



refugee council
impact report 2004-05



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Naaz Coker

Chair, Refugee Council



As I prepare to stand down after seven years as chair of the Refugee Council, it's hard to imagine a more rewarding organisation to have been involved with. One of the great things about it is its undoubted impact at so many levels of society. At its most fundamental, the Refugee Council affects the lives of countless individual women, children and men. That's important and gives credibility to the work we do.

At the other end of the scale, the Refugee Council has a real impact in influencing public opinion and in achieving changes in law or policy that give refugees a fairer deal. It's never as much as we want, but we do make a difference. Then there are the myriad of organisations and individuals we work with, including other charities, local government, schools, businesses and volunteers. All are touched by the work we do.

One of the great strengths of this organisation is its flexibility. Since I've been Chair, the Refugee Council's turnover has bounced from £8 million up to £70 million and back down to £12 million. These momentous changes are driven by government policy and the funding structures we work with – such as the need to get into and then out of the provision of emergency accommodation. Changes on that scale need a sharp management team and staff who have the capacity to respond in time.

Amidst all the change, however, we must always keep sight of our main objective. During our last strategic review, I asked some refugees what they thought the Refugee Council gave them. The first thing they said was a welcome and “a safe place”. It's something the Refugee Council must never forget – that we exist, first and foremost, to provide safety and support.

In the past seven years there have been many groups who have sought that support. When I joined the Refugee Council, the Bosnian programme was ending. A year later we welcomed the Kosovans, then it was the Kurds and Afghans, and in the past year we have been helping to resettle Liberians and Burmese. From these and the many other refugees I have met over the years, I have always drawn inspiration – from their spirit of hope and resilience despite undergoing torture, hardship and hostility.

Yet one of the saddest facts of the past seven years is that asylum has ceased to be associated with a noble concept of sanctuary and ‘asylum seeker’ has become almost a term of abuse. That is something we must fight.

I am leaving the Refugee Council in good hands. Our Chief Executive, Maeve Sherlock, together with the Board and the Executive Directors will continue to respond to the ever-growing challenges. At the moment, asylum applications are down and the Refugee Council can focus more on helping existing refugees adjust to life in Britain and become active citizens.

But we must also understand the conflicts that create refugees. For this is not a problem that will go away. The world does not yet feel like a conflict-free zone. When the next group of refugees arrive, we must be equipped to respond.

I say thank you to everyone who makes the Refugee Council work so effectively: the Trustees, the management team, staff, donors, volunteers and partners. It has been a privilege for me to be part of that effort.

Maeve Sherlock

Chief Executive, Refugee Council



This was another turbulent year in the world of asylum. The year started on a high note, with the government having to suspend its draconian section 55 policy, under which people were denied housing or support throughout the duration of their asylum claim if they were deemed not to have applied for asylum soon enough after arriving in the UK. There were troubles ahead, though, with the passing of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 which, amongst other bad news, declared that families with children whose asylum claims had failed risked losing their housing and support. We have been watching the piloting of this initiative very carefully and at the time of writing are waiting to see if it will be extended nationwide. And yet another asylum bill was floated before the year was out.

The political debate on asylum was ignited by the Conservative Party's decision at the start of 2005 to adopt a policy that the UK should withdraw from the 1951 Refugee Convention – something no country has ever done. The General Election Campaign which followed represented a low point in recent British political history with an ill-informed and resolutely negative debate on immigration being centre-stage. We countered this by publishing, with the support of other refugee agencies, *Tell it like it is*, a pocket guide to asylum which equipped people with the basic facts and exploded the most common myths. This proved extremely popular with 100,000 copies being distributed in the run-up to the election.

The fall in the numbers of people claiming asylum in the UK has continued during the last year and has made it a challenging year for all those working with refugees and asylum seekers. We responded to the rapid pace of change by engaging in a widespread consultation and adopting a new strategic plan. This has enabled us to

clarify the key direction of our work and ensure that we stay focused as the storm that is our external environment rages around us.

In these pages you will find a testament to the wide variety of work the Refugee Council does. This is constantly changing and developing as we look for new ways to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. To mention just one, during the year we introduced a new one-day induction programme in our London office under which newly arrived asylum seekers can be properly briefed even if they are not living in Home Office accommodation. This year the Refugee Council's Children's Section also celebrated 10 years of work helping unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK. The occasion was marked by a wonderful party in London's Living Room, where the sounds of the young people celebrating must surely have kept London Mayor Ken Livingstone from his work that evening. We are all proud not only of our service but of the young people who pass through it and go on, despite having often suffered terrible trauma, to dizzying heights thereafter. They are truly an inspiration.

This Impact Report gives us the chance to highlight the amazing contribution of so many people to the work that we do. Refugee Council staff never cease to impress me with their talent and dedication. Working alongside them are 350 volunteers whose efforts enable us to offer a range of services – from sending 'talks teams' into schools to helping refugees learn English. We could never do all the work we do without the support of many funders – individuals, organisations and departments – who are willing to buck the trend and fund our work with refugees and asylum seekers. Thanks to each and every one of you.

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 three years ahead. This is a summary.

The Refugee Council vision

To ensure that refugees 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

Direct services

Providing direct advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers is at the heart of the Refugee Council's work. While our main aim is to give practical help, we also provide a safe and welcoming space for our clients where they can relax and be sure that they will always be treated with respect.

Advice

In 2004-05, Refugee Council advisers conducted 59,216 advice sessions throughout the UK. We also responded to 11,573 telephone advice enquiries. During 2004 we opened a new telephone advice line in the West Midlands to add to the existing services in London and Leeds. We helped clients complete 9,767 applications for National Asylum Support Service (NASS) support and found emergency accommodation for 4,961 destitute asylum seekers. We also helped 5,928 people at the end of the asylum process to obtain basic support while they wait to be removed from the UK. We provided all these services to 146 different nationalities in 118 different languages.

Day Centre

At our Day Centre in London, we offer clients a warm and friendly environment where they can come for a hot meal and a change of clothes, as well as receiving practical advice and help in their own language. People can just drop in or make an appointment for specialist services. Our aim is to help clients with whatever they need – either by providing services ourselves or by directing them to others who can help.

Last year, the Refugee Council Day Centre in London:

- served 50,120 meals
- handed out 1,124 food parcels
- issued 1,454 clients with clothing parcels

Our Day Centre also offers showers and laundry facilities. English classes and study sessions are held for newly arrived refugee children and we host surgeries for external services like the Red Cross Family Tracing Unit and the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.



Ruth from Eritrea thought she had reached safety when she finally arrived in the UK, but her problems were about to get worse. She was abducted, held against her will and abused for several months. Finally she was abandoned outside our office in London, where the slow process of healing and rebuilding her life could begin.

“When I came to the Refugee Council I had no solicitor, bad health and no accommodation. The Refugee Council helped me find out how to solve my problems. They brought me to hospital, got me accommodation and took me to the Refugee Legal Centre. I can’t explain how much they have helped.”

Ruth was recently given refugee status.

Resettlement

Britain has started to take a limited number of refugees for permanent resettlement under the new Gateway Protection Programme. Many of these refugees are particularly vulnerable having lived in refugee camps in some of the poorest parts of the world for several years.

In 2004, the Refugee Council provided direct assistance to more than 70 Liberians arriving in Sheffield under the very first UK group resettlement programme.

The resettlement team helped them gain access to mainstream services and find jobs and training courses. The team also helped the refugees to get involved in community activities and volunteering. Since their arrival, 30% of the group have taken up voluntary placements in various agencies in Sheffield.

Induction

In September 2004, the Refugee Council launched its one-day induction programme in its London office. This new programme seeks to inform asylum seekers about the asylum process and about their rights and responsibilities in the UK. Since starting the programme, we have delivered more than 5,000 briefings and helped 1,103 clients apply for support.

In 2004-05, staff at our Leeds office delivered 6,000 briefings to a total of 1,851 clients going through the one-week residential induction process in Leeds and Barnsley.

One of our community development workers on the resettlement programme helped a group of Liberian women arriving under the Gateway Protection Programme to set up a choir called ‘Zeela’, meaning ‘peace’. The choir has been a great success and a valuable part of the resettlement process, providing an opportunity for the women to meet regularly as well as raise awareness of their plight. Rose Bazzie, one of the founding members of the choir, commented:

“Zeela has given me and the other women a lot of self confidence. We have gained respect from the community and have good contacts with people. Many people did not know about Liberia and we have helped people understand more about our country.”

Helping the most vulnerable

While all of our clients have pressing needs, some of the most vulnerable have additional barriers to overcome when navigating the asylum process. Years of experience have equipped our staff with the skills needed to address the particular needs of children, women, and clients suffering from trauma or illness, ensuring they get the help they need.

Specialist advice and support

For many people who come to the UK seeking protection, the trauma of forced exile and the suffering they have experienced back home will have left emotional and physical scars requiring specialist attention. Others are faced with additional obstacles due to mental or physical illness. Our Specialist Team provides a range of advice, support and referral services aimed at meeting the needs of these particularly vulnerable people.

Last year, the Specialist Team provided 1,900 advice and support sessions to 1,105 vulnerable clients. We helped:

- almost 1,000 clients to find a doctor
- 210 to find health visitors, midwives, sexual health clinics and other health services
- 159 to access counseling, psychotherapy or psychiatric services
- 160 clients to get essential medication by renewing their HC2 certificates

Women

Our Specialist Team runs two women's groups, in addition to the casework it does with individual women. The groups have been successful in helping many very vulnerable women to overcome isolation and to adjust to life in the UK.

This work is complimented by the efforts of our Community Development Team to support refugee women within their own communities and improve the quality of the services they use. This year, the Refugee Council's women's network worked particularly hard to draw attention to refugee women's issues, culminating in a conference and the publication of our women's strategy, *Making women visible*.

Destitution

In May 2004, a legal victory resulted in the reinstatement of basic support and accommodation to thousands of asylum seekers who had previously been made destitute under the terms of 'section 55'. As a result, we were able to provide emergency accommodation to some 600 destitute asylum seekers.

However, destitution remains a major issue for asylum seekers, particularly those at the end of the asylum process. At the beginning of 2005, some 6,000 Iraqis were in this position, unable to claim any support because doing so would require them to declare their willingness to return to war-torn Iraq. After the intervention of a Refugee Council project worker, this Home Office policy was overturned in the courts, and we went on to assist more than 3,000 clients in the first three months of 2005 to get the essential support they needed.

In 2004, Refugee Council project worker, Kate Brown met Abdullah in our Leeds office. His asylum application had been refused and, unwilling to return to Iraq, he had lost all entitlement to support.

"Abdullah required medical attention for a stab wound and told me that he had been attacked six times whilst living on the streets. For his own safety he rarely slept and had not eaten for a long time. Coming to the Refugee Council was his last-ditch attempt to get help."

With Kate's help and the Refugee Legal Centre, Abdullah took his case to court in an attempt to get support. In December 2004, Abdullah won his case, forcing the Home Office to concede that it was unsafe to return to Iraq. As a result, support was made available to all Iraqi asylum seekers unable to return home.

Children

In January 2005, the Children's Section celebrated 10 years of work helping unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK. A party was held with many former clients and staff attending – the then Children's Minister, Margaret Hodge, also came along.

In 2004-05, our panel of special advisers received 3,568 referrals from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and provided 5,862 advice sessions at the drop-in service in London. We provided one-to-one casework assistance to 911 children throughout the country and accompanied almost 200 children to the asylum screening units in Croydon and Liverpool. In the coming year the Refugee Council's Children's Panel will begin operating in Leeds, Maidstone and Birmingham.

In the course of the year, we also accommodated 16 young people at our 10-bed hostel in Hillingdon, helping them to go to school and to obtain leave to remain in the UK. Three of our ex-residents obtained degrees in accountancy, law and computing.

Asylum seekers in detention

The Refugee Council works directly with asylum applicants held in Oakington reception centre near Cambridge. In 2004-05, our staff based at Oakington provided 8,459 advice sessions to detainees, explaining their entitlements, checking immediate health needs and arranging appointments with onsite medical services and religious groups.

This year we worked especially hard to meet the needs of children in detention. We briefed and assisted in referrals for 250 unaccompanied minors detained at Oakington and successfully lobbied for better welfare assessments for children

Guinah, from Togo in West Africa, arrived in the UK in 2003 aged 16. He was alone and had only a few words of English. One of the first things the Refugee Council gave Guinah was a French/English dictionary.

"I had no one to talk to, but I had the Refugee Council. The people there helped me throughout my difficulties, fought for my life and my rights. Isolation, which is the worst enemy for somebody in exile, has been quickly defeated."

Within a year his English had improved so much that he was addressing large audiences about his experiences, including the European Social Forum, the STAR (Student Action for Refugees) conference and a Refugee Council reception at the Foreign Office. As a result of his speeches he gained a two-year scholarship to the United World College of the Atlantic in Wales, where he is currently studying.

in detention. The lobbying efforts of the Asylum Rights Campaign sub-group on detention, chaired by the Refugee Council, also resulted in improved conditions for asylum seekers detained throughout the country.



Training, employment and integration

Speaking English and knowing how things work in this country are important skills for all asylum seekers and refugees. For those able to work, finding a job is a key step towards integration. Our work in this area not only focuses on language, citizenship, training and employment, but also seeks to give people confidence and equip them with skills that will be useful here and at home, should they eventually return.

Learning and integration

The Refugee Council Learning and Integration Unit provides learning, development and employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. Our training centre, based in London, provides a uniquely supportive environment in which students gain the confidence, skills and recognised qualifications they need to achieve their goals.

In the past year, we have assessed and advised over 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers. In addition:

- 257 people have trained and qualified in English and basic skills
- 54 trained and qualified in IT and accountancy
- 34 completed parenting classes
- 56 undertook work placements
- 90 volunteer mentors were trained
- 40 refugees were successfully mentored into jobs or voluntary work

In October 2004, we delivered the first pilot programme for citizenship training through the Training and Awareness Project in Peterborough. The project provides newly arrived asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers with orientation and citizenship training to enable them to integrate fully into local life.

Alem from Ethiopia was a student at the Refugee Council Learning and Integration Unit in London and benefited from our mentoring scheme, which matches volunteers with refugees to help them overcome barriers to employment:

“Andy being my mentor has helped me so much. His dedication for my success – I just cannot explain it with words. I have been working since March 2005 for a small business firm as personal assistant to the owner and I have many responsibilities. I just want to say many thanks for your support and Andy’s. I hope to be a mentor to others whenever I can.”

Asset UK

The Refugee Council plays a leading role in Asset UK. This is a training partnership bringing together eight agencies whose aim is to prepare asylum-seekers for the workplace in the UK or their home countries. In the past year, for example, Asset UK has helped develop English courses for construction and childcare workers in Peterborough and Cardiff and developed a new qualification in teaching basic literacy to learners of English as a second language at South Bank University in London. In addition:

- 175 people received orientation, advice and guidance including advocacy, financial support for tuition fees, travel and childcare and help with applications
- 112 teachers received training on teaching asylum seekers, improving their skills and awareness
- We helped 80 asylum seekers into volunteering placements to gain experience of the work place

- 33 volunteer tutors were trained at teacher training workshops
- 26 mainstream education, advice and guidance workers were trained in issues relating to asylum-seekers

Asset UK also aims to spread best practice through its website, which includes research and resources for policy-makers and agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers. It has also helped organisations create similar partnerships in Poland and the Czech Republic and showcased its work at numerous conferences and events.

To help universities share experiences and best practice, Asset UK has created the Higher Education for Refugees and Asylum Seekers Network (HERAN), the UK's first higher education network aimed at helping institutions address the issues affecting asylum seekers.

The role of volunteers

Many of our training, employment and integration services could not be offered without the help of volunteers. They come from all sections of society and we are particularly proud that many clients and ex-clients want to volunteer with us. In the past year, our volunteers have provided English language support to more than 150 asylum seekers and refugees each month and helped 10 refugees get jobs through one to one support on our employment mentoring scheme.

Mahoro is 35 years old. He fled Rwanda in 2003 and now volunteers at the Refugee Council in Birmingham. He started volunteering because he wanted to keep busy and contribute something to the UK.

“I wanted to help people overcome the problems I have had to face since arriving in Britain. My work has helped me overcome the psychological trauma of becoming a refugee and I have also learnt a great deal. My English accent has improved and I have much more confidence in dealing with people. I have learned to deal with external agencies, to take initiative and to give advice both by telephone and in person. I have also learned a lot about the asylum system and about working with people from different cultures.”



Information and events

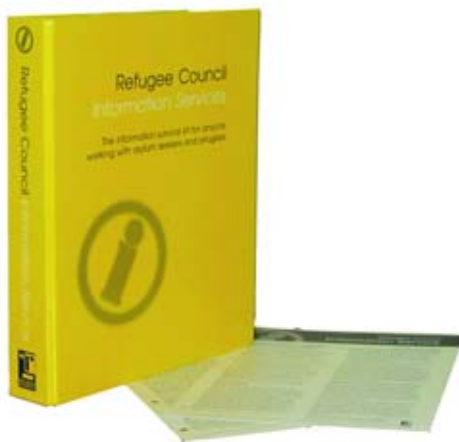
The Refugee Council plays the leading role in producing information for the refugee sector. We provide a huge range of information about refugee and asylum issues in a variety of formats for different audiences and purposes. Journalists to teachers, policy makers to asylum seekers – all rely on the accurate, accessible and timely information for which the Refugee Council is renowned.

Publications

In 2004-05 we produced 10 new briefings for advisers and others on issues ranging from the government’s five-year strategy for asylum and immigration to voluntary returns to Afghanistan and applying for section 4 (‘hard case’) support. We put out 8 new leaflets for asylum seekers and refugees in 27 languages. We also published 14 policy papers setting out the Refugee Council’s position on a variety of government policies and produced research reports on the withdrawal of support from, and employment rights for, asylum seekers.

The *Refugee Council Information Service* continued to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on asylum and related policy, practice and services to hundreds of statutory and voluntary organisations in the UK. We also provided 2,000 schools and colleges with 4,600 Refugee Council books and teaching resources.

In addition, staff and specially trained volunteers responded to 3,500 information enquiries from advisers, legal practitioners, the general public and refugees and asylum seekers themselves.



Judith Aklama works at the London Borough of Enfield and subscribes to the *Refugee Council Information Service*:

“I always look forward to the Refugee Council’s updates. They save me a lot of time, point me in the right direction and keep me abreast of legislation changes, policy and practice in this highly specialist area. The *Information Service* is my work bible!”

Refugee Council online



The Refugee Council website – www.refugeecouncil.org.uk – is the most comprehensive and authoritative in the sector. Most of the information we publish can be downloaded free of charge from the site. Last year 480,000 people visited our website and downloaded a quarter of a million information leaflets and briefings. At the end of March 2005, 12,000 people received the Refugee Council E-newsletter and our online events diary was used to publicise over 200 events taking place throughout the year.

Training and conferences

Last year, we were able to expand the training and conferences we offer to others, allowing us to pass on our knowledge and expertise and creating a forum for our colleagues in the sector to meet and share ideas.

In the past year, we delivered training to more than 850 public and voluntary sector employees, covering health, benefits, the asylum process, unaccompanied minors, employment and training, and education. We also organised three conferences attended by 600 delegates, covering our women's strategy and the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004.

Nemone Herbert is a Social Worker with the Leaving Care Team at Reading Borough Council. In January 2005, she attended a Refugee Council training course in London – *Emotional Wellbeing of Refugee Children and Young People*:

“The presentations were very informative and the trainer had a really supportive approach to the session as a whole. We were given all sorts of excellent handouts, including useful information on which websites to visit and the various agencies that are working in this area.”



Policy and lobbying

The Refugee Council's policy and lobbying work has a real influence on government, politicians and policy makers because it flows from the expertise we have built through the direct work we do with asylum seekers and refugees. Our aim is always to ensure the highest standards of protection for refugees and to highlight problems when we see them.

UK policy

Over the year, we have prepared and circulated 14 detailed responses to government consultations covering a range of UK asylum issues. Much of our work has focussed on the impact of the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act, which came into effect in July 2004. We have also joined other organisations to campaign against cuts in legal aid to asylum seekers. This year, our policy adviser for children focused particularly on achieving improvements to the asylum determination process for children.

The Refugee Council continued to work on areas of mainstream policy including health, education, employment, training and child protection. We continued to explore new ways of raising achievement among asylum-seeking and refugee children in schools and in March 2005, we jointly published research with Asset UK highlighting the experience, qualifications and skills asylum seekers bring to the UK. We have also continued to feed our specialist expertise into developments in healthcare research and policy.

Lobbying for change

While always retaining our independence, the Refugee Council also maintains strong links with Ministers and policy makers at the highest levels. The organisation also works directly with Parliament through the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and other bodies.

Lobbying successes this year have included the campaign against the removal of judicial oversight from asylum decisions as proposed in the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004. We also prevented thousands of asylum seeking families from EU accession countries being made homeless when those countries joined the EU in May 2004.

Few working in the refugee and housing sectors will forget the landmark legal judgement in May 2004, which saw basic support and accommodation restored to thousands of asylum seekers that had been made destitute under the draconian 'section 55'. This was the result of 16 months of tireless campaigning and litigation.

Neil Gerrard, the Labour MP for Walthamstow, has been Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees since 1997. The Refugee Council provides back up and support to the APPG on Refugees so that MPs and Peers are kept informed of developments in asylum policy.

"The Refugee Council has regularly helped parliamentarians to fight, and on occasion, to defeat particularly dangerous measures, such as the proposed removal of judicial appeal against asylum decisions in the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act. Their first-hand experience of the asylum issue, and what is happening on the ground, together with their policy expertise, mean that Refugee Council briefings to MPs and Peers carry real weight."

International policy

The Refugee Council continues to lead UK agencies in influencing international and European agendas. In July 2004, we launched *Refugees: Renewing the Vision*, which sets out a positive, alternative agenda for improving the asylum system in Europe. The paper was launched at a meeting of government officials, parliamentarians, journalists and NGOs and has been endorsed by 11 other organisations.

In 2004-05, the Refugee Council played a leading role in the Asylum Rights Campaign sub-group on Europe and made representations to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. We also kept UK agencies informed about the European dimension of asylum policy, among others things by distributing an EU update to 600 agencies and individuals.

We have continued to host the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), a multi-agency network for international NGOs operating in Afghanistan. In the past year, BAAG has increased its membership and sent 600 organisations and individuals the BAAG monthly review and other essential information. BAAG played a key role in formalising a European network of NGOs that operate in Afghanistan and has continued to keep an open dialogue with the government, NATO and other high level bodies.

This year, the Refugee Council was a focal point for the European Council on Refugees and Exiles' (ECRE) advocacy work as Chris Nash, Legal Officer at ECRE explains:

“The Refugee Council is an important partner of ECRE in advocating for refugee rights in Europe. The sound policy expertise of the International Protection Team and its strong links with policy-makers enable it to respond quickly and effectively to developments, while also being in a position to share this extensive knowledge and experience with other refugee-assisting organisations both in the UK and more widely within the ECRE network”.

Voluntary return

This year, our Voluntary Returns Project has strongly advocated the use of 'Explore and Prepare' programmes allowing refugees to return temporarily in order to assess conditions for permanent return. The first return and explore journey to Afghanistan took place in summer 2004, and in the wake of the Asian tsunami, refugees were allowed to pay short visits to family members in countries affected. The Voluntary Returns Project has also been a key source of independent and up-to-date information on voluntary returns policy and has ensured that refugee community organisations were able to contribute directly to the development of policies and programmes.

Between April and October 2004, our Sri Lanka Project provided up to date country information for voluntary agencies supporting projects in Sri Lanka and to those making representations to authorities about refugees and displaced people in and from Sri Lanka.



Engaging the public

As a result of hostile media coverage and the actions of certain politicians, many people in the UK are poorly informed about asylum issues. The Refugee Council aims to change attitudes by exploding the myths about refugees and promoting the positive case for asylum. We do this by engaging with the public through the media, campaigning work and events.

Media

Due to asylum being such a high profile issue, our media office is one of the busiest in the charity sector. A small team handles hundreds of enquiries each week and issued more than forty press releases on major stories in 2004-05. Among the highlights of the year were a major comment piece in the Guardian by Maeve Sherlock in July 2004, her appearance on BBC TV's Newsnight in January 2005 and a double-page profile in Guardian Society.

Nigel Morris is the Home Affairs Correspondent of the Independent newspaper. He regularly writes on asylum issues:

"I find the Refugee Council an invaluable first port of call for information on all matters involving refugees and asylum. I have always found its briefings speedy and accurate – the two top priorities for any journalist."

Our regional media officer continued to build up the media profile of the Refugee Council in the regions. In particular, the officer contributed to a major programme to improve community cohesion in Peterborough and achieved continued sympathetic coverage of the refugee resettlement programme in Sheffield.

In the run-up to the 2005 general election campaign, we distributed over 100,000 copies of our pocket guide *Tell it like it is: the truth about asylum* produced in partnership with Refugee Action, Scottish Refugee Council, Welsh Refugee Council and STAR (Student Action for Refugees). With asylum featuring as a key issue in the general election, the pocket guide encouraged people to engage in the debate using facts and figures, not myths and scare stories, and proved to be hugely popular.

In April 2004, a number of top premiership footballers, including Thierry Henry of Arsenal, joined up with the Refugee Council and Amnesty International UK to combat racism against asylum seekers through a video for schools. The launch event gained widespread media coverage.

Events

The Refugee Council uses events to raise our profile as an organisation, to raise awareness of the issues and to raise money. 2004-05 was a busy year. We held two *No Laughing Matter* comedy nights in London and Leeds, two nights of dub poetry – the first in June 2004 featuring the legendary Linton Kwesi Johnson – and a repeat of *Speak!* – the literary evening – this time chaired by Hari Kunzru and featuring Louis de Bernieres. In November 2004, we held a major reception for supporters at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and later in the same month hosted a benefit dinner at the Groucho Club for which the award winning cook, Claudia Roden, designed the menu.

Refugee Week

The Refugee Council plays a leading role in Refugee Week, the week long nationwide festival held in June each year. Refugee Week 2004 generated well over 400 pages of press cuttings – a significant increase on previous years. Hundreds of events took place around the country, including Celebrating Sanctuary launch events in London, Birmingham and Leeds.

In 2004, the Refugee Council organised the first ever Refugee Week film Festival, in conjunction with the Princes Trust.

Elvis was forced to flee Uganda after he was attacked because of his political beliefs. He has been in the UK for three years and has devoted his time to volunteering in Leeds for the Refugee Council volunteer talks team.

“Many people believe the negative propaganda about asylum seekers. However towards the end of the session, after talking to the real person affected and answering most of the myths, it’s amazing how people’s attitudes change. Some become supportive there and then!”

Volunteering

Volunteers play a key role in engaging with the public to spread a more positive message about asylum seekers and refugees. In Yorkshire and Humberside, the West Midlands and East Anglia, our volunteer talks teams give presentations to schools, churches and community groups in their areas. The talks bring refugee issues to life for the general public and give asylum seekers themselves a chance to tell their stories.



Developing the sector and partnership working

We want our own resources and expertise to stretch as far as possible while also seeking to learn from the experiences of others. We do this through a combination of partnership working, nurturing and supporting refugee community organisations (RCOs) and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the country and taking on a co-ordinating role on behalf of service providers.



Supporting refugee community organisations

We provide practical support to refugee community organisations (RCOs) around the country on issues including business planning, developing services for women, financial management, partnership work, network development and dealing with the media. Support includes providing information, seminars, advice, training and consultancy work with new and established RCOs. We also help RCOs to present their needs to statutory and voluntary sector organisations and we lobby funders on their behalf.

In 2004-05 we distributed over 3,000 copies of *Doing it for ourselves*, a publication that gives practical advice and information on how to start, develop and sustain a community group. We also distributed development information to 550 voluntary and community organisations in four regions via regular mailings and emails.

Events

Our training is taken up not just by RCOs but also by other organisations in the voluntary sector, which is testament to its quality. In London we helped 20 RCOs attain the Quality Mark through our training, while in the regions we ran a quality assurance programme that included 21 training sessions in four regions, each session attended by an average of 12 voluntary organisations.

We provided in-house training to over 60 organisations on topics ranging from partnership and development to fundraising, management committees and finance. We also offered one-to-one support to 128 RCOs and 57 second tier organisations on project start-up, financial management, fundraising, financial policy and regulation, networking, governance and constitution.



Nicola Mayer from the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service commented on the Refugee Council publication, *Doing it for ourselves*:

“Doing it for ourselves provides all you need to know ‘under one roof’. Its nine chapters progress through the lifecycle of an organisation from start-up, through fundraising, finance and communication... This is immensely helpful.”

Partnership working

We are involved in many partnerships with NGOs, other agencies and local authorities around the country catering for the needs of refugees and asylum seekers nationwide. We play an important role in the Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands and East of England Regional Consortia. In the past year we have been particularly involved in helping to develop refugee integration strategies.

The Refugee Council acts as a lead partner co-ordinating the provision of NASS services to refugees and asylum seekers nation-wide. Through our Inter Agency Co-ordination Team (ICT) we play a leading role in harmonising service delivery across agencies and influencing NASS policy and practice at both a strategic and operational level. The monthly IAP newsletter, plus additional bulletins, ensure all agencies have up to date information on new developments.

The ICT successfully negotiated with NASS to better implement the proposed Home Office changes to section 4 support to Iraqi asylum-seekers. It also made NASS aware that asylum-seekers and refugees are being needlessly pushed into destitution because of procedural and bureaucratic problems, which NASS has now committed to remove.

New areas of work

In December 2004, we set up a dedicated research unit to expand the scope of our research. Its aim is to enhance the availability, quality and impact of research and encourage participatory research with and by refugees and asylum seekers. Since its inception the unit has secured funding for two major research projects: Inclusive Secondary Schools – a three-year research and development project, and Refugees’ Experiences of Integration – a two-year qualitative research project to be undertaken in partnership with the University of Birmingham.

Dr Claudia Hasanbegovic co-ordinates the Domestic Violence Project at the Latin American Women’s Rights Service. The Refugee Council community development team has helped raise the profile of her project and put them in touch with government officials and agencies.

“We greatly appreciate all your work, advocacy, networking, and access to campaigning you have facilitated and provided for us. As a minority organisation we often find it difficult to voice our community’s needs and experiences to statutory agencies. All your work... has been a crucial corner stone to put the needs of our community and clients in the public agenda.”

Summarised statement of financial activities

For the Year Ended 31 March 2005

	Unrestricted Funds £000	Restricted Funds £000	Total 2005 £000	Total 2004 £000
Incoming Resources				
Donations, legacies and other voluntary income	1,439	522	1,961	1,582
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects:</i>				
Government and local government income	2,613	2,821	5,434	5,294
<i>Asylum support:</i>				
Accommodation	-	15,779	15,779	41,881
Grant	-	6,985	6,985	9,419
Other	-	978	978	402
Income for training programmes	-	1,194	1,194	2,007
Income for youth homes	-	203	203	211
Income from training and publications	284	126	410	223
<i>Activities for generating funds:</i>				
Investment income	130	4	134	185
Other incoming resources	34	82	116	169
Total Incoming Resources	4,500	28,694	33,194	61,373
Resources Expended				
<i>Cost of generating funds:</i>				
Fundraising costs	443	136	579	712
<i>Charitable expenditure:</i>				
Grants payable	21	1,488	1,509	1,294
<i>Cost of activities in furtherance of objects:</i>				
Settlement services to refugees	2,284	2,770	5,054	3,204
Asylum support programme	247	7,428	7,675	9,369
Asylum support accommodation	-	15,779	15,779	41,881
Training programmes	232	851	1,083	2,048
Youth homes	32	184	216	229
International work	178	325	503	461
Advocacy and information	781	157	938	894
Management and administration	271	-	271	276
Total charitable expenditure	4,046	28,982	33,028	59,656
Total Resources Expended	4,489	29,118	33,607	60,368
Net (deficit)/surplus before transfers	11	(424)	(413)	1,005
Net investment gain	2	-	2	-
Transfer between funds	(261)	261	-	-
Net Movements in Funds	(248)	(163)	(411)	1,005
Opening Fund Balances at 01 April	1,658	2,081	3,739	2,734
Closing Fund Balances at 31 March	1,410	1,918	3,328	3,739

These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Charity. For further information, the full annual accounts and auditors' report on these accounts should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from: The Chief Executive's Office, Refugee Council, 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB.

Summarised balance sheet

As at 31 March 2005

	2005 £000	2004 £000
Tangible assets	545	632
Investments	10	8
Current assets	6,338	14,747
	6,893	15,387
Current liabilities	(3,307)	(11,452)
Provision for dilapidations	(258)	(196)
Net assets	3,328	3,739
Funds		
Unrestricted funds		
General	854	752
Designated	556	906
Total unrestricted funds	1,410	1,658
Restricted funds	1,918	2,081
Total funds	3,328	3,739

The summarised financial statements set out on pages 18 to 20 have been extracted from the full annual accounts prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985, which were approved by the Council on 24 November 2005.

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.

Naaz Coker, Chair

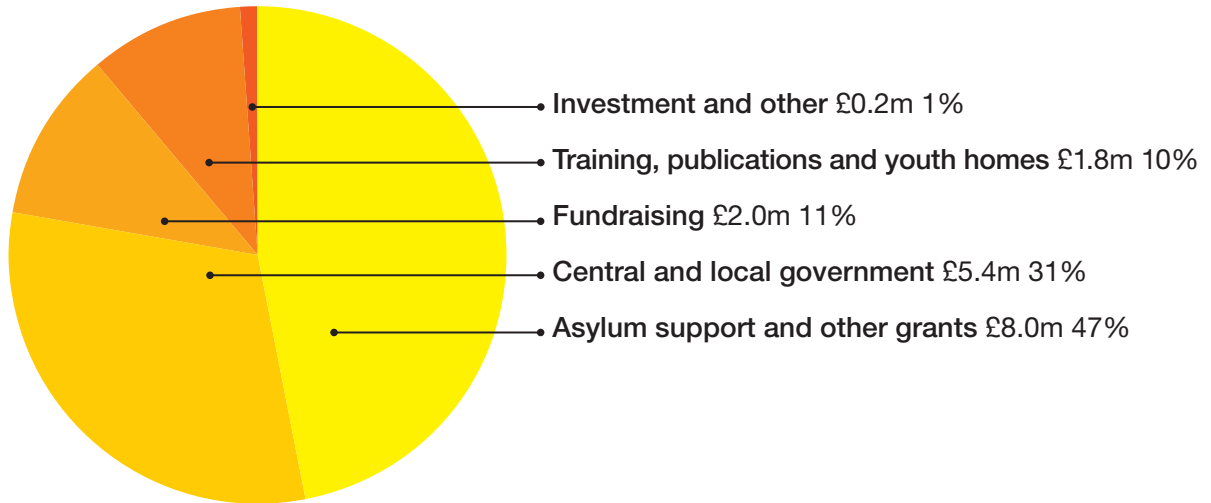
John Wenger, Honourary Treasurer

Summary of income and expenditure

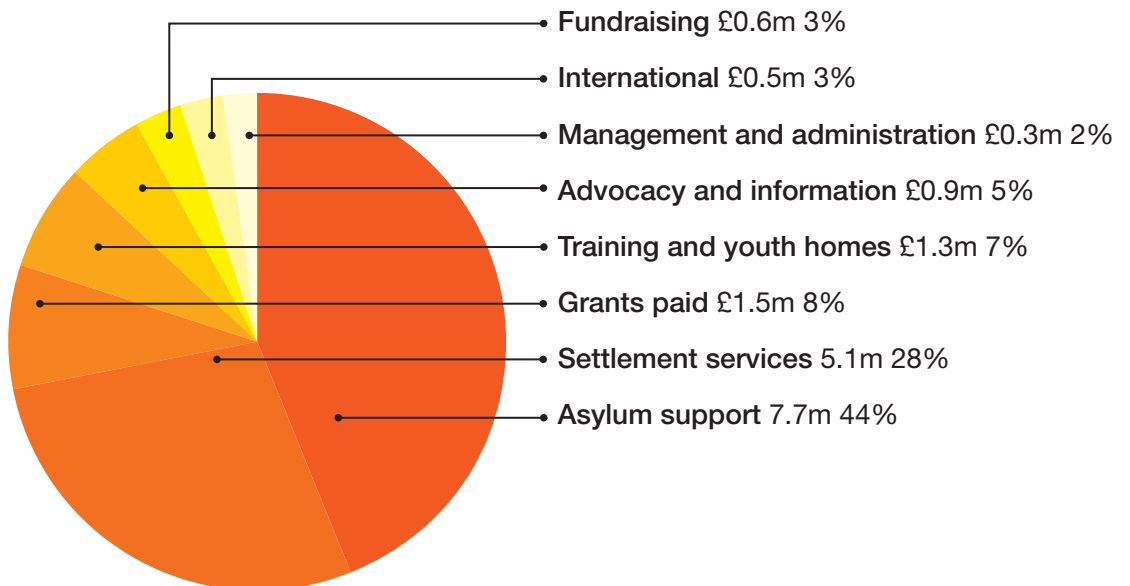
For the Year Ended 31 March 2005

Asylum support accommodation income and expenditure is £15.8m.
This is excluded from the charts below.

Income excluding asylum support accommodation



Expenditure excluding asylum support accommodation



Independent Auditors' statement to the Trustees of the Refugee Council

We have examined the summary financial statements of the Refugee Council for the year ended 31 March 2005, which comprise the pie charts, the summary statement of financial activities and summary balance sheet set out on pages 18 to 20.

This report is made solely to the Charity's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice 2000. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Charity's Trustees 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 Charity and the Charity's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Auditors

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summary financial statements in accordance with the recommendations of the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: a Statement of Recommended Practice 2000.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summary financial statements with the full financial statements and Trustees' Annual Report. We also read the other information contained in the summary annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summary financial statements.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our work having regard to Bulletin 1999/6 *The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement* and Practice Note 11 *The audit of charities* issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

Opinion

In our opinion, the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the Trustees' Annual Report of the Refugee Council for the year ended 31 March 2005.

Deloitte & Touche LLP
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditors

09 December 2005

Members

Action for Social Integration
Afghan Aid
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
British Red Cross Society
Bromley Refugee Network
Catholic Bishop's Conference
Catholic Women's League
Chile Democratico
Chile: Sports, Culture and Development Association
Christian Aid
Churches Commission for Racial Justice
Congolese Voluntary Organisation
Council for Assisting Refugee Academics
Ethiopian Community in Britain
Family Welfare Association
French African Welfare Association
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Generation Roots
Gordon Barclay Vietnam Fund
Haringey Refugee Consortium
Horn of Africa Community Group
Housing Associations Charitable Trust
Immigration Advisory Service
International Care Network
International Rescue Committee UK
International Tamil Refugee Network
Iranian Association
Iraqi Community Association
Iraqi Welfare Association
Irish Refugee Council
Jesuit Refugee Service UK
Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Kings 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
Lewisham Refugee Network
Medical Aid for Palestinians
Medical Foundation
Merton Voluntary Service Council
Midlands Refugee Council
Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum
Migrant Organisations Development Agency
Migrants Resource Centre
Minority Rights Group
National Children's Bureau
North of England Refugee Service
Northern Refugee Centre
One World Foundation
One World UK

OXFAM
 Pan African People's Welfare
 Advisory Service
 Polish Ex-Combatants Association
 PRAXIS
 Quaker Peace and Social Witness
 Reconnect
 Red Sea Community Organisation
 Redbridge Refugee Forum
 Refugee Action
 Refugee Advice Centre
 Refugee Arrivals Project
 Refugee Education and
 Employment Programme
 Refugee Legal Centre
 Refugee Studies Centre
 Renewal Refugee and Migrant
 Project
 Russian Refugee's Aid Society
 Save The Children
 Scottish Refugee Council
 Sierra Leone Women's Forum
 Sion Centre for Dialogue
 Somali Advisory Bureau
 Somali Carers Project
 Somali Centre for Information and
 Advocacy (SOCfiA)
 Somali Development Organisation
 Somali Refugee Action Group
 South London Tamil Welfare Group
 South Sudanese Community
 Association UK
 South Thames African Welfare
 Association
 Southwell Diocesan Social
 Responsibility Office
 Soutwark Refugee Communities
 Forum
 St Mary Magdalene Centre for
 Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 St Mary's Justice & Peace
 Stonham Housing Association
 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 GB
 Vietnamese Mental Health Services
 Waaberi Cultural Association
 Welsh Refugee Council
 Western Kurdistan Association
 World Jewish Relief

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:

Mr John Akker

Council for Assisting Refugee Academics

Mr Michael Bartlet

Religious Society of Friends, Quakers
Appointed January 2005

Mr Valey Cyrus Arya

(formerly Mohaimen Arya)
Afghan Association of London

Ms Naaz Coker

Chair
Co-opted

Sally Daghlian

Scottish Refugee Council
Retired January 2005

Mr Alemayehu Dessie

Ethiopian Community Association
in Britian

Mr David Farnsworth

Welsh Refugee Council
Appointed January 2005

Dr Edie Friedman

Jewish Council for Racial Equality

Mr Andy Gregg

Co-opted

Ms Julie Hollyman

Co-opted
Appointed May 2004

Ms Helena Ismail

Vice Chair
Horn of Africa Group

Edward Lord

Co-opted
Retired July 2004

Mr Keefa Kiwanuka

One World Foundation
Appointed January 2005

Mr Afzal Mirza

Refugee Advice Centre

Saverimuthu Stanislaus (MBE)

South London Tamil Welfare Group
Retired January 2005

Mr Barry Stoye

Refugee Legal Centre

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 & Milners
1 Bedford Road
London WC1R 4BZ

Thank you

Organisations

29th May Charitable Trust
Ajahma Charitable Trust
Basil Bellhouse Charitable Trust
British Red Cross
CAFOD
City Parochial Foundation
John Ellerman Charitable Trust
J Paul Getty JR Charitable Trust
Imperial College
KPMG foundation
Levi Strauss Foundation
Marchday Charitable Trust
The Samuel Sebba Charitable Trust
Henry Smiths Charity
Tolkien Trust
Northern Rock Foundation
Saint Sarkis Charity Trust
Wakefield Trust
Youthaid
HBOS Foundation
The Northmoor Trust
Yorkshire and Humberside Consortium
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Lloyds TSB Foundation
Comic Relief
Bridge House Trust
BBC Children in Need
Lankelly Foundation
Jack Petchey Foundation

Individuals

Emma Thompson
Chris and Gilda Haskins
Northern Dairies Educational Trust
Mr B G Awty

Legacies

Miss Q J Stearn
Mrs M Burn
Mr A F P Smith
Mr James McKeown
Mr B J Cock
Mrs Pauline Sondheim
J V March
Henry Walter Dowsett
Professor Margaret Stacey
Mrs Daphne Lister
Mrs Irene Bloomfield
Miss Pamela Clayton

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.

And finally...

A special thank you to our volunteer photographer, Eugenia Mauluka, who is herself a refugee, and our volunteer writer, Hashi Syedain. Both devoted their time and skills to help us produce this Impact Report.

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

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