picks up glints of the dawn as blue braid  
We sip brewed masala tea, break hot buttered chappati and talk,  
you share dreams of your lived worlds we will never know  
You come here with a song on your lips  
that we have no language to hear.  
You wear the weight of history like a  
crown of intricate design in burnished gold  
You come through our barbed wires,  
our militarised walls, our CCTV tracking, our sniffer dogs  
With your stories and laughter, you come through our borders  
algorithmized to contain, discipline and extract  
value from your black body  
Your gaze into the distance does not forget but you forgive...  
you carry the sea within you  
that beautiful clear water silent  
with the pain of children and family left behind  
...the sunlight picks up fish scales,  
adrift memories of a present continuous  
feeding frenzy as we gorge, destroy,  
suck everything dry to feed our first world lives.



Yours is not a courage that comes with a gun, or a knife or a militarized border yours is a courage that comes from knowing. We invented race and racism here and this says more about us than it ever does about you.

Our racism is skin deep but becomes lethal when coddled with phrases like 'People make Glasgow' Do they? In this great city people have always been left behind but we pretend, we brand, we strut and play games with words like civilization and progress ... Capital makes Glasgow on the backs of bodies that clean and care ... the river brought the slave ships and loot from the colonies and now BAE systems brings profits and jobs from death and war...

You see our bleeding feet as we walk on broken shards of amnesia and the hot coals of forgotten histories that holds a boot on our throats to silence and choke not kill... as women's voices on the estate forgotten by history rise sharply "do not come here" "We don't want you here." "Go back from where you came" "Our property prices will fall" "Black strangers like you bring problems, garbage and rats" " You have no manners" "You have no manners" "we do not want you here, we need to protect our children from you".

The light fades and in the gloaming the shine of cheap chrome fittings on locks and iron gates meant to keep us safe ....as the sun sets on the estate, the night birds shriek as we wait for another dawn.









