



A new project supporting refugee community organisations

In March 2007, the Refugee Council was awarded funding by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) under their Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services (BASIS) programme to deliver a five-year, England wide service to strengthen the organisational development capacity of the Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) sector. The BIG BASIS programme aims to improve the infrastructure support available to all voluntary and community sector organisations in England. This new project will be delivered by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action and will focus particularly on enhancing RCOs' financial sustainability.

Over the course of a five-year period, from 2007 to 2012, the project will deliver customised support and training for RCOs, second-tier infrastructure organisations and funders in each of the nine English regions.¹ There will be twelve support workers based across England, who will provide one to one advisory support and group training in core skills, for example, fundraising, financial management, governance and project development.

The project team is looking for 50 RCOs to get involved in the project towards the end of this year. In the coming months you will be able to visit the BASIS project page of the Refugee Council website at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/BASIS for further information, and sign up to register your interest. If you prefer to call, we will also give you the appropriate telephone number for your area.

Support to RCOs will be provided in a variety of ways depending on each RCO's needs. This might include the use of: information products and toolkits; one to one support; group training; networking; peer support; seminars and events. The project team will provide intensive capacity building support for up to 50 RCOs within the first year, and



Service users with an adviser at RAMFEL

by 2012, up to 400 RCOs will have had access to direct support and training from this project. The team is keen to provide a consistent service across the country and to complement any existing infrastructure support in these nine regions.

The approach to this project and the services it will provide have been designed in direct response to the findings of RCOs' needs in England. This research was undertaken by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action during the development phase of the project and highlighted the demand for organisational development support among RCOs.² The research survey identified:

- 668 RCOs across England
- 54% of RCOs contacted, responded to the survey stating their organisational development needs

BIG recognise that RCOs face considerable practical and cultural barriers to accessing funding and managing secured funds in a way that will satisfy the strict requirements of UK funders. This is why the project is key to helping RCOs overcome these challenges.

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¹ These are: East Midlands, East of England, Greater London, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside.

² The research report: *Refugee Community Organisations in England – Realising Potential December 2006* will shortly be available at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/BASIS

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Over the five-year period, the project hopes to deliver a significant increase in the ability of RCOs to manage, develop and sustain their organisations, and to successfully fundraise. In addition to this and very importantly, the project will also help to increase BIG and other funders' awareness of the issues facing RCOs and their particular needs. The project's information products (including online materials) and England wide events will also be accessible to the voluntary sector UK wide.

The central support team, which is based in London, will produce regular updates in RCO News and on the BASIS project page of the Refugee Council website³ about project developments and services available in your area. This is an exciting project and both the Refugee Council and Refugee Action are strongly committed to making an impact on improving RCOs' access to funding and raising funders' awareness of the challenges facing RCOs. The team is looking forward to working with you. For more information, go to www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/basis

London refugee integration consultation

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone has taken leadership of work in London on refugee integration, over the past year, by agreement with the Home Office and London Councils. While recognising some excellent local practice in this field, he is clear that a city-wide strategic framework is now needed to meet the long-term challenge of integration for refugee communities.

With his Board for Refugee Integration in London (BRIL), he has prepared a draft strategy aiming to offer that framework: *London Enriched: the Mayor's Draft Strategy for Refugee Integration in London*. It explains the need for a strategic approach, sets out basic aims, and analyses gaps and barriers to achieving integration. Then it suggests actions which might help to move London towards that goal.

On **10 July 2007**, the Mayor launched his draft strategy for consultation with communities, other stakeholders and the wider London public. The deadline for responses is **Monday 29 October 2007**. The Strategy document and its Summary are on the GLA website at www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/immigration/strategy.jsp. There is also a short questionnaire for public response.

As part of the consultation process, the GLA is working closely with the refugee sector to organise five sub-regional consultation events; North, West, East, Central and South London. There will be two women's events, one for young refugees, one for disabled refugees, one for older refugees, and two focus group meetings for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender (LGBT) refugees.

Events in specialist areas are also being planned, for example, housing and culture - these events will be open to a wider range of service providers including statutory sector agencies.

Refugees wishing to give their views on the whole strategy are best advised to attend a sub-regional event. For details about the date and venue for each event please contact, **Jill Healey** at the GLA on **020 7983 4000**, or email refugeeintegration@london.gov.uk.

Further changes to ESOL and further education funding

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has indicated that asylum seekers on a waiting list for a course before their 19th birthday, will now not be able to take up a place if it becomes available after they turn 19. However, it is hoped that most people in this situation will still be eligible through having waited over six months for a decision on their asylum claim or appeal. The other recent announcements made by the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education still stand. This means that after six months, people with an ongoing asylum claim will be eligible to access LSC funding, as will refused asylum seekers who are eligible for Section 4 support but who cannot leave the UK because of circumstances beyond their control. These changes will start on **1 August 2007** and until then supported asylum seekers remain eligible for LSC funding up to Level 3. See Refugee Council's June 2007 briefing on ESOL and further education at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

³ The project will have its own dedicated website which we will inform people about when it goes 'live'



Sharing experience

Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL)

Rita Chada, Director of RAMFEL talks to RCO News about their latest projects and shares her views on how RCOs can achieve financial sustainability.

RAMFEL was established as Redbridge Refugee Forum in 1992 in order to provide both front line legal advice and representation to individuals and families as well as support to other refugee community organisations. In addition to our legal advice, we also provide English classes, a generalist casework service and a specialist casework service for women without any recourse to public funds affected by domestic violence.

When I joined RAMFEL I noticed that although we were called Redbridge Refugee Forum, we were seeing clients from across east London including: Barking & Dagenham; Havering; Newham; Redbridge and Waltham Forest. We recently changed our name to RAMFEL to ensure our clients could better identify with the organisation and its services. We also wanted to better reflect the changes in society and the fact that we are receiving more requests from the migrant community.

RAMFEL currently employs nine staff, and fifteen volunteers. We readily acknowledge that we can't provide everything and we are now working on two sub regional funding applications with other advice providers and smaller RCOs to increase staffing for a collective service.

Our other key focus at the moment is children's services. It seems that yes, very child does matter, but not if your parent is a refugee or

asylum seeker! There is a distinct lack of support for refugee and migrant children in schools which is why we have teamed up with a local school as part of the Refugee Council's Inclusive Secondary School Project.¹ Our other main programme of work at the moment is capacity building for smaller RCOs, for example, assisting them with funding applications.

In order to achieve sustainability, RCOs need quick results that will help them to develop and deliver their services. I know of one group who went back to a capacity builder every week for three months to complete an Awards for All funding application. When the pace of change and development is that slow, then the work is hindered because people lose enthusiasm and interest. The real challenge is to maintain individual motivation and secure collective commitment.

Like all organisations, we have experienced ups and downs in funding. However the commitment from our staff and trustees has remained consistent. We have tried to introduce services that reflect our client needs, but I leave it for them to judge if we are doing a good job!

For more information or about possible ways of working in partnership, contact [Rita Chada](#) on **020 8478 4513** or email info@ramfel.org.uk or visit www.ramfel.org.uk



Funding news

The Wates Foundation (Greater London)

The Wates Foundation has announced that it is accepting applications under its Large Grants Programme. Under this programme, grants ranging from £10,000 to £60,000 (for up to three years) are available for projects that improve the quality of life by promoting a broad range of social priorities. These include the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the young and disadvantaged aged 5-25; the rehabilitation of offenders; community integration and cohesion; and addressing substance abuse. For details on how to apply visit www.watesfoundation.org.uk/how_to_apply.html.

Local Network Fund (London)

Due to the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People ending in March 2008, the final deadline for applications to the fund, which is managed by the Capital Community Foundation, is **7 September 2007**. For more information visit www.selcf.org.uk/news/index.php?id=31

¹ Go to www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/research for information about the Inclusive Secondary School Project

Training

Don't be shy! - Learn to speak confidently in public

In partnership with the Refugee Council, The English Speaking Union is running a free day's training on effective communication on **Tuesday 11 September 2007**. This workshop aims to improve:

- participants' speaking, listening and creative thinking abilities to aid effective communication.

These skills are often taken for granted, but there is an enormous amount that individuals can learn to improve their ability to put across their opinions, negotiate, respond effectively to others arguments and speak confidently in front of a group. The training will include activities and games to improve participants' confidence in communicating in formal situations.

Time: 9.30 – 3.30pm

Venue: The English-Speaking Union, 37 Charles Street, London, W1J 5ED

To reserve a place on the training, email ruth.marriott@refugeecouncil.org.uk or call **020 7346 6744**.

Myths about case resolution programme

Please follow this Border & Immigration Agency (BIA) weblink for information about how asylum applications under the case resolution programme (also known as legacy) will be processed by the BIA.

www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/asylum/casesresolutionprogrammefaq/

Please note that this is not an amnesty despite recent rumours. Legal aid is available for people to complete their questionnaire once they have received this from BIA directly. Refugee Council would urge people not to be tempted into paying large sums of money to a legal adviser who promises that this will result in ILR being granted.

Meet the funders seminar

The Refugee Council's Community Development Team is holding a 'meet the funders' seminar for RCOs on **Thursday 27 September** at the **London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre from 10-3.30pm**. The following funders will be presenting their funding programmes: Big Lottery Fund, The Arts Council, The Lottery Heritage Fund and Sports England.

The aim of this seminar is to:

- Give RCOs an opportunity to talk face to face with funders
- To provide funders with the chance to promote their funding programmes; explain their selection criteria; define their funding remit and highlight their funding priorities.

For more information and to book a place, email cdt@refugeecouncil.org.uk.

Who's who at the Refugee Council?

Jonathan Ellis – Director of Policy and Development



Jonathan joined the Refugee Council last month to lead their policy and community development work.

He previously worked for OXFAM, where he worked closely with the Refugee Council in the successful

campaign against asylum vouchers in 2000-1. He also led OXFAM's global conflict campaign. He is a former trustee at Student Action for Refugees, a mentor on Timebank's refugee programme and a current trustee of Asylum Aid.

In his last job, he was Director of the Empty Homes Agency and worked closely with refugee community housing associations to help them try to access empty property in London. In his spare time he enjoys running courses on campaigning and has just written a book on campaigning.

"I am delighted to be joining the Refugee Council. I am really enthusiastic to drive forward our policy proposals to the new government. And I am looking forward to meeting RCOs and hearing their views about how the Refugee Council can support their work," said Jonathan.

He is keen to visit RCOs in the coming months and to hear your views. To contact Jonathan, call **020 7346 1096** or email jonathan.ellis@refugeecouncil.org.uk