



Refugee Council
Impact Report 2005/06

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Helena Ismail

Interim Chair, Refugee Council from February 2006



It gives me great pleasure to be writing this introduction to the Refugee Council's Impact Report 2005/06. This year the report is in a different format and is based around two key themes - journeys and volunteering. At its heart are the stories of four remarkable people, all refugees and all volunteers. The stories show how the Refugee Council helped them to complete their journeys to safety and how they have gone on to give so much back to the organisation. Through these stories, the remarkable range and impact of the work of the Refugee Council is vividly brought to life, and the amazing contributions of people who come to the UK with nothing are highlighted.

2005 was the Year of the Volunteer and as well as the people featured in this report many other people, from all backgrounds, have given their time, their skills and their commitment to the Refugee Council in a voluntary capacity. Without them we couldn't have done half the things we did in 2005/06 – and of course, the work continues. So I would like to pay my personal tribute to our volunteers, not just those recipients of Year of the Volunteer Awards but to all the volunteers at the Refugee Council who make such a significant contribution to the organisation. The names of the award recipients are recorded in the Thank you section on page 31.

As ever, 2005/06 was a period of transition and change. It is because of one of those changes that I find myself writing this introduction in my capacity as Interim Chair of the Board of Trustees. As many of you will know, during the year Naaz Coker retired as Chair after eight years of dedicated work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for everything she has done for the Refugee Council.

I am pleased to say that Douglas Board will be taking over as Chair in January 2007.

In September 2006, Maeve Sherlock stood down as Chief Executive. Her report is on the following pages, but she will modestly give the credit for another year of achievement to others. It falls to me to thank her for the immense contribution she has made to the Refugee Council in three years as Chief Executive. We wish her well for the future.

Let me end, by praising the staff of the Refugee Council and my fellow trustees. Can I also thank our partners and donors for all their support. The last year has seen yet more policies introduced which make life much tougher for asylum seekers and refugees, and the public debate on asylum is still poisoned by hostility, fear and ignorance. We have much to do if this country's tradition as a haven for people fleeing persecution is to be maintained. Let us all continue this good work to ensure that this country lives up to its reputation for welcoming refugees to its shores, showing humanity, justice and fairness to those who have lost everything and fled from violence, persecution and other human rights abuses.

Maeve Sherlock

Chief Executive, Refugee Council during 2005/06

In September 2006, Maeve Sherlock stepped down as Chief Executive of the Refugee Council after three years. So 2005/06 proved to be her last full year in charge of the organisation. On the eve of her departure the journalist Hashi Syedain, a Refugee Council volunteer, spoke to her.

Hashi Syedain: Looking back, what have been the main developments in the past year?

Maeve Sherlock: The heartening message from the past year is how much ordinary people care about refugees. In the past 12 months we've stepped up our campaigning efforts and have been really impressed by the level of public support. Our Don't Believe the Type campaign continued to challenge myths about refugees and more recently, No Place for a Child, a campaign run with the Save the Children Fund and Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) saw 14,000 postcards sent to the Home Secretary, protesting against the locking up of children in detention centres.

HS: So people do listen when the Refugee Council calls for better treatment of asylum seekers and refugees?

MS: Yes, I'm convinced that our voice does make a difference. What we said about destitution helped end Section 55, which left many asylum seekers sleeping rough on the streets a couple of years ago. In the past year we have continued to highlight poverty among refused asylum seekers through our own campaigning, which now includes the Just.Fair. campaign, and by supporting Church Action on Poverty's excellent Living Ghosts campaign.

On a more general level it has been encouraging that the nature of the debate about refugees has become less febrile. It reached a low point during the 2005 election campaign, when the Conservative Party actually suggested that Britain withdraw from the UN Convention on Refugees – something no country has contemplated before. But after the

election it was almost as though we pulled back from the brink, which was a huge relief. The tenor of that debate was detrimental to sensible policy making and the reception we and others in the field have received at subsequent party conferences is much more constructive. Unfortunately, towards the end of the year problems resurfaced at the Home Office. The feeding frenzy over foreign nationals in prisons resulted in a level of attention on Home Office activities that no organisation could survive unscathed.

HS: How have you responded to the change in numbers of new asylum seekers over the past three years?

MS: During my tenure at the Refugee Council there has been a steady shift in the emphasis of our activities from dealing with newly arrived refugees to helping people further down the line, either to settle in the UK or to return home. The numbers of new asylum claims have dropped by three-quarters and numbers continue to fall.

We have been involved in two major programmes – the Gateway Protection Programme and SUNRISE. Gateway is a programme that brings recognised refugees into the UK for resettlement. It's a wonderful initiative and the government deserves credit for sticking with it. The first group to come were from Liberia and settled in Sheffield. Since then groups from Burma and the Democratic Republic of Congo have arrived. The number of councils participating in the scheme has also increased and they are geographically well spaced across the country, including Bolton, Hull, Norwich and Brighton and Hove.



People that come to the UK through Gateway are in some ways even less prepared for life in the UK than those who arrive under their own steam and apply for asylum on arrival. But the programme gives them fantastic support to integrate straight away. It has been really moving to hear the stories from the first group and how much it meant to them to be safe and to be able to get on with their lives.

SUNRISE is a scheme we are piloting in Yorkshire and Humberside that offers support to refugees immediately after they have received a positive decision. Part of this is about matching up individual refugees and families with local volunteers to make them feel at home in the local community. This kind of contact is sometimes more powerful than any official programme – family to family contact that refugees would otherwise find hard to establish and that answers questions no programme can hope to – what do people's homes look like, how do they eat, what to they do on the weekends?

HS: So helping refugees to integrate into UK communities and play a full part in British life is becoming a more important part of the Refugee Council's role?

MS: Yes, helping with integration is definitely one of the areas we will continue to expand. Refugees don't just want to survive, they want to thrive. We have a number of initiatives aimed at helping refugees find work and helping children to settle. There is the Refugees into Teaching programme, in conjunction with the Training and Development Agency for Schools, that helps refugees who were teachers in their countries enter the profession here. Refugees into Business is based on a website giving advice

and networking and training opportunities for those wanting to start their own businesses. For children, there is the Inclusive Schools programme, supported by the KPMG Foundation, which identifies schools that are good at supporting refugees and aims to spread their good practice to other schools.

HS: Are you optimistic about the future for refugees in this country?

MS: Very much. As I leave the Refugee Council there is a lot to be optimistic about. There is now a growing body of successful refugees in this country who are changing perceptions. Dispersal around the UK is also gathering pace. It's easy to hate a statistic but hard to hate real people, so the more we can mix populations the better. That way more people can hear individual stories.

But on a policy level there are still many worrying trends – the raising of borders in order to stop smuggling and trafficking has made it harder than ever for refugees to reach a safe country. We also have to understand the difference between asylum and migration and make sure that whatever security measures we put on our borders, there are always doors for refugees – access to a process. It's not impossible, but you have to want to do it.

This is a wonderful sector to have worked in. I'm still in awe of what so many refugees have been through – and then they still want to give something back. Some of the children are astonishing. We are lucky that so many of these refugees want to settle in this country.

Guinah's journey

Guinah was 15 when he set up a group called the Association des Jeunes Libres or Association for Free Youths. The group wanted to speak out about the tyranny in their country, Togo in West Africa. As a result, Guinah faced harassment and persecution from the authorities. In June 2003 his mother persuaded him to leave Togo after another rigged election. "People were being targeted, arrested, tortured and... many of those who have gone have never come back. In Togo there's no election without a bloodbath."

Guinah was smuggled into the UK by an agent. It was the only way he could find safety here. Gemma Juma, the Refugee Council's International Protection Manager, says this is an increasing problem:

"Our borders are now so tight that people fleeing persecution are pushed into the hands of smugglers and traffickers, and forced to make ever-more dangerous journeys. The Refugee Council is currently developing a project, supported by the UNHCR, to develop realistic safe routes for refugees to reach Europe."

During 2005/06, the Refugee Council undertook a number of initiatives in this important area:

- **Contributing to the European Parliament's Annual Human Rights report to highlight our concerns about interception measures and their impact on refugees fleeing persecution**
- **Delivering a keynote speech on The Impact of Interception Measures to the 11th Annual Humanitarian Conference in Geneva**
- **Giving evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee Enquiry into Immigration Control on the impact of interception measures**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy

Guinah was completely alone in the UK. "When I looked in front of me there was no mum, behind me no dad, on the left no brother and on the right no sister." He was so depressed he even considered jumping under a train. "I thought I'd jump onto the rails. A non-stopping train was coming. Another quick idea lit up in my head, 'Why should I kill myself after having escaped the danger of torture and

death?' The train had passed. I did not jump onto the rails. I started sobbing very heartily."

Many asylum seekers are suffering from psychological problems and are helped by the Refugee Council's Specialist Team. Andrew Keefe, Specialist Team Manager, explains their work:

"If somebody is very depressed, or very traumatised, we assess them and then either refer them to a specialist mental health team or to an agency that provides in-depth counselling or psychotherapy. Others we can help ourselves."

"We think of ourselves as 'counsellor advocates' rather than just 'counsellors'. There are only so many times you can ask somebody how they feel about being homeless, before you have to actually find them somewhere to live."

"We are called bi-cultural workers because we see ourselves as a bridge between the culture of the client and the culture of the professional."

The Specialist Team's work in 2005/06

- **475 clients seen by bi-cultural workers**
- **673 clients supported by health workers**
- **293 clients participated in the Women's Group**

The Specialist Team works with specialist volunteers, including a psychiatrist, a nurse and a GP.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/mainservices



Our work with children 2005/06

- 4,503 drop-in sessions
- 6,000 surgeries held around the country
- 837 cases allocated to individual advisers, involving more than 50 young people in detention. 30 cases allocated to a specialist women and girl's advisor
- 100 calls a week to the advice line
- More than 100 children regularly attending the social evening
- First round of training sessions delivered to refugee community organisations on working with separated children, funded by the Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
- Conferences held in London and Birmingham focussing on refugee children
- No Place for a Child campaign launched in March 2006, by the Refugee Council in partnership with Save the Children and BID, to end the practice of detaining children for immigration purposes. More than 14,000 members of the public have signed up to support the campaign and a report on alternatives, written by parliamentary champions, has been presented to the Government

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/children

As a separated child, under the age of eighteen, Guinah was helped by the Refugee Council's Children's Panel. "My caseworker is a very nice person. She was really caring. She advised me to come to her office at the Refugee Council anyday and anytime. She paid my travel. She put me on her computer. She gave me some books and also a French-English dictionary. She also helped me to find a solicitor. 'One day you'll be able to see your mum again,' she said. I got stronger with the hope she gave me."

Although things were still very difficult for him, Guinah gained in confidence and started meeting other young refugees at the Young People's Social Evening held every Tuesday at the Brixton Day Centre. Through the social evening he got involved in drama projects and was introduced to STAR, (Student Action for Refugees). "I became a member of a very big family. For me the Refugee Council is like a 'tree of life'."

Caroline Watson from the Children's Panel runs the social evening:

"The social evening is an opportunity for separated children to come together in a safe environment. The young people come from all parts of the world where there is or has been conflict. The beauty of the social evening is that friendships made at the group transcend all cultural differences."

Guinah is a natural and talented communicator, and as his English improved, he was keen to speak up for other refugees. "I began to ring the alarm bells about the plight of the refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. I also talk about what's going on in my country. I wanted people to understand that we would not go away if our countries were safe. Because going away from your dearest is a trauma." He spoke at STAR conferences and at a Refugee Council reception for supporters at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

As a direct result of one of his speeches, he was offered a bursary place at Atlantic College in Wales where he is currently studying for an International Baccalaureate Diploma. Guinah knows he is lucky to have got a place at such a prestigious college. Other young refugees, though bright and keen to learn, have many barriers to educational attainment.

Inclusive Schools programme 2005/06

In 2005, the Refugee Council started a major three year action research project, **Inclusive Schools**, funded by the KPMG Foundation. It aims to identify good practice and strategies for increasing the inclusion of asylum seeking and refugee children in secondary education and improving their educational attainment. Lisa Doyle, Inclusive Schools Project Co-ordinator, is leading the research:

"Potentially, schools can have an enormously positive impact on refugee children, helping them rebuild their lives by providing stability, a place of safety, a celebration of their achievements, but most importantly, a chance to be children first and foremost. For their parents and carers and the wider community, schools are a vehicle for integration and social cohesion. This philosophy also underpins the project's structure, whereby the learning is taking place from the grass roots."

For more background see: **Daring to dream: Raising the achievement of 14 to 16 year-old asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people (October 2005)**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/daringtodream

Guinah got his refugee status in the summer of 2005 and the first place he came to pass on the good news was the Refugee Council. During his holidays from college he volunteers in the Campaigns and Public Affairs Team, run by manager Bob Deffee:

“Guinah is one of a number of volunteers who help us in our work with the media, with MPs and on campaigns. The success of campaigns like Don’t Believe the Type and No Place for a Child could never have been achieved without support from volunteers – both those who work in the office and those who help us at events and festivals.”

After college, Guinah hopes to go on to university and then to work promoting human rights. But he will never forget his journey into exile. Guinah writes poetry; in one of his poems he writes about leaving home:

I was leaving, but unable to see
This land that cradled my childhood.
I was going, crying along my route
I was going, carrying with me nature and love
To share with the world.
This is my identity
And my judgement is based on it
But I have gone
And I don’t know when the return will be.

Campaigns and media work 2005/06

Don’t Believe the Type was launched at the Glastonbury music festival in June 2005. Its aim was to hit back at the myths and stereotypes peddled by the media about asylum seekers and refugees. More than 3,000 campaigners have been signed up

Tell it like it is: The truth about asylum, is the highly successful Refugee Council myth-busting leaflet, giving people the real facts and figures about asylum. More than 100,000 copies have been distributed

Successful media campaigns conducted on reports on Section 9, Section 4 and vouchers

Average of 100 calls a month to the Refugee Council media office

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news



Images: Don’t Believe the Type campaign launch, RISE Festival, 2005

Elvis's journey

Like many refugees, Elvis was an opposition activist in his homeland. He paid a terrible price for his commitment to democracy in Uganda. His pregnant wife was beaten so badly she lost her baby, his sister was raped in front of him, his son ran away, and he was threatened by armed men. But when Elvis first fled to the UK in 2002, he hoped it would only be for a short time. "I was just running for my life. Seeking asylum was not in my mind."

When Elvis did end up claiming asylum he was detained at Oakington Reception Centre in Cambridgeshire. Fortunately, a Refugee Council team is based there. "The Refugee Council was the only organisation that was really willing to talk to me. They said 'Look, we're going to help you.' They were not hostile, they would always welcome you."

"Since the centre opened in April 2000, we have seen and helped nearly 50,000 asylum seekers," says Annemarie Leach, the Refugee Council's Manager at Oakington. "Many have experiences similar to Elvis, and all are treated with dignity and respect. We pride ourselves on giving a professional, friendly and supportive service to every Elvis we meet."

After leaving Oakington, Elvis was sent to Leeds. He had a place to stay, but he had no money because of a bureaucratic mistake. Again, he turned to the

Refugee Council. "The guy I talked to was very kind to me. He said 'We're going to work it out.' and he gave me some food. I'll never forget. I could hear him talking on the phone with an official, arguing vehemently on my behalf."

Charlotte Cook, Manager of the Refugee Council's Leeds Office:

"Unfortunately, we see lots of clients, like Elvis, where the system just hasn't worked and people have no-one else to turn to. People need a roof over their heads and basic support while they wait for their application for asylum to be processed. Our staff work extremely hard to make sure everyone gets that support."

Living in a strange city and forced to live on benefits, Elvis had his first claim for asylum turned down.

Clients helped in Refugee Council offices 2005/06

	Screenings	Face to face sessions	Calls to advice line	In-depth briefings, One Day Induction Process (ODIP)	NASS Forms submitted
Birmingham	36,506	11,059	1,277		
Ipswich	5,355	3,029	1,000*		
Leeds	25,841	17,389	4,252		
London	36,240	15,243	4,668	2,098	
Oakington				9,647	4,029

London clients were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Of the 20% who responded, the findings were: 96% very satisfied, 4% fairly satisfied

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/mainservices



He won a place to study Computing for Medicine and Health at Leeds University, but couldn't take it up because he couldn't afford the fees.

James Lee is the Refugee Council's Policy Adviser for Employment and Training:

"Most people who claim asylum in the UK are educated and skilled. But claiming asylum in the UK deskills them, isolates them from the wider community, limits English language learning and traps them into poverty. It is not surprising that when someone gets refugee status, their chances of getting a job that matches their previous skills and experience are not high. If they are able to find work it is usually short term, low skilled and low paid."

In December 2005, the Refugee Council joined forces with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Zimbabwe to call for a restoration of the right to work. At a meeting in the House of Commons, MPs and peers heard from Zimbabwean speakers, who were all forbidden to work and living without support. They included:

- **A surgeon with experience in paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics**
- **A home economics teacher with an MA in Education**
- **A trained carpenter – who was also an Olympic standard middle distance runner and coach**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/zimbabweupdate

Given his situation, it is hardly surprising that Elvis suffered from depression. But he was determined not to give in: "My doctor advised me 'Go out. Meet people. You can't just stay alone. Even the medication you are taking now, it's not helpful.' So I started volunteering." Elvis helped out at the Refugee Council's office in Leeds and at the St George's Crypt Homeless Centre. As his confidence grew, he became a key member of the Volunteer Talks Team, which goes out to schools, community groups and churches.

"In my life I've always been fighting, taking on prejudice. When I started, many people I spoke to, like school children, believed asylum seekers are coming here because of benefits, to get houses. They believed all the media stereotypes. But I tell them what the reality is and they really want to know. It changes their hearts and minds."

Volunteering 2005/06

Across the Refugee Council, volunteers are estimated to have contributed 100,000 hours of support

East of England – 1,129 volunteering sessions delivered

London and South East - 1,640 volunteering sessions delivered

West Midlands – More than 50 volunteers attended at least once a week; 75 per cent are refugees or asylum seekers or from other disadvantaged groups

Yorkshire and Humberside – More than 100 Why I Left my Country talks delivered by the Volunteer Talks Team; Volunteer Advisers project set up to develop volunteer skills

Job support, CV and interview training was provided by volunteers from major employers such as KPMG and Goldman Sachs

12 Refugee Council volunteers were recognised in the national Year of the Volunteer awards

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/volunteers

Elvis has gone on to become one of the Refugee Council's star speakers. He has addressed MPs, spoken at universities and in January 2006 spoke at a key Holocaust Memorial Day event in London, organised by the Jewish Museum – a close partner of the Refugee Council.

More recently, Elvis's solicitor won him the right to work. He is part of the team in Hull, who are working as part of the Government's Gateway Protection programme, to resettle refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Hull programme is a new initiative, started in 2005, that builds on the pioneering work done in Sheffield by the Refugee Council, other bodies and the local authority in Sheffield.

"So far, we have supported Liberian, Burmese, Karen and now Congolese refugees," Rachael Thompson, Deputy Team Manager of the Leeds Resettlement Team explains. "The service includes day to day family support, access to services such as benefits, health and education and help finding employment. As well as Elvis, we now have a Liberian refugee who arrived on the programme in Sheffield who has become a community development worker helping the Burmese and Karen refugees. His experience has been invaluable."

Elvis has had a long journey and it is not over yet. He is still an asylum seeker, and his latest claim has been turned down. His life remains uncertain and he does not know what the future will hold. But in the meantime he continues to make his contribution and think positively. "I feel great that I'm working with the Refugee Council, the first organisation I met and the first organisation that helped me."

Zeela Choir, formed by the Congolese community resettled in Sheffield and supported by the Refugee Council, performing at the launch of Refugee Week 2006. © Icon Photomedia



Shohro's journey

“We just wanted freedom and democracy in our country,” Shohro says, recalling her political activities. “But putting up posters and handing out leaflets could get you into trouble. Even making a video of the news on Sky TV could be dangerous.”

Shohro's country is Iran and for years she was an opponent of the fundamentalist regime. Finally, fearing imprisonment, Shohro decided she had to escape, travelling first to Turkey and then on to the UK.

There are many Iranian exiles in London and a lot of Iranian groups supporting refugees. But Shohro wanted to meet people from different backgrounds and learn from other cultures. “One of my friends told me about the Women's Group at the Refugee Council. I wanted to be involved because of my experiences in Iran. Women are often the main victims of persecution and they get forgotten. At the Women's Group I found a place where I could go and share ideas.”

The Women's Group is one of a number of activities that take place in the Refugee Council's flagship Brixton Day Centre. Admasu Haile-Selasse is the Senior Operations Manager:

“We provide a safe and welcoming environment, with the aim of minimising the impact of destitution and isolation. Services such as hot meals and hot showers help people at the very start of their journey through the asylum process, but other programmes, such as the Women's Group, bring people together and put them on the road to integration into British society.”

Shohro recalls that when she first arrived in the UK she felt like a stranger and didn't know what to expect. “The regime in Iran warns people not to go to other countries. They say European countries treat you like animals. But I saw people at the Refugee Council who were very kind and helpful.” Her experiences led Shohro to become a volunteer – and six years later she is still helping out. “I see people who are distressed and who need urgent help.

I comfort them and direct them to the right room. I care for unaccompanied refugee children at the Young People's Social Evening, talking to them and listening to their problems. We play board games and I help to plan the days out to places of interest.” Like many refugee volunteers, Shohro also assists as an interpreter, helping new arrivals who do not speak English.

Language support at the Refugee Council, 2005/06

- **7,629 interpreting sessions delivered by the interpreting team in 56 languages**
- **11 Working with Interpreters training courses delivered**
- **In May 2005, the Refugee Council Interpreting Services Handbook was launched**
- **29 client information leaflets produced, in 10 languages**
- **Multi-lingual website developed, in 20 languages**

<http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Shohro has seen at first hand the growing number of people coming to the Refugee Council's offices who have been refused asylum and who are completely destitute. Tackling this problem has become a key issue – both at the practical level and at the policy level.

“Trying to change policies that leave our clients destitute is one of the most challenging areas of the Refugee Council's work,” says Nancy Kelley, the Refugee Council's head of policy. “In November



The Day Centre 2005/06

28,660 hot meals served

703 food parcels and 989 clothing parcels distributed

2,482 drop-in English classes delivered

Other services include the Learning Time project, the Women's Group, the Young Women's Group, English classes, family tracing, social evenings for young people and Arts Club (music, dance and drama).

At other Refugee Council centres, additional services are also delivered to people, these include:

In Leeds:

Drop-in sessions, run by volunteers around the city; social-space; English classes; financial support; donations of clothes, toiletries and baby things.

In Ipswich:

Outreach support, with the Red Cross in Peterborough and Norwich, to train and support volunteers working with clients; Time Together mentoring scheme, matching refugee mentors with British citizen mentors.

In Birmingham:

Women's Group, weekly Children's Surgery, Law Surgery held weekly by trainees law students.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/mainservices

2005 the House of Lords ruled that Section 55, a policy that denied all support to people who 'failed to claim asylum as soon as reasonably practicable', was a breach of human rights. It was a victory for our lobbying and campaigning work. But we are still fighting in many other areas to ensure that people who cannot go home and are not allowed to work aren't left homeless and hungry."

As well as volunteering at the Refugee Council, Shohro continues to work with Iranian community organisations. Often the work involves highlighting what is happening back in Iran. "Women are still being stoned to death, there are still public hangings. I am still fighting for change in my country. The difference is that here I am free." As well as campaigning, community organisations provide practical and personal support for asylum seekers and refugees. "I went on a training course on Women's Therapy. Now I work with other women, sharing their problems." Shohro was a PE teacher when she was in Iran so she uses her skills by leading exercise classes. She's also worked with disabled youngsters and the homeless.

Like many refugees, Shohro is keen to promote a better understanding among the British public about refugees and why they have fled from their countries. She writes short stories and poems about her motherland and during Refugee Week, Shohro read some of her work at a community organised event attended by around 300 people. The main message was, "Don't be quiet, don't be silent, do something for Iran".

"Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of events that promote positive images of refugees," says Almir Koldzic, UK Co-ordinator of Refugee Week. "In 2005, there were around 350 events that were organised by a whole range of organisations and sectors. The majority of these events featured established and emerging artists, who came to the UK as refugees or asylum seekers."

Refugee Council's support for Refugee Week 2005/06

- Jointly organised address in Parliament by the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks
- Organised seminar on Refugee Women
- Key participant and organisers of Celebrating Sanctuary festivals in London, Birmingham and Leeds
- Worked with Refugee Community Organisations to increase participation in regional Refugee Week activities
- Supported development of new business plan and governance structure for Refugee Week

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/refugeeweek
www.refugeeweek.org.uk

Shohro does not know what the future holds for her, but she's sure the Refugee Council will be a big part of it. "I want to prove that refugees did not come to Europe to have a better life. I know most were forced to leave their country. I want to continue to help people, so I think I'll carry on volunteering at the Refugee Council for the rest of my life."

Work to help destitute clients, 2005/06

Section 4:

Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, also known as 'hard case support' allows NASS to provide full-board accommodation outside London for destitute asylum seekers who have exhausted all their appeal rights but are unable to return home.

- 6,303 sessions delivered by a newly created team in London to help refused asylum seekers get hard case support; 90% of refusals overturned on appeal
- 2,857 sessions delivered in Birmingham
- Campaigning with local churches and politicians, in Yorkshire and Humberside, led to a temporary halt on evictions
- Meetings organised between Iraqi community and NASS to discuss the impact of removals to Iraq

Section 9:

Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 provides for the withdrawal of asylum support from failed asylum-seeking families.

Section 9 pilots are being reviewed following publication of a report on the impact of the policy, Inhumane and Ineffective, which received wide media coverage.

Asylum Support Vouchers:

Parliamentary and media campaign to oppose extended use of vouchers for clients receiving hard case support

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/campaigns

Urginia's journey

For Urginia getting the picture was everything. As an independent photo-journalist in Zimbabwe, she was determined to show what was happening in her country even if that meant putting herself into positions of danger.

"I remember once there was this demonstration and tear gas was going off, but instead of running away I ran towards the trouble. I forgot that I was carrying my son on my back. My husband shouted, "What do you think you're doing!" but I had my camera. I used to carry it in my baby's nappy bag. And I thought 'Just one shot and then I'll run.' And they used that shot in the paper."

Instances like this persuaded Urginia's family that she was not safe. They paid for her to take a break in the UK. But just two weeks before she left she was assaulted by officials and beaten up by the police. When she arrived here, families and friends, shocked by the extent of the bruising on her body, persuaded her to claim asylum.

Her first contact with the Refugee Council was as a client, asking for help with support and accommodation. But after she got leave to remain in 2003, she enrolled on a six month training course for a diploma in computing, with the Refugee Council's Learning and Integration Unit.

"I was supposed to do it in a college, but at the time I was being rejected for so many things, like opening a bank account. I would find, even in a post office, people didn't know about asylum and could be hostile. So I knew I would feel more comfortable working with people who knew and understood my situation."

"Urginia is typical of those we have helped with education, training and employment," says Sreelata da Costa, Head of the Refugee Council's Learning and Integration Unit (LIU). "Our greatest achievement has been an almost 100% success rate in enabling our qualified accounting technician

Learning and Integration Unit 2005/06

- 520 clients helped through face to face advice or assessment sessions and a further 1,200 given information via email or telephone
- LIU became a test centre for the new Skills for Life ESOL exams – 30 clients completed the first Skills for Life course with a 100% success rate
- LIU selected as one of 18 national pilots for the UK Citizenship course
- 231 clients trained in ESOL and IT – 80% were women
- 88 parents completed a parenting course, with four trained as facilitators. This course has been delivered in Somali, Tigrina and Amharic
- Three Financial Literacy courses training 33 clients, were delivered in the first three months of 2006
- Innovative volunteering and ESOL scheme for asylum seekers, with Hackney City Farm, began in March 2006
- Horticultural training for refugees at Hackney City Farm
- 57 work placements provided in FTSE companies and the public sector, resulting in 31 jobs
- KPMG provided CV and interview support to 45 clients
- 22 refugee doctors enabled to gain UK qualifications and clinical appointments, with financial support from the Hardship Fund for books and examination fees

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/liu



trainees to enter full time employment in a range of sectors including housing associations, charities and major FTSE companies.”

Later on, Urginia – now reunited with her son, but living in temporary accommodation – approached the Refugee Council about becoming a volunteer.

She started working for the Information and Marketing Team; filing, putting together information packs for training and helping with marketing activities.

Information, Training and Events 2005/06

- **51% increase in subscriptions to the Information Service**
- **More than 100 training courses delivered**
- **Four conferences held across London, Birmingham and York**
- **Successful comedy night, No Laughing Matter, held at the Comedy Store, May 2006**
- **New website launched September 2006**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information-service

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/training

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/conferences

More recently, Urginia has picked up her camera again, taking photographs at numerous Refugee Council events.

“When I arrived in the UK I was scared to hold a camera and to point it at people because of what had happened to me. I wasn’t really confident so this has helped me to regain my confidence.”

“Now, I’m thinking bigger, I don’t want to take pictures just for papers now, I’m thinking maybe I can make documentaries, it’s helped to open my mind. Now I’m more confident, confident about speaking to people in this country – so it’s opened up my mind a lot.”

“The contribution that volunteers make to our events is immeasurable,” says Anna Lodge, Events, Conferences and Training Manager. “Urginia runs photo shoots for training brochures, takes pictures of government ministers at conferences and relates her moving story at campaigning and fundraising events. We were so proud when she won an award through Year of the Volunteer, it was so well deserved.”

Urginia is a member of the Zimbabwe Journalists Association, an exile group, and also takes pictures for The Zimbabwean newspaper. She can often be seen with her camera at demonstrations and vigils.

Urginia is also happy to tell her story and so has been featured in many newspapers and magazines.

“The best way to create a better understanding of asylum is by telling the stories of people who’ve fled persecution and found safety in the UK,” explains the Refugee Council’s Media Officer, Hannah Ward. “That’s why the Refugee Council works with community groups to give refugees and asylum seekers a voice. It isn’t easy given our hostile media. But the courageous people who do tell their stories do make a difference.”

Working to develop the refugee community sector is an important part of the Refugee Council’s mission.

Working with Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) 2005/06

- **880 RCOs received six issues of RCO News and RCO Women’s News**
- **159 RCOs in London were sent information packs**
- **Doing it for Ourselves guide to running an RCO distributed to 40 RCOs and 160 more distributed around Europe by the UNHCR**
- **61 one-to-one fundraising consultancy sessions delivered**
- **27 Women’s Groups directly supported, and another 19 RCOs advised on women’s issues**
- **National Refugee Forum planned strategies for RCO development and capacity building**
- **163 delegates attended three RCO seminars**
- **National conference attracted 70 RCOs**
- **Revised edition of QASRO – Quality Assurance System – completed for distribution in 2006**
- **Two-year research project launched on refugee experience’s of integration, in partnership with the University of Birmingham**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/rcos

“The Refugee Council has helped me a lot,” Urginia says. “Even talking about my experiences, I could not do that at all. I would see people fighting and I would

get palpitations. But coming here and going to my counselling at the same time, and talking about what I was doing at the Refugee Council, it helped me forget about my problems, and allowed me to move on.”

“I want my future to be really bright. Right now, it’s a bit unstable. I think one day I will really be someone.” She hopes one day to return to Africa, if not Zimbabwe.



Images: Zimbabwe vigil, outside the Royal Courts of Justice and protestors demonstrating against Iraqi removals

Statement of financial activities

For the Year Ended 31 March 2006

Incorporating the income and expenditure statement

Incoming resources from generated funds	Unrestricted funds £000	Restricted funds £000	2006 total	2005 total £000 restated
Voluntary income				
Donations, legacies and other voluntary income	1,044	737	1,781	1,961
Investment income	109	5	114	134
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Direct services to refugees and asylum seekers	1,803	11,205	13,008	27,697
Campaigning and policy	231	314	545	388
Education and training	614	596	1,210	1,273
Capacity building	353	1,256	1,609	1,741
Other incoming resources	32	–	32	–
Total incoming resources	4,186	14,113	18,299	33,194
Less: Cost of generating funds				
Voluntary income				
Fundraising costs	557	–	557	579
Total cost of generating funds	557	–	557	579
Net incoming resources available for charitable activities	3,629	14,113	17,742	32,615
Resources Expended				
Charitable activities				
Direct services to refugees and asylum seekers	1,887	11,375	13,262	29,434
Campaigning and policy	526	543	1,069	938
Education and training	607	678	1,285	1,083
Capacity building	339	1,429	1,768	1,532
Total charitable activity costs	3,359	14,025	17,384	32,987
Governance cost	44	–	44	41
Total resources expended	3,960	14,025	17,985	33,607
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	226	88	314	(413)
Transfers				
Gross transfers between funds	–	–	–	–
Net incoming/(outgoings) before other recognised gains and losses	226	88	314	(413)
Other recognised gains				
Gains on investment assets	5	–	5	2
Net movement in funds in year	231	88	319	(411)
Reconciliation of Funds				
Total funds brought forward 1 April	1,410	1,918	3,328	3,739
Total funds carried forward 31 March	1,641	2,006	3,647	3,328

Balance sheet

As at 31 March 2006

	2006 total £000	2005 total £000 restated
<i>Assets</i>		
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	360	545
Investments	24	10
	384	555
Current assets		
Debtors	2,372	3,578
Cash at bank and in hand	3,975	2,760
	6,347	6,338
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(2,574)	(3,307)
Net current assets	3,773	3,031
Total assets less current liabilities	4,157	3,586
Provisions for liabilities	(510)	(258)
Net assets	3,647	3,328
<i>Funds</i>		
Unrestricted funds		
General	–	854
Designated	–	556
	1,641	1,410
Restricted funds	2,006	1,918
Total funds	3,647	3,328

The summarised financial statements set out on pages 22 to 24 have been extracted from the full annual accounts prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985, which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 28 September 2006.

The full annual accounts:

- have been audited and the auditors' opinion was unqualified; and
- will be delivered to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission.

Helena Ismail, Interim Chair
John Wenger, Honorary Treasurer

Independent auditor's statement

We have audited the financial statements of the British Refugee Council for the year ended 31 March 2006 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the cash flow statement, and the related notes 1 to 22. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditors

As described in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of financial statements, which are required to be prepared in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant United Kingdom legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. We report on the consistency of the trustees' report with the financial statements. We also report if the charity has not kept proper accounting records, if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit, or if information specified by law regarding trustees' remuneration and other transactions is not disclosed.

We read the Trustees' Report and the other information contained in the Annual Report for the above year as described in the contents section and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the trustees in the preparation of the financial statements and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the charitable company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion, we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion:

- The financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2006 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended
- The financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985
- The Trustees' Report is consistent with the financial statements

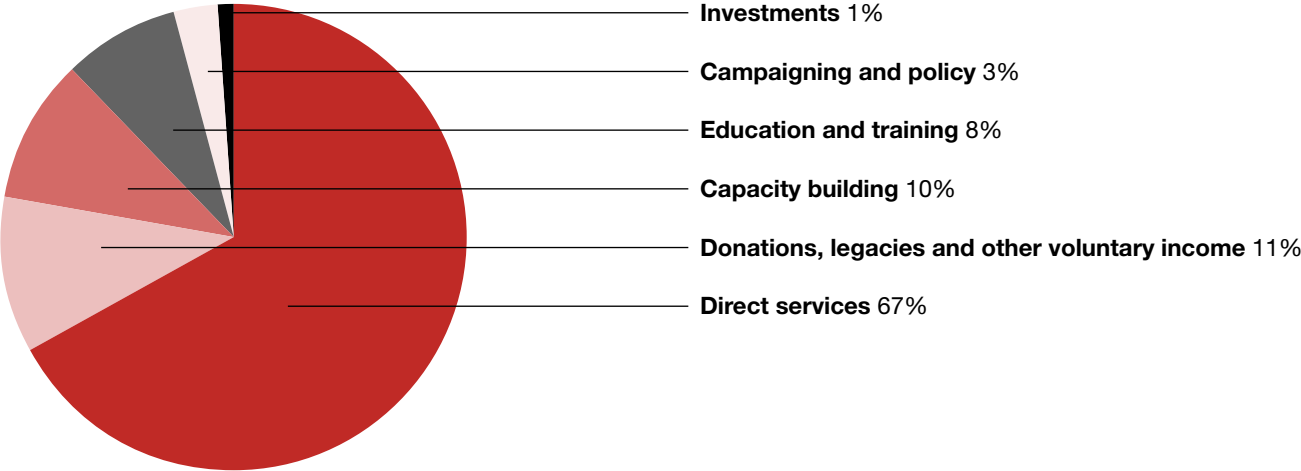
Deloitte & Touche LLP

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
London

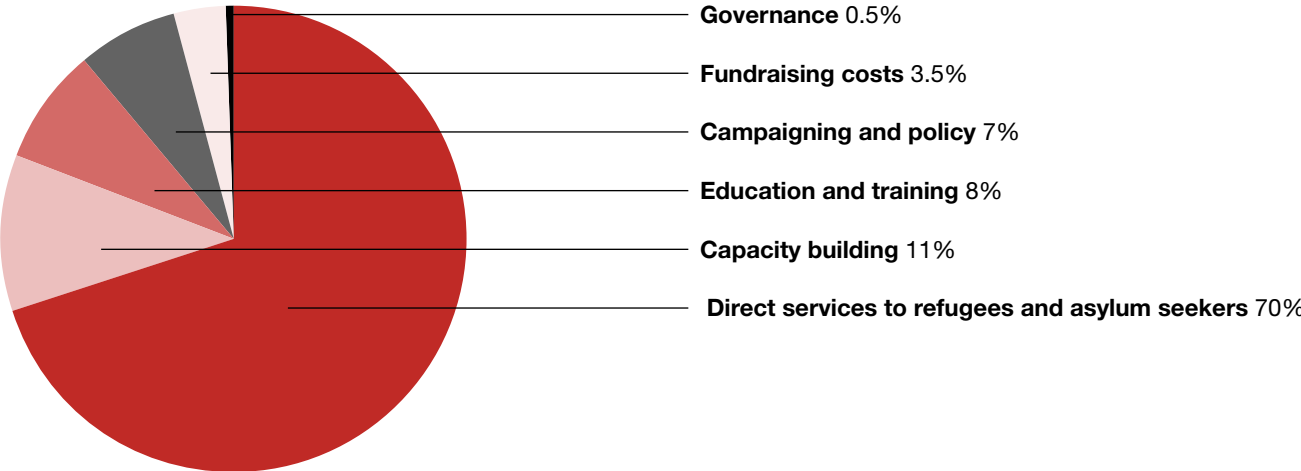
Income and expenditure

For the year ended 31 March 2006

Income excluding asylum support accommodation



Expenditure excluding asylum support accommodation



Strategic plan 2005–08

In summer 2004, the Refugee Council carried out a consultation exercise asking staff, members, refugee communities and other key stakeholders what direction they thought the organisation should be taking over the next three years. This resulted in our strategic plan for 01 April 2005 to 31 March 2008, which outlines our vision, mission and main strategic directions for the years ahead. This is a summary.

The Refugee Council vision

For all refugees to get the support they need to rebuild their lives and know they are safe wherever they come from.

The Refugee Council's mission

- We give advice, support and information to asylum seekers and refugees
- We campaign and lobby for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and abroad
- We work with refugee community organisations and other bodies to ensure that the voices of asylum seekers and refugees are heard and their needs are met

The Refugee Council's core guiding principles

- We are driven by a commitment to human rights and a belief that asylum is a fundamental right
- We aim to make a positive impact in all we do
- We value and will make the most of the diversity of our staff, volunteers, clients, and refugee communities in informing and improving our work
- We are impartial and non-partisan in all we do

Our clients

Our core client group is asylum seekers and refugees, including people granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave. We will also identify how lessons learned from working with asylum seekers and refugees can be applied to groups such as migrants who have been trafficked, are in bonded labour or have suffered human rights abuses. We will strive to ensure our campaigning, capacity building and direct services are sensitive to the needs of particular groups, including women, children and unaccompanied children.

Strategic directions

The Refugee Council will lead the sector in championing the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, and in developing innovative approaches that respond to their emerging needs and the needs of service providers.

The Refugee Council will provide high quality information, advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers where it is the best provider or where it can demonstrably make a positive impact.

The Refugee Council will work, in partnership where appropriate, to assist and enable other organisations, including Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs), the voluntary sector and providers of mainstream services, to develop good practice in supporting and integrating refugees and asylum seekers.

The Refugee Council will challenge hostility and ignorance, and campaign to influence UK, EU and international policy, public opinion and the media on all issues to do with refugees and asylum seekers.

The Refugee Council will improve efficiency, performance and delivery, with a positive culture which encourages, inspires and helps staff and volunteers to deliver excellence.

The Refugee Council will diversify its funding, including an appropriate level of public funding, through an income generating strategy, which enables it to deliver its priorities and achieve organisational sustainability.

For copies of the full strategic plan, contact:
Chief Executive's Office, Refugee Council, 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB. Tel: 020 7346 6709

Legal and administrative information

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 2005/06:

Mr John Akker

Council for Assisting Refugee Academics

Mr Michael Bartlet

Religious Society of Friends, Quakers

Mr Valey Cyrus Arya

(formerly Mohaimen Arya)
Afghan Association of London
Resigned June 2006

Ms Naaz Coker

Chair
Co-opted
Retired January 2006

Mr Alex da Costa

Angolan Civic Communities Alliance
Elected January 2006

Mr Alemayehu Dessie

Ethiopian Community in Britain
Retired January 2006

Mr David Farnsworth

Welsh Refugee Council

Dr Edie Friedman

Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Retired January 2006

Mr Andy Gregg

Co-opted

Ms Julie Hollyman

Interim Vice Chair (from February 2006)
Co-opted

Mrs Helen Ireland

Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID)
Elected January 2006

Ms Helena Ismail

Vice Chair
Interim Chair (from February 2006)
Horn of Africa Community Group

Mr Keefa Kiwanuka

One World Foundation

Mr Afzal Mirza

Refugee Advice Centre

Mr Barry Stoye

Refugee Legal Centre
Retired January 2006

Mr John Wenger

Honorary Treasurer
Co-opted

Auditors**Deloitte & Touche LLP**

Hill House
1 Little New Street
London EC4A 3TR

Bankers**National Westminster Bank plc**

PO Box 2354
65 Piccadilly
London W1A 2PP

Solicitors**Gregory, Rowcliffe and Milners**

1 Bedford Road
London WC1R 4BZ

Members

Action for Social Integration
Afghan Association of London
Africa Educational Trust
Africa Foundation Stone
African Support and Project Centre
Amnesty International UK
Angolan Civic Communities Alliance
Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees
Asylum Welcome
Barnardo's
British Association of Social Workers
Catholic Bishop's Conference
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Congolese Voluntary Organisation
Council for Assisting Refugee Academics
Ethiopian Community in Britain
French African Welfare Association
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Generation Roots
Gordon Barclay Vietnam Fund
Horn of Africa Community Group
International Care Network
International Tamil Refugee Network
Iranian Association
Jesuit Refugee Service UK
Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
King's Lynn Asylum and Refugee Support
Kurdish Cultural Centre
Kurdish Housing Association
Latin American Association
Latin American Women's Rights Service
Lewisham Indo Chinese Community Chinese School
Medical Aid for Palestinians
Medical Foundation
Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum
Minority Rights Group
North of England Refugee Service
One World Foundation
OXFAM
Pan African People's Welfare Advisory Service
Polish Ex-Combatants Association
PRAXIS
Quaker Peace and Social Witness
Reconnect
Redbridge Refugee Forum
Refugee Action
Refugee Advice Centre
Refugee Education and Employment Programme
Refugee Legal Centre
Refugee Studies Centre
Russian Refugee's Aid Society
Scottish Refugee Council
Sion Centre for Dialogue
Somali Advisory Bureau
Somali Carers Project
Somali Centre for Information and Advocacy
Somali Development Organisation
Somali Refugee Action Group
South Sudanese Community Association UK
Southwark Refugee Communities Forum
St Mary Magdalene Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
St Mary's Justice and Peace
Tamil Relief Centre
The Airey Neave Trust
The Children's Society
The Community of Congolese Refugees in GB
The Harrow Refugee Forum
The Methodist Church
Third World Refugee Bureau
Twickenham Refugee Welcome Centre
UKCOSA
United Nations Association of the UK
Vietnamese Mental Health Services
Waaberi Community Development Association
Welsh Refugee Council
Western Kurdistan Association
World Jewish Relief

Thank you

Trusts

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Awards for All London
Basil Bellhouse Charitable Trust
BBC Children in Need
British Red Cross
CAFOD
City Parochial Foundation
Comic Relief
Community Fund
Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
Goodall Charitable Trust
The Walter Guinness Charitable Trust
Gunter Charitable Trust
Ipswich Girl's Industrial Home Trust
HBOS Foundation
Henry Smith Foundation
John Ellerman Foundation
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
King's Fund
KPMG
KPMG Foundation
Beatrice Laing Charitable Trust
LankellyChase Foundation
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Oliver Morland Charitable Trust
Newman Charitable Trust
Northern Rock Foundation
Northmore Trust
Jack Petchey Foundation
The Samuel Sebba Charitable Trust
Skipton Building Society
The Souter Charitable Trust
WF Southall
Swan Mountain Trust
Wates Foundation
Young-Holiday Charitable Trust

Refugee Council Patrons

Emma Thompson
Lord Morris of Handsworth
Hari Kunzru

Individuals

Barbara Cairns
Chris and Gilda Haskins
Mark Haddon
Jenny Sheridan
Thena Kendall and the Felice Morgenstern Fund
Helen and Keith Bolderson

We would also like to thank

- All the other individual donors, trusts, companies and statutory funders who support us so generously – we cannot list them all
- All the local faith and community groups across the country who raise funds and awareness of refugee issues for us
- All the people who give up their time for free to volunteer, contribute to the success of our events each year and partake in sponsored events

Year of the Volunteer award winners

Erika Trueman
Elvis Nduhukire
Barbara Coombs
Anwarali Budharali
Maggie Ashworth
Beryl Tierney
Kosar Parveen
Ismail Kawumbi
Urginia Mauluka
Lameeia Mohammed
Sister Eleanor Wiseman
Benjoly Mongay Bapindikwa

The Refugee Council is the largest charity working with asylum seekers and refugees across the UK. We campaign for their rights and help them to rebuild their lives in safety.



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www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1014576 Registered company no. 2727514

Registered address 240–250 Ferndale Road London SW9 8BB