

## Different past, shared future.

### ~ Refugee Week 2007

As you are probably well aware, Refugee Week 2007 is just around the corner! From the 18 to the 24 of June, hundreds of events will take place across the UK to celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK. These events will range from big music festivals and art exhibitions to political debates, film screenings, conferences, school activities, sports and community events. Events will be organised by charities, local government, refugee community organisations, schools, churches, arts organisations, day centres, refugee umbrella networks and regional and national consortiums amongst many others.

The purpose of Refugee Week is to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotypes of refugees through events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and promote understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary. The ultimate aim of Refugee Week is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration, enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to the UK.

So what events can you go to this year? Here are a few examples of the many interesting events taking place throughout the week:

**Celebrating sanctuary, Birmingham: 16 June** – A one day free festival that launches Refugee Week 2007 and celebrates the contribution of refugees in Birmingham.

**Re-training and re-employing refugee teachers, London: 22 June:** A conference organised by the Refugees into Teaching partnership, which aims to encourage dialogue between those responsible for selection and recruitment decisions and those seeking to become fully qualified teachers.

**Photo exhibition, Bristol: 16-24 June:** St Mary Redcliffe Church is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Mohamedin Bakhat, a Darfuri artist, responding to the life of the Zaghawa people and their experiences in the current conflict.

**Celebrating sanctuary, London: 17 June:** This one day music, dance and performance festival provides a platform for some of the UK's emerging refugee artists. Set on London's South Bank, the festival also includes information stalls and an array of fantastic food from different refugee communities.

If you would like to get more information about the above events, or find out about other Refugee Week events in your area, take a look at the *Events Calendar* on the Refugee Week website. This calendar lists all the Refugee Week events taking place around the UK and lets you search for events by location, date and type.



(photographer: Tobias Madden)

*Children playing at Celebrating Sanctuary, London, June 2006*

If you are thinking of organising an event for Refugee Week but are not sure what to do, the Refugee Week website includes an *Ideas for Events* page containing diverse examples of previous Refugee Week events. The page also includes an *Events Toolkit* - a resource full of tips on organising events and looking for funding.

There are various promotional materials available for Refugee Week 2007 including stickers, badges, posters, banners, balloons and t-shirts. You can order and view images of all these promotional materials in the *Get Involved/Publicity* section of the Refugee Week website.

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This year's campaign, the Refugee Week Media Campaign is focused on promoting the positive relationships that are formed everyday between refugees and British born people. To highlight this, the Refugee Week team and its partners have interviewed different people across the UK, from friends, to neighbours to work colleagues, and will be promoting these interviews in magazines and on the Refugee Week website.

For more information about how to get involved in Refugee Week 2007, go to the Refugee Week website at [www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk) or call **020 7346 6752**.

## Charities Act 2006 update

The Charities Act 2006 was passed by Parliament in November 2006. Some parts of the Act came into force on 27 February 2007 but most of the other parts of the Act will be implemented by early 2008. The provisions of the Act that are being applied now and which may affect refugee community organisations most are:

### Changes to audit thresholds:

Most charities with an annual income below £500,000 will not need to have their accounts professionally audited (was previously -£250,000). This change affects both unincorporated and incorporated charities and will apply to financial years of charities beginning on or after **27 February 2007**.

### Registration:

Generally only charities with an annual income above £5,000 must register with the Charity Commission (was previously £1,000). Registered charities with an income below £5,000 will remain on the register unless they ask the Commission to be removed. This provision came into force on **23 April 2007**.

### Personal liability of trustees:

When charities experience problems, trustees may be personally liable for any resulting debts or losses. The Charity Commission now have a new power to relieve trustees of personal liability where they have acted honestly and reasonably. Trustees can now apply to the Commission as well as the courts for relief from personal liability.

The Act also recognises that it is reasonable for charities to buy trustee indemnity insurance and makes this process easier. These provisions came into force on **27 February 2007**.

The Cabinet Office and Charity Commission have published a guide entitled: **Charities Act 2006: What trustees need to know**. To download a free copy go to *concise guide to the Charities Act 2006* at, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third%5Fsector/](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third%5Fsector/) or call **0845 015 0010** and quote the title of the guide.

## Refugee Council multilingual poster

We hope that you will find a suitable space on your wall for the practical poster included in this issue of RCO News. The poster is designed to help you work with clients to identify which language they speak, by providing examples of text in 18 languages plus English, representing the major refugee groups in the UK.



The poster also includes an address for the Refugee Council multilingual website: <http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk> which contains even more useful tools and information. The information held on the site is regularly updated in accordance with changes to asylum policy and legislation, ensuring that clients have the most up-to-date and accurate information available. If you would like more copies of this poster, please email, [helen.clegg@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:helen.clegg@refugeecouncil.org.uk) or call **020 7346 6736**.

## New publication

The Citizenship Foundation has recently published *Life and law in Britain* an illustrated guide for young asylum seekers and refugees (and those who support them) outlining young people's legal rights and responsibilities in Britain, and the ways in which everyday matters are customarily dealt with.

The guide covers areas such as education, money, work, consumer and criminal law. Free copies are available in multiples of 10, 20 and 50 (excluding postage costs) by downloading an order form from [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/llb](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/llb). For more information email [llb@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](mailto:llb@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)



## Sharing experience

### African Francophone Integration Project

*Methodé Nguimby, Chair of African Francophone Integration Project talks to RCO News about their services and what they think about Refugee Week.*

The African Francophone Integration Project was formed in 2003 to provide support to French-speaking African refugees and asylum seekers living in Manchester. Our main aim is to help our clients to integrate into the wider British community and improve their quality of life by facilitating their access to local services. To achieve this aim, we provide advice and guidance on accessing welfare benefits, housing, education and offer other support services, including: orientation, interpreting and translation services. Our Project is completely refugee led and currently serves a membership of 200 in Greater Manchester.

In order to provide a good advice service, it is essential to respect confidentiality regulations and to clearly identify and understand your clients' needs. We have successfully developed our advice services, with support and training from the Manchester Refugee Support Network since 2003. We have also received help from Cheetham Hill Advice Centre and successfully gained the Quality Mark, Level 2 and NVQ Level 2 in advice and guidance. Obtaining the Quality Mark has helped our organisation to be aware of 'bad' advice, and the importance of having policies and procedures in place to run a structured and high quality advice service.

As part of this year's Refugee Week in Manchester we will be organising and taking part in some exciting cultural and social events. For example, we are hoping to organise an event to teach people about Congolese rumba and other African music. You see, many people think that rumba originated from Cuba but there is one belief that the word rumba derives from nkumba, which means 'waist' in KiKongo, a Central African language, and also refers to a social dance that joins couples at the waist. So, come along and experience it for yourself!

Refugee Week is very important to us as it really brings people together and enables both host and refugee communities to share their experiences and to get to know more about each other. It is a fantastic opportunity to highlight and celebrate the huge and varied contribution of all those who have come to and live in the UK.

For more information contact **Methodé Nguimby** or **Raphael Ngoma** on **0161 223 3114** or **07908012606 - 07950502640** or e-mail **africom@yahoo.com**.



## Funding news

### Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation offers small grants (up to £10,000) for capital or revenue costs to organisations with an annual income of less than £300,000 and large grants (up to £30,000) to organisations of any size. The large grants programme is for capital costs only. Under its Community Support priority area, the trust considers applications in the following areas: **Community** (projects in deprived communities; financial exclusion); **Drugs and alcohol** (rehabilitation of substance and alcohol misuse); **Elderly** (addressing isolation and loneliness; residential improvements/adaptations); **Ex-offenders** (working with prisoners and ex-offenders to improve their life skills); **Young people** (building young people's confidence, life and employment skills).

Applications must be received at least eight weeks before the next decision-making meeting in **early September 2007**. For more information, visit **[www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk](http://www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk)** or call **020 7320 6996**

### Volunteering England (VE)

Volunteering England (VE), which administers the Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme (OFV) general fund, is prioritising projects that involve volunteers in: health promotion; health advocacy; support for people with specific health conditions, befriending and support for people with specific health and social care needs. VE will distribute over £500,000 in new grants projects that will run for three years, (grants between £10,000 and £35,000 per year). The deadline for preliminary applications is **30 July 2007**. For more information, visit **[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)** or call **020 7520 8991** or e-mail **[ofv2007@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:ofv2007@volunteeringengland.org)**.

## Free conference

The EASI and PRESTO partnerships are hosting a conference, **Making it work: Asylum and refugee experiences** for Refugee Week on **21 June 2007** at Islington Town Hall, London on effective integration for asylum seekers and refugees. The conference will look at integration from the perspective of tackling discrimination in the labour market, focusing on:

- Preparing for the labour market and finding work.
- Work restrictions on most asylum seekers.
- The importance of asylum seekers accessing ESOL from the day of arrival.
- Benefits of volunteering, mentoring and work placement schemes for asylum seekers, refugees, employers and the community.

There will also be entertainment and an interactive marketplace, showcasing successes and developments from the EASI and PRESTO Advisory Group, ESOL classes at Hackney City Farm, and others. If you would like to attend or require further information please email [geri.mckenna@education-action.org](mailto:geri.mckenna@education-action.org)

## Training

### Are you an asylum seeker preparing to volunteer?

Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) are offering a free ESOL and Communications Skills course to asylum seekers with intermediate English who are starting a volunteer placement or who are interested in volunteering. The course aims to maximise asylum seekers' volunteer experience by: improving speaking, reading and writing skills; fully documenting their volunteering, and helping them to reflect past experience and future development.

The course will run from **18-27 June 2007**, 10.30am-1.30pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. To register for this training, contact RAGU on **020 7133 2110** or email [ragu@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ragu@londonmet.ac.uk).

### Giving advice

**Learning to Advise** is a 13 day (over 13 weeks) course for new and existing advisers. It covers: advice work skills; best practice in interviewing; introductions to welfare rights; alternative dispute resolution; money advice; housing law; employment law; immigration law and dealing with difficult situations.

Cost: Voluntary sector organisations: **£610** plus VAT (approximately £45 per day). Trainees can also access single modules for **£80** plus VAT per day. For more information contact the Advice UK training team on **020 7407 6611** or [training@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:training@adviceuk.org.uk).

### Are your skills recognised?

The Graduate Forum is offering a free skills transfer service for refugee graduates and professionals. The service offers: qualification accreditation by the UK National Recognition Information Centre; individual advice and guidance to assess your skills and support you in a new career path; access to employment opportunities; training support allowances and interview skills seminars. For more information contact **Nahid Mortuza** on **020 7375 3010** or email [nahid@careerslondon.com](mailto:nahid@careerslondon.com)

## Who's who at the Refugee Council?

### Juliette Stevenson – Referral and Admin Officer, Refugees into Teaching (RiT) project



Are you a teacher who wants to work in the UK? Are you a refugee community organisation that works with refugees who were teachers? If so, the Refugees into Teaching project can help you.

It is estimated that there are hundreds of refugee teachers in the UK who want to work in schools, but meet significant barriers. RiT hopes to change this through supporting refugee teachers with information, advice and guidance. We have guidance workers based in London and Birmingham through our partners, and offer a national referral service for people in other areas.

To find out more about the project, and to register on the national refugee teachers database, please visit our website at [www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk](http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk) or call **020 7346 1166**.

The project is holding a conference during Refugee Week entitled **Coming full circle: re-training and re-employing refugee teachers** on **22 June** in London. For more information, please email [rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk) or call **020 7346 1166**.