

Funding changes: what is next for RCOs?

The UK voluntary sector funding environment is undergoing major changes, which are likely to drastically affect the way refugee community organisations (RCOs) operate in the future.

As stated in the Home Office's consultation paper¹ on refugee integration services in England, most of the Home Office refugee integration budget is currently spent on core and strategic funding of nine major voluntary sector organisations working with refugees, and on three funding streams: the Refugee Challenge Fund; the Refugee Community Development Fund; and the Purposeful Activities for Asylum Seekers Fund.



CAIA Christmas celebration (see page 3)

Following the consultation on refugee integration services, the Home office is proposing that the available budget should be redirected to provide a core set of services that support the Immigration Nationality Directorate's new asylum case management process. One of these proposed services is consultancy advice and support to RCOs. Although the Home Office believes that the availability of refugee services is inconsistent in certain areas, they recognise that the crucial work done by RCOs should continue to make an important contribution to the provision of services. The proposed RCO consultancy service is expected to provide RCOs with the opportunity to build their capacity to deliver services for their member communities and attract additional funding.

Following its recent grants funding review, London Councils, formerly the Association of London Government (ALG) has formally agreed the priorities for its £28 million funding programme for voluntary organisations in London. Starting in 2007, the London Councils Grants Scheme will incur a significant change, when open bidding will be replaced by the commissioning of services. This will allow London Councils to actively seek organisations to fund rather than responding to bids. Among the first six priorities selected for commissioning services are: victims of crime; homelessness; children and young people; and social enterprise. London Councils plan to advertise for funding applications for their first commissioned services in February 2007².

Changes in the funding and support environment mean that voluntary sector organisations, including RCOs need to adjust their way of working by engaging themselves in service delivery. In some instances, this may involve operating more like businesses, for example as social enterprises. A guide for small charities entering into contracts to provide services on behalf of public bodies was published by the Charity Commission in 2003 and following a consultation³ on the document, a new version is expected to be published in February 2007.

Amid these current funding changes, charitable trusts and foundations remain the key funders for RCOs. Trusts and foundations have their own priorities and community organisations can apply to them only when their project matches the funders' priorities and the organisation fulfills their selection criteria. Many RCOs have developed extensive experience in trust fundraising, nevertheless, there are a great number of RCOs that encounter difficulties in identifying suitable funders for their projects, let alone completing often very complex funding application forms. There are many factors which may impact heavily on RCOs' efforts to secure funding, for example, lack of resources and constant changes in both their clients' needs and their management committees. These pressures

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¹ Home Office Consultation document 2006 at, www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/6353/6356/17715/National_Refugee_Integratio1.pdf

² London Councils consultation on funding services, www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/doc.asp?doc=18863

³ Charity Commission consultation, www.charitycommission.gov.uk/enhancingcharities/consultcc37.asp

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add to RCOs' difficult task of fundraising.

In response to RCOs' fundraising needs, the Refugee Council's Community Development Team (CDT) runs regular funding surgeries for RCOs in London. These one-to-one support sessions enable RCOs to: develop their fundraising strategy; to develop projects tailored to their community needs; to identify suitable funders; to prepare good quality funding application forms and/or bids and to continue with the process until funding is secured. For more information on funding surgeries or to book your appointment, contact **Ezechias Ngendahayo** on **020 8346 1163** or email ezechias.ngendahayo@refugeecouncil.org.uk. For other support services provided by CDT, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelpcommunities/community/

Focus on policy: the work of the Refugee Council policy teams

Our policy advisers' work involves developing position statements and responding to consultations on UK, European and international developments in refugee protection and welfare. We meet regularly with senior officials and with parliamentarians in order to influence developing asylum policy. We work with other Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and with government departments to ensure that the Refugee Council's knowledge of asylum in the UK is fed into broader debates.

Our areas of expertise include:

- Education of refugee and asylum seeking children
- Employment, education and training of adult refugees and asylum seekers
- Unaccompanied children, focusing on the asylum system and services for children.
- International refugee protection, including refugees' access to the EU and the UK and the development of the Common European Asylum System.
- UK refugee protection, including the UK's obligation to refugees under international law, UK asylum law and process.

Examples of current work:

As part of our work on international refugee protection, we continue to press the UK government to address the impact that its

interception measures (border controls, visas etc) are having on refugees' ability to reach the UK to seek asylum here.

In partnership with ECRE (The European Council on Refugees and Exiles) we have been focusing on the impact that the EU Dublin II Regulation⁴ has on unaccompanied children in an attempt to influence the European Commission's review. We have drafted a briefing on Dublin II and children and are planning a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees on this issue in Spring 2007.

Working with agencies from across the sector we are monitoring the roll out of the NAM (New Asylum Model) and have recently been successful in persuading the Home Office to allow more time for considering children's claims in NAM.

We have been active in opposing the Learning and Skills Council decision to cut ESOL funding, writing to Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, and publishing a briefing on the impact that cutting funding will have on outcomes for asylum seekers, refugees and the wider community. We will continue to play a key role in the campaign to reverse this damaging decision.

For more information about our policy work, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/ or email nancy.kelley@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Online refugee services directory

Islington Council has launched a new online refugee services directory for refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them. It includes information about rights and services within the borough, London-wide and nationally. There are video translations and downloadable written translations in five languages and symbols to aid users. Although many of the services listed in the directory are based in Islington, information

included in the directory is applicable to any refugee and asylum seeker.

Visit the directory at www.islington.gov.uk/refugeedirectory. For further details and/or to give any feedback about the directory, call **Islington Refugee Integration Services** on **020 7527 7140** or email iris@islington.gov.uk.

⁴ Dublin II is the regulation that governs in which EU country a claim for asylum is determined. It was developed to ensure that asylum seekers can only make a claim in one EU state.



Sharing Experience

The Centre for Armenian Information and Advice (CAIA)

Misak Ohanian, Chief Executive Officer of the CAIA talks to RCO News about their services and views on current funding provision for RCOs.

The CAIA was established in 1986 to provide advice and support to disadvantaged Armenians including: refugees; women; children; older people and their carers by enabling them to access their statutory rights and by providing them with training and educational opportunities. Our services include: a lunch club for older people and their carers; a free mini-bus service to enable the frail and disabled to attend our events; a parent and toddler group and summer playscheme. CAIA's library and community resource centre is open to children, students, and journalists on Sundays and our free bi-lingual newsletter, 'Armenian Voice', helps to raise awareness about our services and promotes community networking.

We currently employ two full time and three part time staff and a number of committed volunteers. The diversity of our workforce ensures that we represent all the languages of our clients and makes it easier for us to understand their predicaments.

For the last 20 years, our main funder has been the London Councils, who have funded our advice worker. Both the London Borough of Ealing and Hounslow have also funded our services, as these two boroughs have large Armenian populations. We keep informed about funding changes by attending funders' workshops and by maintaining regular communication with key funders. CAIA also receives regular funding e-bulletins from organisations including, Advice UK, Refugee Council, Evelyn Oldfield Unit and Ealing CVS.

The voluntary sector funding environment is changing and already having a negative impact on our organisation. Our most recent application for older refugee funding was rejected despite our extensive experience of supporting this client group. The new commissioning process would appear to be favouring larger organisations representing local communities, within specific boroughs. This is not practical for us, because even though there is a large Armenian community in Ealing, many of our clients live in different areas of London and England due to various community links and dispersal.

The commissioning of services is making it harder for culturally specific community organisations to secure funding but we have to continue to address the needs of our communities. We believe that RCOs should be funded alongside Local Authorities because they are providing the same public services.

Charitable foundations and trusts are another source of funding for RCOs but in our experience, such funding is good for new organisations but for more established RCOs, these smaller grants and time limited funding restrictions make it difficult to sustain quality services. Culturally specific organisations like ourselves, need support to make our voices heard in this changing environment.

For more information, contact **Misak Ohanian** on **020 8992 4621**, email info@caia.org.uk or visit www.caia.org.uk.



Funding News

London Funders (LF)

A new free e-resource for London's voluntary and community sector (VCS) has been developed by 'The London Funders (LF)'. Access is free through its website, www.londonfunders.org.uk. The funding resource provides access to information about London funders for London's VCS. You can search for funding, access useful funding links, and send your comments on key issues affecting the voluntary sector in London to funders. You can also access information relevant to policy and best practice guidance that funders post to the electronic notice board.

Renewal's Community Chest administered its last round of funding in October 2006. The Community Chest grants will no longer be available to refugee community organisations, as the Renewal programme will end in March 2007.

Training update from the Community Development Team

Financial Literacy Project

The third rollout of the Financial Literacy Project was successfully delivered at Hackney and Islington Refugee Training Partnership, with high attendance and positive feedback. Five different Financial Literacy courses were delivered, targeting participants living in North and North East London.

The Financial Literacy Project courses are delivered in different areas of London to ensure that the project is accessible to as many participants as possible. The final rollout of the project will be delivered during the last week of **February** and the first week of **March 2007** at Southwark Refugee Community Forum, South East London.

The following training will be provided:

- Individual & Self-Employed;
- Budget Preparation for Individuals;
- Business Awareness and Information on Social Enterprise;
- Cash Flow Forecast Analysis;
- and Getting to Grips with Finance.

Contact **Girma Afley** on **020 7346 1161** or email girma.afley@refugeecouncil.org.uk for further information and exact dates of courses.

Training and seminars for refugee community organisations

The free training programme 2006/7 for refugee community organisations (RCOs) started in October 2006 and continues until the end of March 2007. The trainings and seminars have so far been well attended with very positive feedback.

Upcoming training and seminars include: Meet the Funders seminar in East London **28 February 2007**; joint Refugee Council and Metropolitan Police Service seminar focusing on women **15 March 2007**; Bookkeeping and Petty Cash **22 March 2007** and Meet the Funders seminar in Central and South London **29 March 2007**.

For more information, email cdt@refugeecouncil.org.uk or download our training brochure and booking form at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/training/rcos

Needed now: volunteers for our action against destitution

On **19-20 February**, the Refugee Council is organising a **Just. Fair.** sleepout, when a group of us will spend a night sleeping outside Parliament.

The **Just. Fair.** campaign highlights the desperate plight of refused asylum seekers who we know are being made destitute as a deliberate tool of government policy. Our question is: what's so wrong with treating people right?

The sleepout will highlight to the public, politicians and the media that thousands of destitute refused asylum seekers have no home and that driving people into destitution is not working as a policy.

By taking action right outside the House of Commons, we will give a message directly to MPs. The date is significant; the quarterly Home Office asylum statistics are published on 20 February. We want to remind people about those refused asylum seekers who will be homeless that night.

We can't do it without you, so if you can take part, please contact us by **8 February 2007** at just.fair@refugeecouncil.org.uk or call **020 7346 6712**.

Who's who at the Refugee Council?

Paul Ellis – Research Unit



At the research unit we undertake research which plays a key role in the effort to improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. It is important that we work with RCOs in order to understand their needs and the needs of their clients.

We currently have two major projects which are well under way: Inclusive Secondary Schools project and Refugees' Experiences of Integration. Details of these projects can be found at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/lobbying/research.htm.

The research unit is currently planning for future activities and will be devising a research programme. It is important that the work we do in the future reflects the needs and priorities of RCOs and their clients, so if there are any areas of work where you feel that there are gaps in research or where evidence is required, please contact the team at research.unit@refugeecouncil.org.uk or call **020 7346 6783**