

## Developing our relationship with refugee community organisations (RCOs)

The **Working Together** event for RCOs that recently took place at our Brixton office, was a great example of how we can continue to explore ways of working more closely with RCOs – particularly between our policy work and the experiences of RCOs.

Our Policy and Development team decided to organise the **Working Together** event in order to re-establish a two way information exchange between us and RCOs, primarily to let them hear about our influencing work on integration and improvement of the asylum system – but most importantly, to consider through workshops and networking how we could continue this great work together.

The afternoon was very informal, with no plenary session, but instead a brief welcome from Jonathan Ellis, our Director of Policy and Development who set the interactive tone for the day. In order to give RCOs maximum opportunity to network and promote their services as well as Refugee Council, we set up an experimental ‘market stall’ where Refugee Council staff and RCOs displayed information about their services for RCOs - this created an informal space for some very lively discussion and information exchange.

One participant’s feedback about the market stall arrangement was: “It’s so important to get together and exchange information and good practice...it gives voluntary organisations the strength to continue.”

51 RCOs from across London attended the event. Participants attended two workshops out of a choice of five which focused on: Employment and training; Refugee community roles in education in the UK; Influencing the asylum process, Accessing health care services and the new legislation, and Is



Refugee Council **Working together** event for RCOs

the UK closed to refugees? – Why border control matters. These workshops generated a lot of interesting debate, giving both participants and the Refugee Council the chance to share experiences and ways we could continue a two way dialogue.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive and participants expressed an interest in having more events like this. One participant said, “We would like the Refugee Council to organise more events like this outside of London too...there is a need to further the cause of community groups in the UK.”

After the success of this event we are looking at developing this event and possibly running something similar in our other regions. We have recently held consultation sessions with RCOs in London, Birmingham and Leeds, and in follow-up meetings we will be keen to explore how RCOs might like us to develop this initiative in partnership with them.

If you have any questions about any issues raised in this article, please contact [development@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:development@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

### New RCO library at our London office

We are delighted to tell you that our Development Team’s RCO library is now up and running! We have a selection of great books that your RCO can come and use at the Refugee Council Brixton office. The library is expanding, but we currently have 200 books on a variety of topics relevant to RCOs’ organisational development. To find out more, please contact **Ezechias Nghendahayo** at [ezechias.ngendahayo@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:ezechias.ngendahayo@refugeecouncil.org.uk) or on **020 7346 1163**

## Important changes for organisations working with children and vulnerable adults

On the 12 of October 2009 a new 'vetting and barring scheme' for everybody working with children and vulnerable adults goes live. The new scheme is being set up to help prevent unsuitable people working with children and vulnerable adults. It aims to do this by:

- building a register of everyone who is allowed to work with children and vulnerable adults, in other words everyone who has been vetted (checked), and
- creating two lists of barred (banned) individuals, one of which will be everyone who is not allowed to work with children, and another list of everyone who is not allowed to work with vulnerable adults.

The scheme applies to volunteers and paid staff in exactly the same way.

Under the new scheme many more organisations will be legally required to carry out checks on employees and volunteers. Organisations will also have a legal obligation to provide any relevant

information discovered about a current or past employee or volunteer. **Failure to comply with the scheme will be punishable by law.** Additionally, trustees of some charities will have to be on the register of individuals who are allowed to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Some aspects of the new scheme may seem complicated or confusing, but it is important that all relevant organisations understand their new responsibilities. To download a short fact sheet about the scheme, please visit [www.ncvcco.org](http://www.ncvcco.org) under Supporting Small Organisations. Please also check the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) website for the Independent Safeguarding Authority [www.isa.gov.org.uk](http://www.isa.gov.org.uk). They are the organisation responsible for putting the 'vetting and barring scheme' into action and will be publicising updates, events and resources.

*Jordan Thompson is the Small Organisations Development Officer at the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO).*

### Awards for Bridging Cultures (ABC) is launched

The ABCs will reward local schemes and projects, run by grass roots, community and voluntary organisations that build bridges between communities and cultures. These awards, funded by the Baring Foundation have been created to give full recognition to the role that smaller projects can play in contributing to the bigger picture.

Benefits to applicants include:

- An opportunity to showcase their work.
- Sharing good practice and opportunities for learning from other applicants.
- Short listed community and voluntary organisations will be supported to make a DVD of their scheme to support learning and good practice.
- In addition, winners will receive publicity for their project, financial rewards to invest in their projects and the opportunity to become leaders in their field.

It is free to enter and the application process is short and simple. If you would like advice on eligibility or submitting an application, call **024 7679 5768** or visit [www.bridgingcultures.org.uk](http://www.bridgingcultures.org.uk) for further information and application forms.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 1 October 2008.**

### Are you being discriminated against?

A new website has been developed, [www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk](http://www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk), to help people recognise discrimination in its different forms and explain why people should not accept it. The website contains stories, quizzes and guides to help individuals to take action to deal with any kind of discrimination.

### Financial guide for new parents

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has published a *Parent's Guide to Money* which is being distributed by midwives throughout England during this summer. It is a folder for expectant and new parents, containing information on dealing with the financial impact of a new baby, such as budgeting, state benefits, cost of children and childcare, maternity and paternity rights, savings and work. It was developed in consultation with parents and those who work with them. For more information, go to [www.parentsguidetomoney.fsa.gov.uk](http://www.parentsguidetomoney.fsa.gov.uk) or call **0845 606 1234**



## Sharing experience

### Leeds Sudanese Community Association

*Federico Vuni, Chairperson of Leeds Sudanese Community Association talks to RCO News about their services and their views on 'single group funding'\*.*

We established Leeds Sudanese Community Association (LSCA) in 2000 and currently employ one full time paid development worker, a part time cleaner and four volunteers.

Our key priority is to help our members gain work experience through volunteer roles in community support and training. We are also developing new projects and social enterprise initiatives to create paid employment opportunities.

For LSCA, success is about recognising and clearly identifying the needs of the communities we serve and being able to fundraise and manage our funds effectively. Our community is well established in Leeds and we have built up very good networks and partnerships with many organisations in the region. Our success is further reflected by the number of referrals we receive from a variety of statutory and non statutory organisations across Leeds.

Funding and capacity building are the main challenges we face. Without sustainable funding it is very difficult to run activities, rent offices, pay staff and provide adequate training for volunteers.

Thanks to 'single group funding', we have been able to slowly build our confidence and capacity

to expand our services beyond our immediate community members. It is our view that RCOs need 'single group funding' to be able to develop the capacity of their own communities first and to then empower them to play their role in the wider community by making their services widely available.

The LSCA is one of the most integrated communities in Leeds. Most of our older members who have lived in Leeds for more than ten years, are in full time employment in the NHS, social services, education, building and construction and other non statutory organisations. Their children are doing very well at school and university, and some have already graduated. This is the success that we want to share with other refugee communities as we possess a wealth of experience and talent which we want others to benefit from.

For more information please call us on **0113 243 8041** or email **leedsudanese.com@yahoo.co.uk**

*\*Taken from the report: Cohesion Guidance for Funders (www.communities.gov.uk) which proposed that local authorities make 'single group funding' – that is funding for a group that works with people of one single ethnicity, religion or culture – the exception rather than standard practice.*



### Funding news - Interview with London Councils

*As Head of Overview and Scrutiny at London Councils (the body representing London boroughs), Ian Redding has helped implement a major change in the way the body funds the voluntary sector. The Basis Project asked him about the new process, how it has affected refugee community organisations (RCOs) in the capital and the trends in funding across the country.*

**London Councils has moved from a straight-forward grants system to commissioning services from the voluntary sector. Can you explain how and why this came about?**

Basically, we felt that needs weren't being met effectively across London. The old system was about funding organisations, and we relied on them to come up with proposals for projects and services. Now we are funding services that we know need to be delivered. There's no reason why the same organisations we funded before can't deliver those services – indeed, many of them are.

Service-based funding is now common for public sector bodies across the country. There's a real pressure from central government to show outcomes and efficiency, so funded bodies have to be able to demonstrate that their work has impact.

There's also an emphasis, in London and elsewhere, on organisations working together to deliver these services – across geographical areas and organisation type.



*Ian Redding*

The above extract is taken from the Basis Project Blog. See [www.thebasisproject.org.uk/Blog](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk/Blog) to read the complete Ian Redding interview. If you would like to take part in the commissioning debate, please post your comments on this blog.

## Success of Basis Project regional event – East of England

There is no Voluntary Community Organisation (VCO) that has not been rejected, at some point, on a funding application because the application either was not convincing about project's need or because the evidence of need was not strong enough. The same can be said – even more emphatically – about the repeated rejections of funding applications by RCOs (refugee community organisations).

It was for this reason that we decided to organise our first East of England Basis event on issues relating to developing stronger funding applications. The event was called: **Showing the need for your project: What are funders looking for?** We were not sure if many RCOs would attend, due to the multiple challenges they face during their daily community lives. However the day proved to be a real success.

The day started with an overview of the Basis Project\* from Emily Kippax, the Project Manger. This was followed by very practical presentations from representatives of key organisations who gave an overview of the voluntary sector funding

situation in the region and funding ideas to explore. For example, Jane Darlington from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, spoke about approaching private and business donors – a funding area that is often overlooked by RCOs.

We received very positive feedback from all the community leaders, activists and fundraisers who attended. Many RCOs were thrilled to receive so many practical tips that would help them to improve their next funding applications.

Contact [shpetim.alimeta@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:shpetim.alimeta@refugeecouncil.org.uk) for more information.

*Shpetim Alimeta is the Organisational Development Officer for the East of England*

\*Go to [www.thebasisproject.org.uk](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk) to find out more about the project.



## Who's who at the Refugee Council?

### Mani Thapa – Organisational Development Officer (Leeds and South Yorkshire) – the Basis Project

Since January 2008, I have been working for the Basis Project\* as an Organisational Development Officer with responsibility for the Leeds and South



Yorkshire region. The Basis Project ([www.thebasisproject.org.uk](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk)) is a five year partnership project led by Refugee Council and Refugee Action, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This project offers organisational development support to refugee community

organisations (RCOs) in fundraising, project development, financial management and governance.

My role is to address RCOs' needs through the use of information products and toolkits, one-to-one support, group training, networking and seminars. I will also be working closely with funders and second tier service providers to enable RCOs to access funding and mainstream support.

Before working on the Basis Project, I worked for Refugee Action as a Community Development Officer in Leeds. All my work involved innovative approaches, working in partnership with asylum seekers, refugees and refugee communities to help them build new lives here.

In Bhutan, my home country I worked as an Agricultural Economist in the Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture for 12 years. Influenced by my own experience as a refugee, I am passionate about supporting RCOs to integrate into

the wider community. Please contact me on **0113 238 4107** or email [maniT@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:maniT@refugee-action.org.uk) for more information.

*\*Mani Thapa is employed by Refugee Action, the Basis Project partner.*