

# RCD News



Newsletter from the Community Development Team

## Refugee communities and the Internet: new research by the Refugee Council

Service-providers are increasingly reliant on Internet and email to disseminate information. However, there is currently very little publicly available information on access to and use of the Internet by ethnic minorities in general and refugees in particular. The Refugee Council therefore decided to conduct research into the extent of refugee community organisations' (RCOs) access to, and use of, the Internet.

A questionnaire was sent to RCOs across the UK in Winter 2002 and Spring 2003. A big thank-you to all organisations that responded! The results showed a high level of Internet access and use amongst respondents, despite limited resources. However, it showed a strong need for more training and funding for refugee communities if the Government is to achieve its aim of Internet access for all those who want it by 2005.

72% of RCOs that responded to the survey said they have access to the Internet, 62% on their premises. 61% of those with Internet access said their clients can access the Internet on the premises. Around 65% of respondents to the survey said that they rely on the Internet for information they need to deliver day-to-day services. Only 1% said they do not rely on it at all.

The main barriers to Internet access and usage, for those respondents who said they didn't use the Internet, were lack of funding and training.

The survey showed that RCOs were enthusiastic to use the Internet, despite the difficulties in getting and maintaining access due to limited resources. Many RCOs stated that they felt Internet access would enable them to improve

the services they could offer. At the same time, the report on the survey (to be published soon) cautioned that many RCOs, particularly in regions outside London, simply do not have the resources to get online and due to limited contact with the Refugee Council might not have taken part in the survey.

The report calls on the Government, funders and the voluntary sector to build on the enthusiasm of the RCOs which took part in the survey, and further encourage Internet use. This is necessary to avoid further excluding RCOs and other communities, which may be at risk of losing out on the wealth of information and services available online.

For more information contact Kirsten Walton on 020 7820 3018 or email

[webeditor@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:webeditor@refugeecouncil.org.uk)



*Inset: Tai Chi class at the Bishop Ho Ming Wab Centre*



## Sign up to legal aid campaign

The campaign against the government's plans to restrict the availability of legal aid is now being co-ordinated by Liberty. The campaign has issued the following statement:

"Drastic cuts in legal aid for migrants and asylum seekers will undermine a vital human right. It is a central principle of our justice system that all individuals are entitled to a fair hearing. Denial of effective legal advice and representation for these vulnerable groups will be a charter for discrimination. We call upon the government to abandon this proposal that would deny essential legal representation."

It has already been signed by over forty organisations and the co-ordinators would like as many organisations as possible to sign, especially community organisations whose members are likely to be most directly affected by the government's proposals. The campaign also encourages organisations to lobby their MPs and to provide case studies that illustrate the likely impact if these changes were to take place. For more information contact Niamh McClean on 020 7378 3656, [niamhm@liberty-human-rights.org.uk](mailto:niamhm@liberty-human-rights.org.uk). You can also get up-to-date information on the campaign at [www.immigrationandasylumwork.info](http://www.immigrationandasylumwork.info).

## Health News

### Health Workers Forum & Mental Health Workers Forum

The Refugee Council has recently set up two new forums regarding health: a Health Workers Forum and a Mental Health Workers Forum. The aim of the Health Workers Forum is to give RCOs and NHS Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) a chance to work together and share experiences and views on how to improve access to healthcare.

The Mental Health Workers Forum aims to give RCOs the chance to share and discuss the mental health problems facing their clients. The Refugee Council is aware that RCOs are likely to be experiencing particular problems at the moment, as a result of people being made homeless under Section 55. This is a chance for RCOs to give their views on what action needs to be taken and create an effective lobbying group. For more information contact the Refugee Council's health policy advisor, Helen Murshali, on 020 7820 3108, [helen.murshali@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:helen.murshali@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## Support for Refugee Doctors

All qualified refugee and asylum seeking doctors are eligible to join the refugee doctor's database, a project organised by the Refugee Council and the British Medical Association (BMA). Doctors can register their details, and will then be sent a regular newsletter and relevant publications such as the JCORE Guide for Refugee Doctors. They will also be sent individually targeted information on training and other initiatives. In July 2003 there were already 882 doctors registered on the database, and this data is also used to inform people about the number of refugee doctors, which region they live in and what support they need to continue their careers in the UK.

Refugee and asylum seeking doctors can also join the BMA's Refugee Doctor Initiative. They will receive free weekly copies of the British Medical Journal and the BMA News, access to the BMA library and some local office services. For more information on both projects contact 020 7383 6133, [internationalinfo@bma.org.uk](mailto:internationalinfo@bma.org.uk)

## Funding News

### Home Office Family Support Grant 2004-2005

This aims to support parents with their parenting role and strengthen their relationship with their children. There are three strands for 2004-5: A) Innovation, B) Development of previously funded work, and C) Black and Minority Ethnic Parents. Applications for strand C must focus on parents struggling with parenting their teenagers who are displaying challenging behaviour. For further information contact the Family Support Grant Team, Family Policy Unit, Department for Education and Skills, 5C Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT, 020 7925 3803/3804/3805 or [www.dfes.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies) or [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/family/index.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/family/index.html)

### Wates Foundation

The foundation supports small community groups and projects that will improve the quality of life of disadvantaged and excluded communities. Current programmes include community support and development, aid to ethnic and immigrant communities, arts, heritage and the environment. Grants are up to £25,000 per year and can cover activity costs or core costs such as revenue, infrastructure, and service provision. For further information contact 01372 861 000, [www.watesfoundation.org.uk](http://www.watesfoundation.org.uk).

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## Sharing Experiences

### RCO News talks to the Bishop Ho Ming Wah Centre about their Tai Chi class.

“The Tai Chi class was set up three years ago in order to provide the elder members of the Chinese community with an exercise activity as part of our healthy living programme. These gentle movements co-ordinated with breathing exercises are well suited to the needs of all ages, and especially elderly people with arthritis and respiratory problems. With an average attendance of 40 to 60 people, these classes have also created an opportunity to meet other people and socialise. This includes people who may be of other nationalities besides our own as the Tai Chi classes are also popular with other communities. As the classes take place just off Trafalgar Square, it is not uncommon for tourists also to pass, take photos and join in! We hold demonstrations at events and festivals as an introduction to other audiences who may interested to join these popular cultural exercises.

The Bishop Ho Ming Wah Centre provides a range of services for the Chinese community, including advice and referrals, counselling, translation and interpreting, and language classes. The healthy living programme includes Tai Chi, traditional Chinese dance, table tennis, chess, singing and Tai Chi Fan dance.”

For more information contact Edith Lau on 020 7925 0755, [bhmwa@fsnet.co.uk](mailto:bhmwa@fsnet.co.uk)





## Doing it for Ourselves

"Doing it for Ourselves", the second edition of the Community Development Team's Information Pack for RCOs will be available shortly. A launch will be held in December, which will also be an opportunity for RCOs to meet the Refugee Council's new Chief Executive Maeve Sherlock. All RCOs will receive one free copy in the post, and the publication will be for sale to 2nd tier agencies. More information will be sent nearer the date.

## Article 19 media research

Copies are now available of the research undertaken by Article 19 on refugees and the media. The research explored the media's role in informing public policy debate on refugee issues, how asylum seekers and refugees are represented in the media, the impact this has on them and the extent to which they feel able to participate in the public debate. For more information and a copy of the report go to [www.article19.org](http://www.article19.org) or contact [ChloeG@article19.org](mailto:ChloeG@article19.org)

## Grant panel members wanted

The Local Network Fund for children and young people is currently looking to recruit new members, in particular from Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BMER) backgrounds to its grants panel in Brent. The Local Network Fund is also very keen to hear from individuals and community leaders from BMER backgrounds, who have experience of working with children and young people (0-19 years), in a professional or voluntary capacity, in Barnet, Ealing, Harrow or Hillingdon. For further information contact Nigel Cooper at the North West London Community Foundation on 020 8424 1167.

## New OSS leaflets

There are now new leaflets outlining the services available at the Refugee Council's London One Stop Service (OSS). Services include day centre facilities and clinics, accessing support entitlements, health advice and legal advice. The leaflet outlines the revised opening times, advice line details and a map of how to get there. The leaflet is available in English and a variety of community languages. It can be downloaded from the web-site

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## Useful web-sites

[www.hrconnection.org](http://www.hrconnection.org)

Information in different languages on issues relevant to human rights groups around the world.

[www.londonfreelist.com](http://www.londonfreelist.com)

Lists events and attractions in London that are free, or priced maximum £3.00. You can also enter your event to be publicised.

## Who's who at the Refugee Council



**Helen Murshali**  
**Health Policy Advisor**

Helen has worked at the Refugee Council for three and a half years. Her role is to track UK health policy regarding refugees and asylum seekers, and to lobby the government and other decision-makers about their needs. Helen responds to policy consultations and also attends relevant task groups on health issues. She organises the health workers' forum and the mental health workers' forum (see page 2). Before joining the Refugee Council, she volunteered with RCOs.

You can contact Helen on 020 7820 3108, [helen.murshali@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:helen.murshali@refugeecouncil.org.uk).

**For further details, please contact the Community Information Adviser on 020 7820 3070 or visit our website at [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)**

