

BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

**Registered Charity No. 1014576
Registered Company No. 2727514**

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees are pleased to present their report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2009.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity number 1014576

Company number 2727514

Chief Executive
Donna Covey

Auditors
PKF (UK) LLP
Farringdon Place
20 Farringdon Road
London EC1M 3AP

Company Secretary
Carol Jackson

Bankers
National Westminster Bank plc
1-4 Berkeley Square
London W1J 6BR

Registered Office
240/250 Ferndale Road
London SW9 8BB

Solicitors
Gregory, Rowcliffe & Milners
1 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4BZ

Stanton Dunne & Co Solicitors
The Generals, Main Road
Boreham, Chelmsford
Essex CM3 3JH

Trustees of the company

The Refugee Council Trustees serve as the directors of the company and members of the Board of Trustees. The following were members of the Board of Trustees during the year:

Douglas Board (Chair)	Co-opted	
Yvonne Cass (Vice-Chair)	Northern Refugee Centre	Appointed as Trustee 3 December 2008 Appointed as Vice Chair 30 July 2009
John Wenger (Honorary Treasurer)	Co-opted	
John Akker	Council for Assisting Refugee Academics	Resigned 3 December 2008
Michael Bartlett	Religious Society of Friends	Re-appointed 31 July 2008
Alex da Costa	Angolan Civic Communities Alliance	
Richard Foster	Co-opted	
Farrukh Husain	The Migrant Resource Centre	Resigned 23 May 2008
Sandra Jenner	Co-opted	Resigned 26 November 2008
Keefa Kiwanuka	One World Foundation	
Mohamed Maigag	Haringey Community and Cultural Association	
Afzal Mirza	Refugee Advice Centre	
Yen Nyeya	Ghana Refugee Welfare Group	Appointed 31 July 2008
Sunetra Puri	Co-opted	
Hooshang Paigir	Afghan Association of London	Resigned 29 May 2008
John Wilkes	Scottish Refugee Council	Appointed 3 December 2008
Maurice Wren	Asylum Aid	
Alison Young	Co-opted	Appointed 26 March 2009
Louise Zanré	Jesuit Refugee Service	

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Structure, Governance and Management

The British Refugee Council ("the Refugee Council") is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. The Refugee Council is a membership organisation and its governing documents are its Memorandum and Articles of Association. Organisations and individuals become members by payment of a membership subscription. All members agree to contribute £1 in the event of the charity winding up.

Appointment of Trustees

The Board of Trustees consists of up to fifteen members:

- Five are elected from Refugee Community Organisations;
- Five are elected from national and international organisations that carry out significant work with refugees; and
- The remaining five are, following a recruitment campaign, co-opted by the other Trustees because of the particular skills or experience they can bring to the work of the Board.

Trustee induction and training

All Trustees receive a full induction upon being elected or appointed to the Board of Trustees. The induction is a comprehensive overview of the work of the Refugee Council, and includes detailed information about our grant arrangements with key funders and a thorough introduction to the organisation's strategic plan, financial procedures and budget for the current financial year. Trustees also receive training on governance issues including, for example, a briefing on what constitutes a conflict of interest.

The Trustee body as a whole is kept up-to-date with legal and statutory requirements with ad hoc training as required.

Organisation

The Board of Trustees administers the charity and normally meets six times a year, with additional review meetings when required. The Resources Committee of the Board is made up of the Chair, Treasurer, Vice Chair and one or more other Trustees with relevant experience and also meets six times a year. The Resources Committee operates under specific terms of reference, with certain delegated functions from the Board of Trustees. The Board ratifies all decisions made by the Resources Committee.

Other committees may be constituted from time to time, for example to review fundraising or governance.

Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team led by the Chief Executive, who is appointed by the Trustees.

Risk management

The Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate systems of control, financial and otherwise, exist. They are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity, taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities and providing reasonable assurance that:

- The Refugee Council is operating efficiently and effectively;
- Its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposal;
- Proper records are maintained and financial information used internally or for publication is reliable; and
- The charity complies with relevant laws and regulations.

The systems of internal control are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance against material misstatement or loss. They include:

- The preparation of a three year Strategic Plan and an Annual Plan and Budget approved by the Board of Trustees;

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Risk management (continued)

- Regular review of financial and operational results by the Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees;
- A review by the Resources Committee with the external auditors of any matters raised for the attention of management;
- Delegation of authority for expenditure;
- Health and safety risk management, review and monitoring procedures;
- Critical incident reporting and review procedures; and
- Contract management of funding partnerships.

As part of its management of risk, the Board of Trustees commissions reports which:

- Identify the risks which the organisation faces;
- Assess their potential impact and the likelihood of them happening; and
- Highlight the management action being taken to mitigate and manage the risks.

The key risks are identified as:

- A reduction in unrestricted income due to the present adverse economic conditions;
- The volatility, internationally and politically, of the sector in which the Refugee Council works;
- The changing pattern of service provision including increased competitive tendering.

Risks, and the actions to manage the risks, are formally reviewed on a six-monthly basis.

Objectives, Activities and Achievements

Objectives

The objects of the charity, as defined in its governing documents, are:

- to provide relief for refugees and their dependants who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress;
- to preserve and protect the physical and mental health of refugees and their dependants;
- to advance the education of refugees and their dependants in need thereof so as to advance them in life and assist in their rehabilitation within a new community;
- to promote research into the condition of life of refugees throughout the world and ways of providing charitable relief for them and to publish the results of all such research; and
- to advance public education about the position of refugees and the situations that give rise to refugee movements.

The charity aims to deliver high quality services to refugees and asylum seekers to ensure that they fully understand their rights and responsibilities in the UK, obtain access to the legal, counselling, housing, employment, education and health care services they need and are able to integrate successfully into British society. The charity also aims to promote positive images of refugees and asylum seekers and ensure that the rights enshrined in national and international law are not eroded.

Public Benefit

The Trustees are aware that the Charities Act 2006 requires charities to demonstrate that their work is of direct benefit to the public. When planning the Refugee Council's activities each year, the Trustees take due regard of the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Within the constraint of resources, the Refugee Council's services, described below, are available to all refugees and people claiming asylum. Services are offered in many of our clients' languages, without charging fees, and recognising the difficulties many face in meeting travelling costs. Our work on sector capacity-building, refugee integration and education of the general public about refugee issues benefits the whole community by supporting community cohesion. Our work on policy, legislation and advocacy advances human rights, and access to employment, education and health care, and combats destitution.

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Activities

The Refugee Council's four major areas of activity are asylum support and refugee integration, campaigning and policy, education and training and capacity building.

Asylum support and refugee integration (direct services to refugees and asylum seekers)

Asylum support and refugee integration is at the very heart of the Refugee Council's work and consists of delivering high quality advice and support services to individuals and families at all stages of the asylum process from locations in Greater London, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and East of England, and in the North-East and Northern Ireland via sub-contracted services. Our day induction services and wrap around services in asylum seeker Initial Accommodation provide assistance to newly arrived asylum seekers, including practical help such as accommodation, food and clothing as well as advice sessions and advocacy work. The One Stop Service provides advice to those at all stages of the asylum process and is able to help our clients to access both mainstream services and specialist support. The Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) helps those who have been given refugee status to both integrate into their community and to gain employment. The charity's Children's Panel works specifically with separated children (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children), helping them to access education, training, health care and legal advice as well as providing much needed emotional support.

The Refugee Council also plays a key role in the Gateway Protection Programme, the Government's programme which resettles refugees from various countries who have been displaced, have often lived in refugee camps for a number of years, require humanitarian protection, and are referred to the UK Government by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Campaigning and policy

The Refugee Council plays a key role in influencing asylum and refugee policy, seeking to preserve the right to seek protection, and challenging UK and European policies that have a detrimental effect on refugees and asylum seekers through analysis, research, information and lobbying. Much of this work involves co-ordinating with our partners in the UK and Europe and analysing the links between UK asylum policy and refugee producing situations. Through our campaigning and awareness-raising work and our leadership of Refugee Week we seek to promote positive images of refugees and asylum seekers and to challenge hostility and ignorance, engaging with our supporters to influence UK, EU and international policy, public opinion and the media on key issues.

Education and training

The Refugee Council provides information about asylum and refugee issues in a variety of media and to a wide range of different audiences – asylum seekers and refugees, advisers and community groups, schools, college and youth groups, voluntary and statutory service providers, legislators and policy makers, academics and journalists as well as the general public. Our Information and Marketing Team also organises conferences and training courses and publishes a wide range of material in print and on-line.

Access to training and employment is vital if asylum seekers and refugees are to integrate successfully into British society. To assist refugees, the charity also runs some employment mentoring schemes, with corporate and other volunteers, and gives advice on training and employment in the UK, through, for example, the Refugees into Teaching project, which aims to support people who have had teaching experience in their home country to develop a career in education.

Capacity building

As the leading organisation in the sector, the Refugee Council's work extends beyond the provision of direct services to asylum seekers and refugees. We also support hundreds of local and regional organisations, including Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) who support asylum seekers and refugees across the country. Through information, advice, training conferences, development materials and support for networking, we help them to develop their organisations and deliver their services.

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Achievements and their impact

The Refugee Council's annual plan for 2008/09 was driven by the key strategic objectives set out in our Strategic Plan 2005-2009. The key achievements for the year are set out below.

Asylum Support and refugee integration (direct services to refugees and asylum seekers)

In line with our plans for the 2008/09 financial year, we:

- Developed and enhanced the service we provide to clients in our Initial Accommodation Centres by identifying specific areas of need and developing specialist teams to address those needs. For example, in Yorkshire and Humberside we have created specialist sub groups for age disputes, women's issues, events and campaigns, sports activities and mental well being.
- Further developed the Talks Team project, identifying relevant target audiences and expanding the Talks Team. This project provides training to asylum seekers and refugees to organise and deliver talks to school children and others, telling their story and describing their journey to the UK. In Yorkshire and Humberside, for example, we delivered talks to not only schools but also unions, health service workers and others, and 70% of the Talks Team volunteers who were granted refugee status went on to paid employment or full time study. The East of England Talks Team has flourished since receiving funding for one year from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, providing talks to many local groups, including the local police training programme.
- Further developed the Gateway Resettlement Programme. The Gateway programme is now well established in Hull and Sheffield, with rolling programmes being agreed, and has been expanded in Norwich. The Gateway team has changed its structure to respond to new refugee needs. For example, we now have employment workers working with the new Iraqi refugees in both Hull and Sheffield.
- Designed and established the new Refugee Integration and Employment Service in London, West Midlands, the East of England and Yorkshire and Humberside, delivering integration advice and support, employment advice and mentoring to clients who have recently been granted refugee status. We are working in partnership with 13 partners and up to the end of March 2009 had delivered advice services to 799 clients in the London, West Midlands and East of England areas. Despite the recession, so far we have helped 113 refugees to find employment within the first 9 months.

In addition, we:

- After continuing to experience high demand for our One Stop Service we have been reviewing how best to meet this demand with our limited resources, and have responded for example by increasing our use of volunteers to provide both face-to-face advice and telephone advice. We have significantly increased the volume of telephone advice provided, to clients and to other agencies.
- Developed our work helping destitute asylum seekers in partnership with other voluntary sector agencies, leading to more networked services for people on or seeking Section 4 support and their dependents.
- Delivered the first year of the SMILE Project (Supporting and Mentoring in Learning and Education), focusing on supporting refugee children in education across the UK and funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. So far, we have recruited 85 mentors and befrienders for refugee children and organized group activities including museum visits, dance lessons, a visit to Parliament and the SMILE film project, as well as delivering awareness raising talks in schools. We also continued to run around a dozen regular surgeries for separated children around England, as part of the work of our Children's Panel.
- Launched a guide to employing refugees, in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This was targeted at employment agencies and employers, with the aim of reducing the barriers faced by clients when trying to provide adequate documentation to prove their right to work.

