

# RCO News

Newsletter from the Community Development Team

## Integration - Full and Equal Citizens?

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2002 over 100 refugee community organisations (RCOs) attended a national conference to discuss the government's integration strategy for refugees, named "Full and Equal Citizens". Integration has been in the media recently due to the government's new proposals on citizenship. However, the integration strategy was actually launched in November 2000. The conference was organised by a sub-group on community development and was addressed by Lord Rooker, minister for Citizenship and Immigration. RCOs discussed the strategy to ensure that it properly identified key issues for communities and that RCOs were included in developing and implementing it. Workshops covered the situation of RCOs inside and outside London, involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal, identifying local initiatives, funding and other resource needs.

The integration strategy has four aims: to include refugees as equal members of society; to help refugees develop their potential and contribute to the UK's cultural and economic life; to set up a framework to support the integration process across the UK; and to facilitate access to the support necessary for the integration of refugees. RCOs felt that their role in helping people integrate was crucial, from basic orientation to learning English to supporting people find education and work, and that the government should provide adequate funds for this. They also felt that effective integration needs to start from day one rather than wait until a person has status - as in the strategy - as many people remain asylum seekers for lengthy periods.



The community development sub-group is part of the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF), which develops the strategy. Other sub-groups look at employment, adult education and training, accommodation, community safety and racial awareness, health and social care, positive images and the education of children and unaccompanied minors. The NRIF is managed by the Refugee Integration Unit at the Home Office.

Wondimu Yohannes from Refugee Action and Dick Williams from Refugee Council co-chair the community development sub-group. The group promotes an understanding of the role of refugee communities and RCOs in integration, and identifies and promotes good principles and practice of community development. It will also identify the support and resource needs of communities and RCOs, and recommend actions to meet them. It seeks to strengthen the participation of refugee communities in relevant partnerships, policy initiatives and development programmes on a local, regional and national level.

The NRIF will shortly be updating the strategy based on the sub-groups' recommendations. If you have any comments about the role of RCOs in successful integration, please contact Dick on 020 7820 3097, [dick.williams@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:dick.williams@refugeecouncil.org.uk), or Wondimu on 020 7840 6505, [wondimuy@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:wondimuy@refugee-action.org.uk)

*Insert: UCRA students receiving graduation certificate.*



## What is partnership working?

The Community Development Team (CDT) has recently acquired the new post of Partnership Development Manager in response to the increasing pressure on RCOs to enter into partnerships with statutory and voluntary organisations. Partnership working is often seen as a way of accessing resources, particularly large pots of European money or the latest UK government initiative (Neighbourhood Renewal, New Deal, etc). In order to participate fully in some of these initiatives RCOs have to work in partnership with others, usually larger voluntary sector agencies or statutory sector bodies. Funders are also increasingly expecting RCOs to work in partnership. However, partnerships are not just about getting a few organisations together to make a funding application. A true partnership is an agreement between two or more organisations to work together to achieve common aims.

Partnerships can benefit RCOs as working together enables organisations to share resources, skills and experiences. This is especially true when each organisation brings a different skill or area of expertise. An example of this is a community interpreting project, where a training provider manages to fill its NVQ courses and an RCO's interpreters receive training leading to qualifications. A good partnership should not detract from an organisation's core work; it should enhance it. Partnerships also provide opportunities for RCOs to access new resources and influence policy makers.

However, working in partnership brings new challenges and may not be suitable for every organisation. Before you start, you need to be clear about your aims and objectives and what you want to achieve from the partnership. Choose your partners with care - what does each organisation offer eg experienced staff, trainers, premises, work placements? Which will be the lead organisation and how will decisions be taken?

Different organisations have different aims, users and methods of working, especially if one is a large agency and the other a small community group. So partnerships need clear procedures in order to avoid conflict. Also, all too often partnerships consist of a few large organisations which control the budget and the agenda, and RCOs do not always get equal access to resources, being offered instead capacity building support.

RCOs also need to weigh-up other potential effects of partnerships, such as increased bureaucracy and a loss of flexibility. Small organisations may not have the resources to collect and record the statistics and reports that partnerships require, as well as attend all the extra meetings. Partnerships also require agreements to deliver certain services and meet pre-set targets. This can weaken the flexibility of RCOs to adapt their services to meet the changing needs of their client group and reflect the constantly changing environment in which they work.

For more information on the Partnership Development Post see page 4.

### Refugee Week 17 - 23 June!

The Celebrating Sanctuary festival is on 16<sup>th</sup> June at Bernie Spain Gardens, Oxo Tower Wharf, South Bank. For details of other events, and to add yours to the list, go to [www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk).

### CDT Local Training

RCOs in Lambeth, Camden, Islington and Haringey will soon receive information about our 2002 local training programme. Courses cover managing an RCO, fundraising and financial management. RCOs outside these boroughs can still attend if there are free spaces. For more information contact Martin Halliday on 020 7820 3014 or [martin.halliday@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:martin.halliday@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## Funding News

### Comic Relief deadlines

The next deadlines for Comic Relief's grant programme for refugees and asylum seekers are 17<sup>th</sup> May and 9<sup>th</sup> August 2002. Organisations can apply for core costs of up to £30,000 a year for 3 years, as well as training grants. For more information and an application pack contact 020 7820 5555, [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com) or Comic Relief, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP.

### Community Action Millennium Awards

This scheme aims to support individuals from refugee communities to renew and update their skills, and contribute to the well being of their communities by developing a project. Grants of an average £2,500 and maximum £5,000 can be used for training, project expenses, buying books etc but not for salaries or an organisation's running costs. Deadlines are 20<sup>th</sup> May, 19<sup>th</sup> August and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2002 and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2003. For more information contact the Medical Foun-

ation on 020 7813 9999. The CDT is organising a briefing from the funder on 26<sup>th</sup> June, and will send more information nearer the time.

### London Arts

The deadline for London Arts' Senses of the City grant programme for refugee-led arts projects is 16<sup>th</sup> September 2002. Projects in music, dance, drama, visual arts etc can receive up to £5,000. London Arts can provide information in various community languages and is also holding advice surgeries for groups interested in applying. For more information contact Tony Taylor on 020 7340 1096, or Access Unit, London Arts, 2 Pear Tree Court, London, EC1R 0DS.

### Emergency Fund

The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) has announced a new short-term assistance fund of up to £10,000 to support organisations experiencing financial difficulties due to unforeseen cuts in funding. For more information contact 01732 520 334 or [www.CAFonline.org/grants](http://www.CAFonline.org/grants)

## Sharing Experiences

### **Sarah Nansukusa, Co-ordinator of the Uganda Community Relief Association (UCRA).**

The Uganda Community Relief Association, based in Haringey, was established 17 years ago and currently employs 6 full-time staff working on a range of projects. One of these, the Training and Volunteers Project, is run in partnership with Haringey Adult Learning Services, and is funded by the European Social Fund, the Single Regeneration Budget, North London Learning & Skills Council and the Community Fund. The project, which has been running for four years, aims to widen access to basic skills provision (English language and computer skills) for African people, particularly refugees and asylum seekers. In this way, skills and qualifications will be raised and participants' employability will be improved. The project provides specialist, targeted and co-ordinated support, guidance and advice, with extra training and support in literacy and numeracy skills for those who need it. The project also works closely with other providers in order to promote access to the labour market and to build the confidence of refugees.

Participants on the project are encouraged to participate in UCRA's volunteering scheme and other local schemes in order to get hands on work experience. Haringey Adult Learning Services also provide information and advice to participants on progression routes to further and higher education. For the year 2001-2002, UCRA recruited and trained 50 beneficiaries in Enfield and Haringey. All were refugees and 90% were women who had been unemployed for over 2 years and who could hardly speak English. A total of 41 qualifications were awarded, 18 of the participants undertook volunteering, 11 have progressed to further education, 12 have obtained full or part-time employment and one left to have a baby. The partnership has been a great success, with students benefiting from the different expertise of UCRA and Haringey Adult Learning Services and accessing the additional services offered by both organisations. Further funding is currently being sought to continue and extend the project. For further information contact:

**UCRA, The Selby Centre, Selby Road, Tottenham, London N17 8JL, Tel: 020 8808 6221**





## Employment Report

The report "Refugees and Progression Routes to Employment" from the Pan London Refugee Training and Employment Network (PLRTEN) is now available on the Refugee Council website [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk). The report gives recommendations on model routes into employment, and on training and employment provision. For more information contact Steve Hill on 020 7820 3090, [steven.hill@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:steven.hill@refugeecouncil.org.uk).

## Volunteer Expenses

Does your organisation pay a flat daily expenses sum to volunteers? If so, be warned as the Inland Revenue recently judged that volunteers at an organisation who received a fixed expenses payment for every day were actually employees. The organisation in question was ordered to back-pay the volunteers at the minimum wage rate. To avoid such difficulties, organisations need to ensure that they reimburse actual out of pocket expenses for each volunteer, and do not pay a fixed amount. It is obviously very important that volunteers are reimbursed, and the Inland Revenue does not set a maximum upper limit.

## Volunteers' Week 7-13 June 2002

Volunteers' Week celebrates the contribution that volunteers make to society. Organisations can get involved by holding events and activities, and it can be a useful way to recruit new volunteers. For more information contact the National Centre for Volunteering on 020 7520 8900, [volunteeringpromotion@thecentre.org.uk](mailto:volunteeringpromotion@thecentre.org.uk) or visit the web-site [www.volunteersweek.org.uk](http://www.volunteersweek.org.uk)

## Directory for Social Entrepreneurs

Does your organisation tackle social problems in innovative and interesting ways? If so you could benefit from an entry in a new internet directory set up by the Active Community Unit. Organisations will receive increased publicity, an email newsletter and access to advice and information on social issues. For more information contact Gwen Oliver or Alison Yo on 020 7401 5393, [a.yeo@can-online.org.uk](mailto:a.yeo@can-online.org.uk)

## Information for young refugees

The National Information Forum has translated its guide for young refugees and asylum seekers into Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Romanian, Somali, Tamil and Turkish. The 100-page guide explains how life in the UK works, from buying a stamp to registering with a doctor or applying for further education. For more information contact the National Information Forum on 020 7402 6681, [info@nif.org.uk](mailto:info@nif.org.uk)

## New CDT Members

This month we welcome three new members to the team. Devan Kanthasamy, fundraising, 020 7820 3076, [devan.kanthasamy@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:devan.kanthasamy@refugeecouncil.org.uk); Girma Afley, finance, 020 7820 3073, [girma.afley@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:girma.afley@refugeecouncil.org.uk), and Elaheh Rambarzini, women, 020 7820 3022, [elaheh.rambarzini@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:elaheh.rambarzini@refugeecouncil.org.uk).

## Useful websites

London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)  
[www.lvsc.org.uk](http://www.lvsc.org.uk)

For information, support, training etc on issues affecting voluntary and community organisations.

Federation of Independent Advice Centres  
[www.fiac.org.uk](http://www.fiac.org.uk)

Provides support to advice-giving organisations.

## Meet the Team!



**Carl Blackburn**  
Partnership Development  
Manager

Carl has been with the team for five and a half years, previously as the finance development worker and now as Partnership Development Manager. Carl supports RCOs currently involved in partnership work and those wishing to get involved in existing partnerships or to develop new ones. He also works to develop and support refugee networks. Carl aims to make other agencies aware of RCOs and make their services more accessible to them. You can contact him on 020 7820 3074, [carl.blackburn@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:carl.blackburn@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

