



WOMEN IN EUROPE

Women's Federation for World Peace Youth Europe Newsletter



Spring 2015



WELCOME

Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity

A warm welcome to this Spring edition of the Women of Europe Newsletter!

We're excited to be able to bring you these stories about inspiring young women from across Europe and to share some of the great things they have been doing to bring more fulfilment to the lives of others, as well as their own. In many cases, WFWP has provided a platform for these women to stand for causes they feel are meaningful, enabling them to bring their unique voice and approach, as women, to those issues. Through their creativity and courageous initiatives, they show us anything is possible if the passion is there. Particularly when it is for others and done together with others.

"Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it!" was the 2015 motto of the UN

International Day of Women, a day celebrated on March 8th every year since 1910. Each year this UN Day is celebrated by women and men alike, for women's economic, political and social achievements, as well as the general celebration of respect and appreciation of women. We've included a few examples of events hosted by WFWP Youth for the recent International Day of Women in this edition.

Christelle Ngama's "Congo Rises" campaign, Sammi Vanderstok's Kilimanjaro climb and WFWP UK's Project for the Women of Jordan are equally beautiful examples of empowered women empowering humanity, whose journeys you are welcome to read more about here. We hope these snapshots inspire your own creativity and empowered path.

Happy reading!

The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) is dedicated to empowering women with the knowledge, the tools and the support needed to create peace at home, peace in our communities, our nations and throughout the world.

It is an NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

For more information visit www.wfwp-europe.org
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WFWP GATHERING – BRUSSELS

*“Youth and the Future of Leadership: The Role of Parents and Family
in Shaping Responsible Citizenship.”*

20-22nd November 2014

Every year WFWP Europe holds a conference bringing together WFWP leaders and contacts from across the continent, to share best practices, refocus and set new goals, as well as organising a public session in Parliament, based on a chosen theme.





*“Children need their parents who are their first educator and these educators need to be supported not replaced.”
Ms. Maria Hindingsson, Secretary General for Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe*

For many, it was a first experience to come to such a big WFWP event, and to learn so much about what WFWP are doing. It was exciting to have nearly 20 young women this year, not only participating but also leading and coordinating some parts of the programme. It was a great chance to connect with the other active young women across Europe, exchange experiences and build new friendships. The sight-seeing day gave everyone a chance to check out some cute Belgian cafes and enjoy the city’s sights together.

A very engaging session at the European Parliament on the theme “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Role of the Family in Shaping Responsible Leadership”, which was co-hosted with international youth organisation, World Youth Alliance.

The audience were asked to “Educate Yourself, Be Proactive, Raise Awareness” on issues surrounding the importance of healthy families. The EU parliament is ready to work

with anyone, especially young people, who are willing to work to help families become better and happier.

Something to watch: A well-made Swedish documentary called „Brainwash“ was recommended, which highlights the problems of the current Gender debate. It can be found on YouTube.

There was a fun and interactive session where several speakers with professional training shared tips for how to communicate effectively. Such as:

- 3 Cs to speak well in public: Clearly, Confidently, Convincingly
- The importance of emotions in communication
- The impact of Body, Voice and Language in communication

An exciting feature of the conference was the session organised by the Young women

under the title “Empowering Young Women in Dignity and Leadership”

Four interactive presentations were given about:

- Women as born leaders (Franziska Nylén – We Found Women Start-Ups)
- Sexualisation of Youth (Asmah Anis – WFWP Youth UK)
- “Congo Rises” Campaign (Christelle Kyora Ngama – WFWP Youth Bolton)
- WFWP Youth Activities in Europe (Yo-

shiko Pammer – WFWP Youth Europe)

Through brainstorming, group discussions, and even dancing, the session managed to stir some spirit and new ideas, and was a much valued contribution to the conference.

A great thanks to WFWP for their support and funding for many more younger women to join this year’s programme.

Full report of all sessions can be found on the WFWP Europe website: www.wfwp-europe.org



MY EXPERIENCE CLIMBING KILIMANJARO

Last October, 20 women and I took on an amazing opportunity and challenge – climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. Mt. Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain in Africa at 5,895 meters above sea level, 50% less oxygen than sea level locations, and a challenge in terms of climate and exposure. Most people decide to climb this mountain in order to challenge themselves and experience harsh climates. However, I decided to climb this mountain in order learn about leadership and working with women.

All the 20 women I climbed with were part of my university's Masters in Business Administration (MBA) program and had signed up for a women's leadership course called "Women Empowering Women." The course was designed to help tackle the problem of women not taking leadership roles in the business world and beyond. In fact, although women hold almost 52 percent of all professional-level jobs, only 14.6% of executives and 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEO's are female. Sadly, one of the reasons why this is the case is because women in leadership roles are perceived negatively, both by men and women. If my generation of women are to help change this pattern and take leadership positions in the future, the first step is to stop the self-defeating pattern of putting other strong women down and instead learning to support our fellow women leaders. Therefore, the course I joined was created to have an all women team tackle a real challenge together - to spend 7 days climbing Kilimanjaro.

One of my best memories on the moun-

tain was when one of my colleagues commented that she was more scared for being with 20 women for 7 days than she was of actually climbing Kilimanjaro. However, as we were reaching the top of the mountain she was about to give up when one of the other women came up to her and offered her some candy and water. That small gesture gave her the energy to keep going and opened her up to trusting her colleagues and learning to respect the strong women she was climbing with. At the end, this women commented that the best part of climbing Kilimanjaro wasn't reaching the top, it was being with other women and learning to work in a team.

Now that I have finished my journey, I myself feel the same. Instead of trying to race to the top of the mountain, our group was more concerned about each other's wellbeing and supported each other along the way. We talked about our dreams and goals as we walked day after day up Kilimanjaro, we shared our food and stories each night as we broke for camp, we filmed each other singing and dancing when we made the key milestones up the route, and we even carried each other's packs when the going got tough at the very top. Coming back from Kilimanjaro, I know that every women has the same potential and if we as women support each other in becoming our best, we can definitely change our future and lead it in a better direction.

Sammi Vanderstok



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

NORWAY

WFWP Norway celebrated UN International Women's Day on Saturday, March 7th, 2015. We based the celebration around the theme 'What we have in common.' The event started off with a song, followed by an icebreaker in which participants found what common interests they shared. Then Roswitha Johansen, leader of WFWP Norway, gave a short speech about the similarities of women of all cultures

and women's non-violent strategy in creating peace, starting with the education of their own children. She further emphasized women's role as peace-makers by naming various influential women in history, particularly those who went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. The speech was followed by some more music, a game called the human knot and a delightful buffet.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

UNITED KINGDOM



On the 12th of March 2015, 50 individuals gathered together at the House of Commons to commemorate International Women's Day. The theme was "Celebrating Women's Achievements". Four female speakers were invited to share their own experiences and advice.

The first speaker was Usha Aryal, national winner of the Biotechnological YES competition. At only 20 years of age Usha was offered a scholarship to do a PhD in Genetics at the University of Leicester and despite much scepticism regarding her age took this opportunity vivaciously. This young researcher in science, who is a big advocate of gender equality due to the concerning gender gap within the scientific sector, spoke about the unconscious gender bias with how men see women as well as how women see themselves.

Tatiana Giroud (Founder of TG Foundation UK) discussed her passion to heighten people's awareness surrounding the issues of victims of sexual violence within the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tatiana showed great compassion for these women who are repeatedly violated up to the point where they are economically destitute from fear, whilst having no access to justice, escape routes or basic human rights.

Music and talent director, Arfa Butt, shared

her passion to help young people progress particularly within the arts sector. Arfa explained how her passion began especially due to the lack of role models within this artistic field. Arfa shared her passion to not only motivate young people but also help young women, particularly those involved in gangs. At this point Arfa decided to manage a programme to support these women, many of which were from ethnic minority backgrounds, through an innovative training programme called 'Gangology'.

Finally Lisa Tse, also known as founder to a variety of business ventures, including one of the top 5 women organisations in the world (rated by CNN) 'The sorority' - A pioneering and influential society of leading women, ranging from business leaders to royalty. The listeners were lead through her experiences as a working mother and of particular gender biases she experienced as a women within a predominantly male working environment. Lisa brought everyone's attention to how hard women work without taking credit for their own achievements and questioned the limitations to our successful female role models, whilst asking if we measure success only in money, fame and beauty? Lisa finally left everyone to ponder the Sorority Motto: 'What belongs to you will come to you when you create the capacity to receive it.'

“CONGO RISES”

Christelle Kyora Ngama is a WFP pioneer, having initiated a Young Women's group in her local town of Bolton, UK, in June 2013. The group has since expanded beyond meetings in her living room to the local community centre for women and has started a number of projects, including a personal initiative: "Congo Rises." Born from Christelle's connection with Congo as her homecountry and driven by the passion she felt in addressing the relatively unknown issues there, this project and its impact have been growing from strength to strength.

This is her story.

The cock crows, the sun starts to rise. Today seems different from any other though – on an October morning in 1996 there are sounds of fighting close by, and the usually happy life of the people in the town of Goma would never be the same.

Christelle K. Ngama is a 26-year-old native of that small town Goma, which is in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She has lived in Bolton, UK for nearly 11 years, leaving her hometown as a refugee when she was just 15 years old.

She was a law student at the BPP University for two years, but she took a break, hoping to reconvene and finish her degree this coming September. “Right now I’m unemployed – and it’s the first time since I was 17,” she says.

As a result of the ongoing war in Congo,

Christelle has created “Congo Rises,” a movement to restore justice, dignity and independence in the DRC. It was started on the 9th December 2014 in Bolton during the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

The war in Congo has been going on for a very long time, Christelle reflects. It became independent almost 55 years ago, but even then it has never been stable. Its independence only exists at face value and there is a lot of violence still being committed, especially towards women.

A fired-up Christelle speaks of the idea behind the name, Congo Rises: “If you don’t have peace within yourself then you can’t create peace. I am Congo. I feel that I am actually Congo. But when I came [to England] I felt I was hiding, looking for myself... I had a lot of



insecurities, not knowing who I was. But now, I am educated, I have actually risen. So I'm Congo, and I've risen for Congo Rises."

Christelle reminisces how in Congo, everyone knows everyone like their own family. How it's a beautiful country. How before the war, everything was fine: "We eat a mango and just throw the seed on the ground, and after two weeks you start to see a little green coming up." But then when the Rwandan group took over it became so stifled that if anyone said anything against the Rwandan government, they might never be seen or heard from again.

When Christelle and her family went home every day in Goma, they thought it might be the last day they would see each other. "Our parents taught us 'tricks,' so that if we heard gun shots we would have to get on the floor and stay there." Indeed, on their first Guy Fawkes Day evening in England, they heard fireworks, and Christelle and her sister immediately fell to the floor. "We only knew guns," says Christelle with a laugh.

Nevertheless, Christelle is planning to go back to Congo next summer, mainly to open a library for the locals of Goma where there is

currently none. "Even when I was young, seeing what my parents have had to go through and all the stuff they had to give up, I want to do something that will help my country."

Although her parents have not always encouraged her activist efforts, due to the dangers associated with this type of work, her dad, who is still in Congo, has offered the local church building as the site for the new library. "There are a lot of young people in Goma who don't have anything to do; I wanted to create a place where they can come during the day," says Christelle. The library will also have programs where student teachers can teach young people who cannot afford it.

"Because I'm studying English Law," she explains, "I've been looking a lot into the Congolese Legal System and its laws in my spare time so that when I'm there I can advise people of their rights." Her future plans include creating a "law clinic" of sorts in Goma, and to be an advisor on civil law issues. Currently, Christelle is collecting French books for the library and funds for travelling.

Another effort to garner support for the people of Congo is a 10K run being held on the 10th of May in Greater Manchester. There



is also a group of young runners from Kirotshe, a village near Goma, who want to go to the Olympics next year. Christelle feels this would give great hope to the nation.

Although things are moving forward, obstacles litter the path to peace. The main challenge for Christelle in developing Congo Rises is juggling all its aspects while keeping sane. “At the moment I’m trying to find balance,” she says. “I’m naturally a revolutionary,” she continues. Christelle has this heart of going towards the danger in order to ease the ongoing suffering of her people. “One time [in Congo] people came to our house and held my dad at gunpoint,” she says. She thought she should be scared, but she says she is more overcome with emotion for the even more horrific things that are happening to others.

People often belittle Christelle’s work, saying things like “stop dreaming,” “things will never change in Congo,” “you’re just doing this for your own benefit,” etc. “I used to get annoyed when my mother tries to discourage me, but now I understand her heart. She spent three days in prison, without trial, just because she was standing up for her rights,” laughs Christelle.

However, the clear reward for Christelle in doing this is the result. Changing people’s minds. Educating people young and old. For example, if there are no books and no library, how will people educate themselves and know the laws in a place like Goma? “It’s not about me, it’s about restoring independence in Congo. If people are free, they can do anything they’ve dreamed of. If some are doing well, others will be motivated to try as well,” she says.

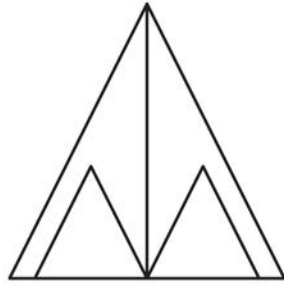
People who heard Christelle speak at a conference in the UN in New York said that she came across as courageous and confident. “A 9-year-old was so inspired [by my talk] and said she wanted to help; I thought, wow, if even a 9-year-old wants

to help, then maybe I did something today!”

Christelle’s advice to young people is that it is good to learn from those who came before us, represent those around us, and pave the way for people to come up after us. This is the way to prepare for the future.

By Tanya Selle





A CHAT WITH ORIGINAL MINDS

Fashion and Beauty are timeless features in the world of women, as accessories in cultivating one's image and acting as a means of self-expression. In an age of more variety, diversity and media influence than ever, those ideas of image are ever-changing and impacting our sense of identity. We spoke to Isobel Coombs and Marian Reynolds, long-time best friends and newly-found business partners from London, who recently started their own fashion label and lifestyle blog, making use of the advantages of our online age. As "Original Minds" they hope to bring a breath of fresh air into the fashion industry and make a positive influence on how women see themselves, as well as showing the possibility of venturing on a self-made and paced career.

What inspired you to start original minds?

Izzy: *We wanted to be creators of our environment that came alongside a steady income but still living the lives we want to lead*

Marian: *One big thing was that we were just sick of working for other people, we just didn't want to work for anyone. Wherever we worked we didn't like the atmosphere or didn't agree with the ethics of the company. Also we don't want to be just career women or stay at home mums – why can't we balance both? We want to break stereotypes.*

What's the idea behind the name?

Marian: *Going back to being you. Going back to being your original self behind all the layers and insecurities, and just simply going back to the person you really are behind all the charade – even beyond make-up and fashion. The idea of working on the inside and then coming out – rather than outside in.*

Izzy: *We try to implement that idea in our beauty posts. You have to have a fresh canvas in and out before make up – which is about enhancing beauty. You can't buy beauty no matter how much money you spend on it.*

What are you currently working on?

Marian: *We are currently blogging and vlogging, we have a lifestyle blog – food/fashion/beauty/social/cultural topics and now we are going in to creating t-shirts. Ideally we would like to expand that to womenswear – this is just the start and we are just learning as we go along.*

Izzy: *We feel we have more to say than thinking we are fashion savvy. It's more our voice, which is why the vlog/blog is a really good tool to create that platform and following.*

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

Marian: *We don't want to jinx it. Something we definitely do believe is that you can't make big change without influence. So we want to become influential enough to make changes.*

Why is fashion and beauty important?

Izzy: *It's a way that people express themselves. It's art. You need more of that in the world rather than copycatting a magazine.*

Marian: *A lot of young women are easily swayed in the wrong direction. There are a lot of nega-*



tive images portrayed through really powerful media. We are trying to create a more positive image.

What are the qualities of a beautiful woman?

Izzy: *A woman that knows her value 100 percent.*

What is a strong woman?

Marian: *Same thing. Women are strong.*

Have there been any challenges or rewards yet?

Marian: *We haven't officially started yet. But a reward has been realising this is something that we did want to do and it's becoming possible. When we have our meetings I wish we could do this all the time*

Izzy: *On a personal level Marian and I started this as best friends – It is the reason we work so well together despite a dispute here and there. We still always remember our origins.*

Marian: *A sort of challenge in the beginning was finding a personal and professional balance. Every time we saw each other it was work. We had to remember 'wait we are best friends and we*

do need to catch up on each other's' lives'. Before the business we used to meet for coffee every week and then it started to turn in to business meetings where we wouldn't make time to catch up – so now we take two hours before our meetings to have coffee and chat and then we do some work.

What should we be looking out for in your upcoming posts?

Marian: *Our next blog will be about Sexism or Gender inequality – Emma Watson has done interesting work in this area – Feminism has almost gone too far one way – it's not about women having more rights than men, it's about women having the same rights as men. My dad always says that it should be called genderism.*

Would you recommend starting a business to anyone else?

Definitely! We need more women doing it!

You can follow Izzy and Marian on their blog at:
originalminds.com

CRAFTS FOR WOMEN OF JORDAN

Colourful cloths, black notebooks and bowls of grapes sit neatly on the tables of the South London Peace Embassy. A late afternoon in October, a Coffee Meeting (a WFPW UK Youth group) is in session with several young women gathered to make cloth-covered notebooks to raise money for women and refugees in Jordan. As hands craft and chats abound, Harumi Currie, WFPW volunteer from Japan who currently lives in the UK, shares about her recent personal experiences in Jordan with the women in the WFPW projects that were started there 16 years ago:

It is midnight. Arriving at the airport, the cool September breeze awakens Harumi, first-time visitor to Amman, the capital of Jordan. The brown expanse before her lays deserted, thoughts of biblical history whispering in the air.

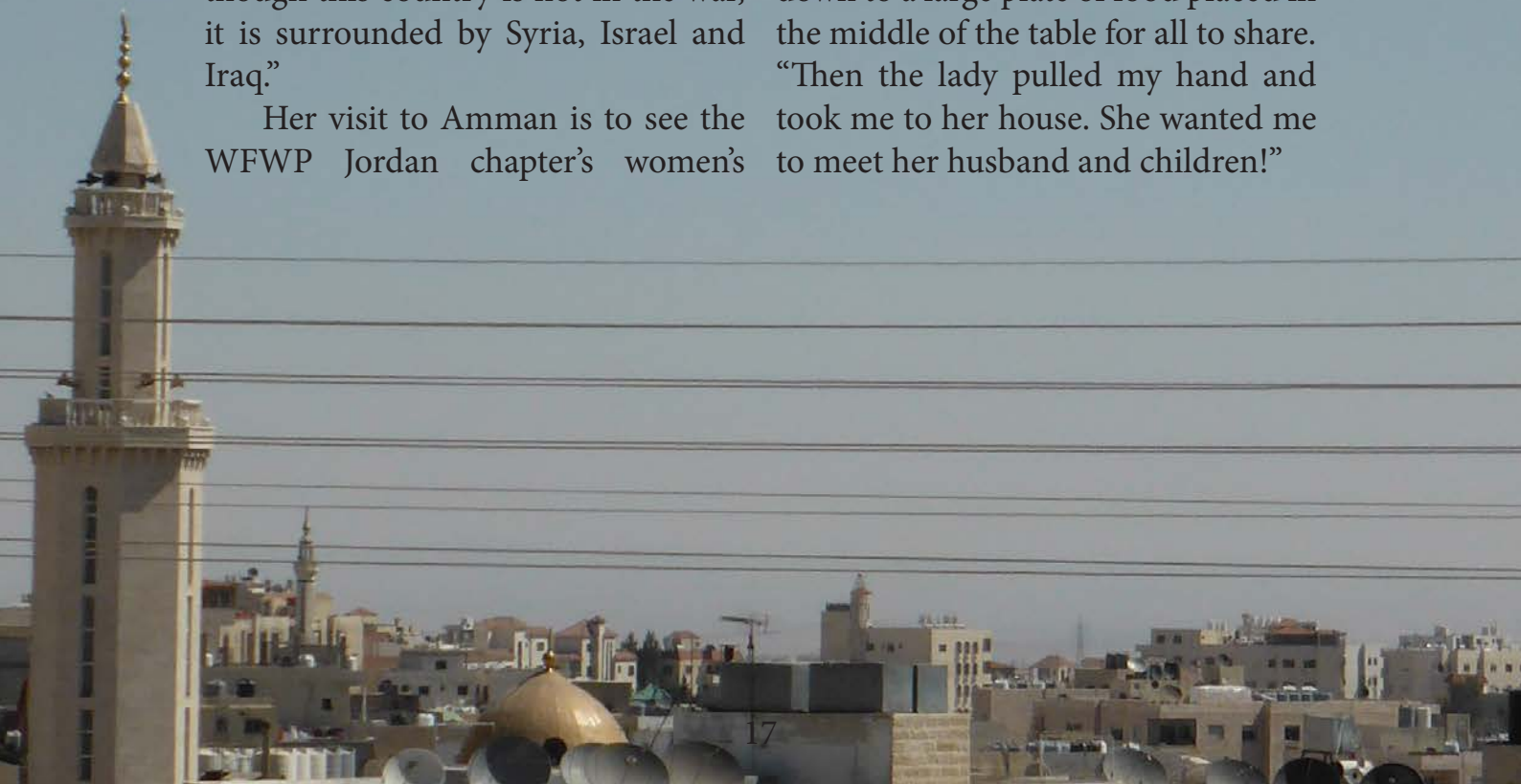
“I have to be very careful how I behave and what I say,” she thinks. “Even though this country is not in the war, it is surrounded by Syria, Israel and Iraq.”

Her visit to Amman is to see the WFPW Jordan chapter’s women’s

training centre, which was established in 1994. This centre and project was started by the International WFPW, called the Middle East Women’s Peace Initiative, to aid Jordanian women, as well as Palestinian and Iraqi women settling in Jordan. The WFPW UK chapter started to support the centre and Syrian refugees.

In the morning, with the Jordan sun shining bright, it is already a hot day. The 360 degree sky paints gradient colors with each sunrise and sunset – a desert canvas to behold. During the day, women are free to walk around but there are few women in the shops. At night, many men walk the dusty streets, but no women, according to Harumi. “It was very strange for me,” she says.

It is off to the training centre. “I felt somehow very close to one lady I met. We couldn’t communicate verbally but we hugged each other,” she says. All the committee members sit down to a large plate of food placed in the middle of the table for all to share. “Then the lady pulled my hand and took me to her house. She wanted me to meet her husband and children!”





Dozens of spices fill the air in the lady's home. Harumi smiles in wonder at this down-to-earth place, where tap water is unpotable and flushing toilets are a rarity reserved for the rich.

The training centre, located in Wadi Seer, a poverty-stricken area in Amman, organises vocational classes, such as beauty courses (the participants can take a national exam to be a qualified beautician after attending the course), accessory-making courses and English and math courses.

"They also support women's independence through the microfinance project," adds Harumi. "Women who run or will run a small

business like a clothes or hairdressing shop can borrow money from WFPW with no interest." They only need to meet the criteria and sign a guarantee. Harumi asserts that this is especially important, as the opportunity for women to go to work is limited in Jordan.

In recent years, many people have escaped from Iraq, and the number of Syrian refugees is increasing rapidly, according to Harumi. "The UN or the Jordan government cannot keep up with them," she says, shaking her head. "Some organisations estimate that nearly 30% of Jordan's population is refugees from Iraq and Syria.

Furthermore, because they cannot work



and instead have to wait years for a visa, their daily life is a constant survival. Many cannot pay for rent, food or medicine.

Because of the overwhelming amount of refugees, WFWP has to limit its support to certain families. “We try to find for the most desperate families food for tomorrow,” explains Harumi. “Some families ate just naan-like bread for three days and then the mother couldn’t produce milk for her baby.”

This is a major concern also because Jordan experiences harsh winters. “The refugees’ living condition is less than basic – they need blankets to survive the winter,” says Harumi, worry in her voice.

It’s situations like these where refugee women need outside help. “At the moment we are focusing to raise funds for [the refugees],” says Harumi. “Sending goods are too expensive. WFWP Jordan can buy essential products themselves like baby’s milk, blanket, meat, etc.

locally.”

Based on these experiences, Harumi encourages young people from the UK to help the training centre, the communities and the refugees.

Keishin Barrett, 25-year-old member of WFWP UK of two years – one of the ladies assembling colourful notebooks – is one such young person that is thinking about going there someday. “I want to do my part and raise awareness even if it is very small,” she says.

As the crafts come to a close, the young women in South London listen to the rest of Harumi’s stories and laugh and talk together. Beautiful new notebooks are ready to sell to support the very women they are hearing about, and everyone leaves feeling inspired about how they can help their sisters in Jordan in the future.

By Tanya Selle

FABRIC COVERED NOTEBOOKS

