

New integration services for refugees

A range of new, high quality services will be available to refugees as a result of the Refugee Council securing new contracts from the Home Office.

After a highly competitive and rigorous process, the Home Office has chosen the Refugee Council as the lead contractor for the new Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) in the London, West Midlands and East of England areas. The Refugee Council is also a key partner in the successful consortium bid in Yorkshire and Humberside. Services will be delivered by other providers in the rest of the UK.

The RIES support involves three elements:

- an advice service for 6 months (on benefits, housing, family reunion, and so on.)
- an employment service for up to 12 months
- a refugee mentoring service which can be accessed at any point in the first 12 months, and which lasts between 6 - 12 months

The Refugee Council was disappointed at the loss announced, last year, of the refugee community organisation (RCO) consultancy and advice strand of this work, and has continued to make the case for this support to be made available to RCOs. RIES aims to help and support newly-recognised refugees to integrate smoothly and quickly into UK society. At the core of the service will be an individual Personal Integration Plan for each refugee, offering them early and intensive casework support and advice.

This new service will only be available to asylum seekers granted refugee status or Humanitarian Protection from 1 October 2008. People gaining status from the case resolution process will not be able to access this service. Referrals can only be made by the New Asylum Model caseworker.

The Refugee Council remains concerned at the narrow focus and short-term nature of this service and believes that RIES is more of a transition service than an integration service. The Refugee Council has made and continues to make the case for the need for integration support for people receiving status from the case resolution process, who are not included in the REIS contract.

Integration advisers, employment advisers, volunteers and refugee mentors will help refugees and family members to access key services quickly, such as housing and welfare entitlements, and to develop and realise plans for training, further education and employment.

The RIES services will support new refugees from our offices, and our subcontractors' offices, and from outreach venues. Our RIES teams will seek to develop our relationships with RCOs. They will also work with other Refugee Council teams and with other agencies, including local authorities, housing providers, Job Centre Plus and employment agencies, education and training agencies, health services, legal and advice services, UK Border Agency staff, and interpreting services, to enable new refugees to access a range of relevant services.



Stella Maravanyika, coordinator of the Zimbabwean Association's Women's Weekly Drop In (see page 3)

Our subcontractors will be announced shortly once the contracts have been signed.

The Refugee Council is now assessing how it will take this important programme forward to make the maximum impact for refugees. The Refugee Council intends to maintain communications with key organisations in the refugee sector as this work is developed over the coming months.

If your RCO has questions about this new service, in the first instance please contact **Jonathan Ellis**, Director of Policy and Development on **020 7346 1097** or jonathan.ellis@refugeecouncil.org.uk.

London RCO granted volunteer award for community media work

John Paul M. Likule, Managing Director of Pyramides Magazine recently received a special volunteer award from Evelyn Oldfield Unit, for his outstanding contribution to the work of Gamaliel Press Group Ltd, a charitable company supporting the French African speaking community in the UK. Mr Likule said that the judges were impressed by the impact of their magazine, 'Pyramides' and its contribution to the integration of the African community within the UK.

Pyramides Magazine is a free bi-monthly community newsletter (published in French) designed to inform, educate and support the African French speaking community in the UK, in order to promote their social, cultural and economic integration within the UK. The magazine has a circulation of 10,000 copies per issue. With a modest team of one full time journalist, two university professors and two freelance journalists, they supply a rich variety of free articles to UK regional press, online sites and newspapers. Content includes articles on: culture, fashion, religion, finance, and special feature interviews.

The magazine has been running for over two years and is currently managed on an almost voluntary basis, something that Gamaliel Press Ltd are keen to move away from. Mr Likule said that their recent reader survey showed that there is an increasing demand and interest, particularly from the younger members of the French African speaking community, who would like the

newsletter to be printed in both English and French – to benefit more members of the community.

Mr Likule said they are keen to attract funding and sponsorship to ensure the future development of the magazine – he strongly



John Paul M Likule (on the right) - Managing Director of Pyramides Magazine, awarded for providing vital information to the African Francophone Community in the UK.

believes that the magazine has the potential to be an important medium, not only for the African community, but for government agencies that often need to reach this community group for a range of reasons.

For more information call **mobile 07958 658191** or email **pyramidesmag@aol.com**

Draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill 2008

The Government published* the Draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill on 14 July 2008 – part of an extensive overhaul of all immigration legislation, Rules and guidance. The Draft (partial) Bill covers about two-thirds of the final Bill that will be presented to Parliament in early 2009.

There are a range of concerns about what is in the Bill. Its general approach is to extend the Government's powers to prevent people's entry into the UK. It reduces appeal rights and gives the government powers to restrict bail. The Refugee Council is concerned that it is only a partial Bill with significant areas such as entitlement to asylum support currently missing from the draft and that it represents a series of missed opportunities, in particular that refugees should be given indefinite permission to remain in the UK the moment that they are recognised as refugees.

The Refugee Council has produced a detailed briefing on the Draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill, which focuses on elements of the Bill that are of most significance for refugees and asylum seekers. To download a copy see www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/immigrationandcitizenship.

*See Draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill: public scrutiny document: UKBA: July 2008:
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/immigrationandcitizenshipbill/>

Sharing experience

Zimbabwean Association

Sarah Harland, Coordinator of the Zimbabwean Association (ZA) talks to RCO News about how they have achieved success in their campaigning activities.

From its start in October 2001, when a small group of Zimbabweans got together and worked furiously with other agencies to prevent forced removals to Zimbabwe, to the current day, teamwork has been central to our success. We have also been fortunate to have the goodwill of many people working in the asylum and immigration field who have generously shared their experience, knowledge and contacts with us.

At the ZA we have pooled our own talents, abilities and contacts to achieve more. Motivational and public speaking skills amongst the community, linked with solid hard work, record-keeping, and report writing are a great combination. Listening to our members about the conditions they are facing – whether in detention or living in difficult circumstances without status - means that we have been able to highlight the problems of those who often feel voiceless, and bring them to the attention of the media, politicians and campaigners.

Building up trust over the years and respecting confidentiality has meant that more asylum seekers are willing to talk to us. This has helped us to collect evidence and information for use in such major Country Guidance cases as ‘AA’, which considered whether Zimbabweans who had unsuccessfully claimed asylum in the UK, would be at risk if returned to Zimbabwe. While the legislation continues, the suspension of enforced removals to Zimbabwe remains in place.

We strongly encourage our members, wherever possible, to tell their own stories. Whenever a surge of media interest comes our way, we link people up with the media. To support those who have a flair for communicating with the media, we are developing media workshops and media teams to ensure that they are better prepared.

The reduction in legal aid has resulted in Zimbabwean asylum seekers being stranded without legal representation. In an attempt to support such people, selected ZA members have started attending Mackenzie Friend Training courses where they learn what they can do to assist, which includes attending court to provide emotional support.

Key developments in the last few months have included the setting up of a ZA Women’s Weekly Drop in, and close work with the Strangers into Citizens campaign, calling for permission to work for Zimbabwean exiles. This culminated in a very successful prayer service at Westminster Abbey led by the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, an outspoken critic of President Mugabe – followed by a rally.

Enabling people to reach their potential, and utilise their skills rather than festering in limbo, is the way forward for us.

For more information call **020 7549 0355** (Tuesday and Thursday) or visit our website at www.zimbabweassociation.org.uk or email zimbabweassociation@yahoo.co.uk.

Funding news

City Bridge trust

The City Bridge Trust has launched its new funding grants programmes. Under the name of ‘Working with Londoners’, the new grant programmes will fund projects that strive to do the following:

- Remove barriers and enable disabled people to participate fully in society
- Bring about greater community cohesion
- Improve the mental health of Londoners
- Maintain and develop London’s environment
- Promote healthy lifestyle for older people
- Improve positive transitions to independent living
- Strengthen the third sector within the capital city.

There is no minimum or maximum grant; and grants for large capital projects will usually not exceed £50,000. Applications over £25,000 need to be accompanied by a detailed proposal and large grants to small organisations are unlikely to be made.

See www.citybridgetrust.org.uk/CityBridgeTrust/Grants/ for more information and an application form.

Basis Project toolkits online

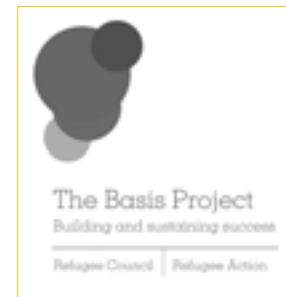
Toolkits on Fundraising and Financial Management are now online at the Basis Project website. With clear information about different aspects of the subjects, the toolkits provide an overview for refugee community organisations to work through at their own pace.

Subjects covered in the Fundraising toolkit include:

- Developing a fundraising strategy
- Different ways to fundraise
- Monitoring and evaluation

Subjects covered in the Financial Management toolkit include:

- Budgeting
- Bookkeeping
- Financial reports



The toolkits can be read online and/or downloaded from the Basis Project website at www.thebasisproject.org.uk

Older Refugees DVD - 'From Isolation to Integration'

This new DVD is a useful tool for raising awareness of some of the barriers faced by older refugees and how they can be tackled.

The Older Refugees Programme was a two-year partnership programme between Age Concern and the Refugee Council, which culminated in a national conference in January 2008. Through a series of Regional Listening Events in London, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside, the Older Refugees Programme heard directly from older refugees about the considerable problems and challenges that they face in their daily lives, but also about how eager they are to participate in and contribute to their local communities and wider society, through education and skills training, volunteering and employment.

For a free copy of the DVD, please contact **Lullyn Tavares** at Age Concern England on **020 8765 7467** or email Lullyn.tavares@ace.org.uk.

New publication

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) has published a guide for RCOs who have little or no experience of monitoring and evaluation: *Becoming more effective – an introduction to monitoring and evaluation for RCOs*.

The guide describes five steps for RCOs to follow in order to carry out monitoring and evaluation. It will help RCOs to:

- be clear about the information they need and how to collect it
- use that information to improve their services
- demonstrate to their funders that they are running an effective service.

Go to the 'publications' section of the CES website to download a copy of this invaluable guide www.ces-vol.org.uk/

Who's who at the Refugee Council?



Hussein Mahamed –Organisational Development Officer (Yorkshire & Humberside/North East) – the Basis Project

Coming to work for the Refugee Council five years ago, I was initially employed as a

project worker in the 'Wrap around' team and with the Gateway Protection Programme as a volunteer coordinator. Supporting vulnerable clients and building the capacity of volunteers has taught me the significance of empowerment - a crucial part of my current role as Organisational Development Officer on the Basis Project*.

As with any sector, the voluntary sector requires organisations to have good organisational governance, fundraising and financial management skills in order to manage their projects effectively. Managing my own business, and studying for a degree in accounting and finance, provides me with the knowledge base required to support refugee community organisations (RCOs) to develop these important skills.

I have previous experience of working with RCOs in Somalia and since arriving in the UK in 2001, I have been actively involved with the Somali Community in Leeds, sitting as Chair from 2001 to 2004. Please contact me on **0113 386 2203** or email hussein.mahamed@refugeecouncil.org.uk or visit www.thebasisproject.org.uk for more information.

* The Basis Project (www.thebasisproject.org.uk) is a five year partnership project led by Refugee Council and Refugee Action, funded by the Big Lottery Fund - offering organisational development support to RCOs in fundraising, financial management, governance and project development.