

Hello everyone! Thank you for joining us today. My name is Shatha and I am a member of the women's group.

As you may all know, Women who are going through their immigration process have always suffered from isolation. The women's group has created a space and a community for marginalised migrant and refugee women to belong. In these weekly sessions, we found peer support and got involved in creative projects. The women's group has provided all of us with a sense of safety and empowerment, and it became an essential part of our weekly routine. When the lockdown was announced, it meant that the isolation we already felt before had extended to physical isolation. The uncertainty has never been more threatening. It was a very challenging time because the women's group support has never been more needed but also it has never been unattainable either. Thankfully, the Zoom calls have offered us the chance to stay connected during these challenging times. And just to give you a glimpse of how the Zoom calls were conducted, I'd like to invite you all to a trip down memory lane: May I ask you all to close your eyes please:

*“The zoom session has started, we are waiting for everyone to log in. Tamara and Rebekka are playing background music - feel-good songs- while waiting for people to join we start with a stretch. The women lead this exercise. Every woman participates with a stretching move and the rest of the group follow their lead. We hear all sorts of noises in the background. Women are joining from the buses after dropping their kids off to school, or they're teaching them from home, cooking in the background. And the too little ones are climbing over their mother's heads, wanting to join our call. Children always had a strong presence in our sessions. We start discussing the topic of that session, we see many lips moving, but we can't hear anything and the all too familiar “Hey Florence, I think you are on mute” and “hey guys please mute yourself if you are not speaking so we can all hear each other” is coming up. The session proceeds and we go into breakout rooms, today we discuss international women's day and look at migrant and black women's activism and art, we read Maya Angelou's poem 'phenomenal woman' and each have a go at writing our own version, or we speak about mental health, about finding hope in difficult times and finally, at the end of the session we send our love and wishes to everyone and dream of the day that everything goes back to normal, and we can go back to being together in the same room again.”*

Now you may all open your eyes and not only appreciate the resilience that got you through those hard times but also enjoy the great collective achievements that came out of it our SLRA women group quilt and zine.