

## Changes to Refugee Council's support for refugees and refugee community organisations (RCOs)

Dear *RCO News* reader,

I wanted you to know that after years of providing invaluable support to RCOs in London through the Community Development Team (CDT) and to individuals through the Learning and Integration Unit (LIU), we will shortly need to change the way that we provide such support.



*Children and parents learning together at Sudanese Children in Need (see page 3)*

It is sad, but it is the reality of the current financial position of these two teams. We have therefore no other option but to rethink how we provide support to RCOs.

Therefore from November we plan to establish a new development team which will bring together all of our staff support to RCOs and refugee networks in London together with our existing work in the East of England, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East.

As a result we are now looking to re-deploy as many as possible of our CDT and LIU staff in London into this new team based in London or into other Refugee Council jobs. It will be a difficult time for all concerned and we would ask for your patience as we move into our new way of working.

We are not clear at the moment about the future of our development work outside London, until the Home Office, which currently funds part of this

work, makes a decision about future funding. We are currently working hard with our partners to make the case to the Home Office for future RCO development funding. We are also actively exploring other sources of funding for our development work.

Our new development team will bring together our RCO support into an integrated team to work with RCOs and refugee networks.

You will hear more from us as we seek to develop this new team and explore new opportunities for supporting RCOs. You will also hear more from us about our joint work with Refugee Action on the new Big Lottery Fund supported BASIS project. This project will help RCOs in terms of finance, governance, fundraising, and project management. We will work with RCOs to help them secure funding from major funders. These new jobs have been advertised externally in line with Big Lottery Fund policy. There was an article in the last *RCO News* on BASIS, and you will hear much more about this project in the coming months.

And there is so much more that we want to do to support RCOs. We are currently looking at our future strategy. Fazil Kawani, Head of Development, will be leading our work to set up a number of events around the country for RCOs so that we can listen to your views and ensure that our plans for the future respond to your needs. RCOs' views are a very important factor in our strategic review.

The Refugee Council remains totally committed to supporting RCOs. We will continue to produce *RCOs News*, and we will use these pages to keep you informed of our work.

If you have any questions or would like to talk to me about our plans to support RCOs, please call me on **020 7346 1097** or email me [jonathan.ellis@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.ellis@refugeecouncil.org.uk).

With best wishes,

*Jonathan Ellis*  
*Director of Policy and Development*  
*Refugee Council*

## A message from Donna Covey - the new Chief Executive of the Refugee Council

I have admired the work of the refugee voluntary sector for many years now. Before joining the Refugee Council as Chief Executive I followed the issue closely in the media and never stopped being frustrated by the hostility and misunderstanding that faced those fleeing to the UK to seek protection from persecution. I always found the portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees very discouraging, and I was therefore delighted on joining the sector to find that there are talented and committed people up and down the UK who are working tirelessly to change perceptions, and help people rebuild their lives.



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Donna Covey (third from left) with Refugee Council volunteers and refugees during Refugee Week 2007

Since joining the Refugee Council at the end of May I have been fortunate to meet many of you who are at the forefront of this important work. Refugee Week 2007 was a particular highlight, and a real opportunity to celebrate the contribution that refugees make to the UK, and of course to sample some amazing food and culture at some great refugee community organisation events.

Many of you will know that the Refugee Council is currently working on our new strategic plan for the future – how we intend to develop to meet new challenges and work more collaboratively with national, local, and refugee-led organisations. I hope that this will be an opportunity for us to work more closely in the future. I am also delighted that, with Big Lottery Fund money, the Refugee Council and Refugee Action will be working closely with refugee community organisations on funding issues, which I know are extremely important for you all.

This remains a challenging time for us all, but collectively we are well placed to provide a welcome to those in need of our help. I greatly look forward to meeting more of you, and working together towards collective aims.

## Case resolution questionnaires

The Borders and Immigration Agency (BIA) has set up a Case Resolution Directorate to deal with all the outstanding asylum claims made before the 5 March 2007.<sup>1</sup> As part of the process to conclude these cases, the BIA is sending out questionnaires to asylum seekers.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the questionnaire is to confirm that the details the BIA has about asylum seeker's cases are still accurate.

The BIA says that questionnaires will go out in significant numbers from 18 December 2007 when all the necessary staff and procedures are in place. Until then, questionnaires are being sent to the first priorities: cases where there is a risk of people causing harm; cases thought to be easily removable; cases thought easy to grant; cases where no initial decision has been made and active review cases including unaccompanied children.

People who receive a questionnaire are strongly advised to seek legal advice – legal aid is available for this purpose. This is not an 'amnesty' – receiving a form just means that the case will be resolved one way or another so it could equally lead to a removal. It is important that people state fully and clearly if they remain in fear of persecution or have human rights concerns.

People who have applied for an extension of leave or ILR, and applied before their previous leave expired, should be able to obtain written confirmation from the BIA of their entitlement to continuing leave to enter or remain. This may be important to demonstrate their continuing entitlement to work, to participate on a course or receive welfare, housing or educational support.

<sup>1</sup>A Question and Answer document is now available on the BIA website: [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/asylum/caseresolutionprogramme](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/asylum/caseresolutionprogramme)

<sup>2</sup>See Refugee Council briefing: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2007/caseresolution.htm](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2007/caseresolution.htm)

## Sharing experience

### Sudanese Children in Need

*Khadiga Khogali, Chair of Sudanese Children in Need (SCN) talks to RCO News about their services and the complexity of refugee integration.*

When I arrived in the UK as a refugee from Sudan, my children were young and I experienced what it was like to face a new culture and also had to deal with both my own and my children's reaction to their new 'life'; it wasn't easy. This motivated me to sit down with my community and discuss how we could best help children and parents to cope with this huge transition in their lives; this was how it began.

SCN employs one part time administrator and five volunteers. Initially we worked with young Sudanese children but soon realised that many of the problems were originating from the parents and not the children. We then started working with refugee parents, to help them understand UK culture.

Our organisation provides support to Sudanese refugee parents and children across the UK. As part of this support, we organise Sudanese social workers and psychiatrists to work closely with our clients. For parents we offer classes in: improving parenting skills; sewing; accountancy; and English and Arabic classes.

We work with children up to 19 years of age. During the last six years, we have helped many children to resolve their issues through confidence and identity building classes, and by helping them to develop their relationships with other communities. One Sudanese girl that we helped was referred to our psychiatrist for depression. She was a very happy girl until she found out in the UK that she had been circumcised in Sudan at the age of seven. It was a shock for her to understand that she was different from other girls. We supported her through this difficult time and she is now a much

happier little girl. As a result of her experience, she now plans to study healthcare so she can support and educate people like herself.



*Improving confidence and self esteem class*

Sudan is a huge country; in land mass it's more than a quarter of the size of the USA! The North, East, South and West of Sudan are like completely different countries, with very different cultures. Although we are all from refugee backgrounds, each community has very different needs and concerns. For SCN, the priority is to build our own community from the inside before any meaningful integration can take place with the host community.

The government is opposed to funding single nationality RCOs such as ours. Yet the diverse needs of our Sudanese community is one example of why this type of funding is needed. Refugee integration is complex, but can work well, if greater understanding is achieved!

For more information, please contact **Khadiga Khogali** on **020 7387 9941** or email **kkhogali@hotmail.com**.

## Funding news

### Capital Radio's Help a London Child Fund (London)

HALC provides grants to charities and voluntary organisations in London that work with children and young people (aged up to and including 18 years) who experience poverty and disadvantage; have experienced abuse, neglect, homelessness, violence or crime; or who have an illness or disability. Eligible organisations can apply for a maximum grant of £3,000 to support new and ongoing projects.

**Application deadline: 5 November 2007.**

For an application form and guidelines booklet, please send an A4 self-addressed envelope (48p stamp) to: HALC 2007 Applications, Capital Radio, 30 Leicester Square, London, WC2H 7LA.

For more information go to [www.capitalradio.co.uk/Article.asp?id=7024](http://www.capitalradio.co.uk/Article.asp?id=7024)

## Reporting Asylum – the London Press Awards 2007

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, is running **Reporting Asylum – the London Press Awards 2007** for fair coverage of asylum issues in London's press. His aim is to encourage a positive environment for the lives, contribution and safety of all refugees and asylum seekers in London's local communities. The awards scheme recognises excellence in London's local, regional, faith, black, Asian and minority ethnic newspapers. The Refugee Council will be on the judging panel, and the scheme is supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), National Union of Journalists and LBC News 1152.

Please submit **one example** (either a photocopy or the original) from London's press, of a news, comment or visual item with your entry form. Go to [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/pressawards](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/pressawards) for an entry form and further information. The closing date is **31 October 2007**.

Less than three weeks to go. Hurry and make an entry now!

### Free media training

The Media Trust's **Introduction to media and web design** seminars/training aim to help organisations improve their media and communications needs, focussing on:

- how to build relationships with journalists
- how to prepare for a radio interview
- the most effective way of choosing online presence
- the principles of search engines
- developing websites
- how to improve ranking of websites and much more!

These trainings are taking place across England from October to December 2007. For dates, venues and times for these trainings, contact the **Improving Reach Team, Media Trust, 020 7874 7657/7653** or email [improvingreach@mediatrust.org](mailto:improvingreach@mediatrust.org).

### Can you help?

A PhD research student is looking for people who have experience of seeking asylum in the UK and who would be willing to be interviewed for a piece of PhD research for the Psychology Department at London Metropolitan University. The interviews will cover issues such as the ways that asylum is represented in the UK media and public responses to asylum seekers. If your organisation would like more information about the research, email **Julie Pearce** at [j.pearce@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:j.pearce@londonmet.ac.uk) or call **020 7320 3548**

### Who's who at the Refugee Council?

#### Manny Adam - Operations Manager, Support and Advice Section



Working on the front line, meeting different people and hearing their stories, and supporting them throughout their asylum process, motivates me to work in the Refugee Council, especially in the Advice and Access team.

I manage the Advice and Access team, which provides advice to asylum seekers and refugees and enables them to access the support they need. My team also offers advice 'surgeries' on an outreach basis across London, to refugee community organisations and other voluntary organisations. This enables clients to access our experience and expertise in this field without having to travel to our Brixton office.

Before joining the Refugee Council in 2000, I worked as a social worker for the London boroughs of Ealing, Brent and Merton for 25 years. I was Direct Provisions Manager, responsible for services for people with disabilities, mental health problems, older people and asylum seekers and refugees.

In this job, I don't know what issues I'm going to face at the beginning of the day, but by the end of the day, I leave work feeling that my team and I have done our best! For more information about our services go to [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/directly/main/london/](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/directly/main/london/) or call **020 7346 1064**.