

# Refugee Settlement

## Can communities cope?

By Maknun Gameledin-Ashami, Libby Cooper, Barry Knight



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# Foreword to CES Research

The following report sets out to give a measure of the involvement of refugee community organisations in the settlement of their communities in the UK.

The opportunity - in a field generally lacking in longitudinal studies of refugee migration - to engage in a critical hands-on approach to diversity issues, has been a challenge for both partners in the research. Charities Evaluation Services and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit are organisations that play significant strategic roles in enabling organisations to shape the future direction of their service provision. Their partnership research demonstrates the value of shared resources and insights, and taps into organisational development theory, whilst validating the experiences of refugee groups themselves.

Key issues have emerged from the research: the destabilising effect of rapidly changing legislation on refugee community organisations; their lack of exposure, through lack of opportunity - particularly those outside London - to policy and strategy development; the failure of funders to ensure community-centred resourcing with appropriate underpinning development support; and the inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation skills within the groups.

But the research also highlights the potential role of refugee intermediaries in the development of the refugee sector; it indicates the wealth of refugee community organisations in social and development terms, and puts forward a framework on how British institutions and refugee groups can play a mutual role in strengthening strategic and integrative action.

Although the study sample was small, the research envisages a continuum approach for improvement, with additional future monitoring of the groups. It therefore makes an important contribution to understanding current developmental trends within the refugee sector.

It is important to place the research firmly within the context of integration: without the mutuality of civic engagement between various sectors that can lead to a 'good society' model, many refugee community groups can remain 'hidden', with mainstream developmental approaches by-passing their aspirations and contributions, and ignoring their role as a haven for their communities - they are the echoes of their history and diaspora, and as such, the only bridges to real integration.

**Tzeggai Yohannes Deres and Maria Kozlowski**  
Evelyn Oldfield Unit

## About Charities Evaluation Services

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is committed to increasing the effectiveness of the voluntary sector and was established in 1990. It works with voluntary organisations, their funders and with different levels of government both in the UK and internationally. CES provides training, advice, consultancy, information and capacity building on organisational development, evaluation and quality matters. It also provides state-of-the-art external evaluation services and designs evaluation systems.

CES publishes PQASSO, the practical quality assurance system for small organisations.

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## About Evelyn Oldfield Unit

The Evelyn Oldfield Unit is an independent, non-partisan, membership-based, charitable organisation, with the aim to provide, develop and coordinate specialist aid and support services for established refugee organisations, in order to increase their capacity and potential for meeting the needs of their communities.

Its service delivery includes university accredited and customised training packages, consultancies, advice, and learning forums, focusing on organisational and community accountability. It works in partnership with academic and research institutions, and government and funding agencies, to develop strategic information about the refugee and migrant sector.

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## Definitions

The following definitions have been drawn from recent research conducted on behalf of the Home Office<sup>1</sup>. These meanings are used through the report, even though the distinctions do not have universal acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> Lawry-White, J, *Synthesis of Seven IRSS/NASS Integration Research Projects*, for the Home Office, 2001

### *Refugees*

**'Recognised refugees who are granted indefinite leave to remain within the terms of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees or those given exceptional leave to remain as persons in need of protection in accordance with obligations under ECHR and the Convention against Torture'.**

### *Asylum Seekers*

**'Those awaiting a decision on refugee status'.**

### *Integration*

**'Integration is a long-term, complex, two-way process in which refugees take part in all aspects of life, while UK society benefits from the potential of the newcomers: this requires adaptation on both sides. Integration involves the process of acquiring civil, social, political, human and cultural rights for refugees, while maintaining their cultural and ethnic diversity. Integration, while encompassing both the organic and functional aspects of settlement, is not synonymous with assimilation that is the loss of the refugee's identity within the host culture'.**

# Executive Summary

## Overview

This report documents the findings of joint research carried out during 2000 and 2001 by Charities Evaluation Services and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit. The purpose of the research was to assess the contribution of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) to the settlement in the UK of the increased numbers of asylum seekers and refugees who are affected by the dispersal policy in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

RCOs are typically formed by a small number of committed refugees who often operate from a private residence or a church hall before gradually acquiring premises and funding. They tend to be predominantly nationality groups and often begin their activities by providing mother tongue classes and supplementary schools as part of helping refugees to maintain their cultural identity. Their gatherings enable asylum seekers and refugees to come together, share information about their country of origin and discuss issues of concern to them.

The research was carried out through in-depth interviews with members of 22 RCOs in London to benchmark their activities and also with members of local support services for dispersed asylum seekers and refugees in Newcastle, Liverpool and Margate.

## Legislation

Over the past ten years, there have been four major changes to the asylum system, which have clearly affected the implementation of the system.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 introduced fundamental changes to the asylum system concerning treatment of asylum seekers and the process of claiming asylum, which resulted in moving the responsibility for asylum seekers from local authorities to a new national agency, the National Asylum Support Services.

The new policy had two main aims: to deter asylum seekers from entering the UK by reducing the level of welfare benefits paid to them; to relieve the burden from London and the South East by dispersing asylum seekers to other metropolitan areas in England, Wales and Scotland.

However, it was discovered that there was no relationship between the level of welfare benefits and the number of people seeking asylum. Also, between 1 April 2000 and March 2001, the number of asylum seekers dispersed was very low, which showed that the dispersal system was not working properly. Some of the regional consortia, which had been charged with providing accommodation and other services, asserted that the low dispersal figures were due to the high level of disappearance of asylum seekers who preferred not to leave London and the South East and that asylum seekers preferred cash and vouchers to accommodation.

In October 2000, the government launched a new strategy for integrating refugees in the UK, which intended to meet the needs of refugees in terms of

accommodation, education and training, employment, access to health care and community development. To this end, the government would provide three funding streams to help resource refugee organisations. By September 2001, it had become clear that certain aspects of the strategy were in disarray and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 was duly modified to abolish vouchers and to overhaul the dispersal system.

## Key findings from the research in Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool and Margate

Research was conducted in Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool and Margate to find out the capacity of RCOs to deliver services and other benefits, such as reinforcement of linguistic and cultural identity, to their refugee communities. The three areas chosen were very different in terms of their Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

In all three areas, the legislation had created enormous changes with a huge increase in the numbers of refugees arriving. Asylum seekers were being settled into localities where few agencies had experience of hosting them and where networks of support are absent or under-developed, resulting in great difficulties both for organisations and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers were housed in hard-to-let housing in the poorest areas. The host communities had little experience of multi-culturalism, and refugee issues in particular, which led to overt racism and abuse of refugees in all three areas, particularly in Margate. This meant that asylum seekers tended to be pre-occupied with getting by, which affected the capacity for self-organisation and support for the integration process by refugee organisations. Most interviewees in Liverpool and Newcastle said that many asylum seekers left the regions and moved to London, although this was not happening in Margate where prospects for work were greater.

Despite these problems, RCOs were making a significant contribution to the settlement of refugees. They were:

- providing cultural and emotional support and opportunities for developing identity
- providing practical assistance, which mainly involved advice and interpretation, communication and cultural mediation
- raising awareness and understanding, and promoting positive attitudes in the community
- providing expert and regional knowledge to inform policy development.

There was universal agreement among the interviewees that problems of capacity impaired the ability of RCOs to perform these roles. They faced a wide range of demands with very limited resources. They commonly had weak structures, little money, sometimes with no meeting place, limited knowledge of the British system, and dependency on a small number of enthusiastic individuals whose dedication led them to work very hard. This was made worse because they tended to be in a weak position in accessing factors supportive to successful organisation development such as resources, energy, contentment, wide contacts, access to networks, knowledge of the system, management support and good living space. The consequence of this was that RCOs were able to perform a 'defensive' function but not a 'transformative' function, which is vital if they are

to effect the changes in local power necessary for true integration. In part, the reason is that RCOs are too small and too few in number in the provisional areas.

RCOs in the three areas varied. Some were old organisations and had transformed themselves into purely cultural organisations or fallen into disuse. Some of these organisations had been reactivated by the new arrivals. Other refugees had taken some time to form groups, partly because of the long period of waiting for an asylum decision. It was only when they needed money and resources that they went through the process of formal registration and this is when they needed external assistance. Support services were under-developed and, for many established agencies, the refugee sector was invisible, but there were some refugee agencies that offered RCOs support and development.

## Key findings from the research in London

By way of creating a benchmark for RCOs, our research looked in-depth at 22 London-based RCOs in order to understand their growth patterns and to assess to what extent they support the process of settlement.

There are between 400 and 500 RCOs in London, and their structures and networks have become more complex and sophisticated over time. From the mid 1980s, funders provided money to London-based RCOs and later on a very few provided free consultants to help with their organisational development. In the mid 1990s, the Evelyn Oldfield Unit was established by several funders, as a result of their own findings, to provide technical consultancy and training support for the development of RCOs.

Our findings suggest that there are two main differences between London and the provinces:

- The level of both membership and volunteering among London RCOs was much higher
- The London RCOs received a much higher amount of funding.

The majority of RCOs in London received funding from their local authority, but unlike other mainstream organisations, they received no government funding, but received a higher proportion from trusts and foundations and the Lottery/Millennium. This funding allowed RCOs to rent offices and thereby establish evidence of professional credibility in a way that would have been unthinkable for their provincial counterparts. It also enabled a scale of activity greatly in excess of that found in the provinces with service delivery being the dominant activity, which mainly involved advice work. There were three main types of advice:

- Accessing the UK welfare system, which required considerable training for staff
- Culture and confidence building to develop and maintain the cultural identity of users, promote positive attitudes and create stability in communities
- Accessing the labour market by providing help with learning English, vocational training and development of skills, which only the most skilled RCOs could provide.

London RCOs had very high numbers of users from 30 different countries, speaking 27 languages, although these may not be entirely accurate figures since many RCOs did not have highly developed monitoring systems. The RCOs worked both with asylum seekers and refugees, with only 30% of them working mainly with settled communities.

RCOs said that demand had increased, which was partly due to asylum seekers who had been dispersed to the North moving back to London. Overcrowding of housing had led to higher levels of mental illness. RCOs were responding more to crisis situations than previously and they had also experienced an increase in requests for help from outside London.

About three-quarters of RCOs were engaged in representational activities, which involved taking up issues with local authorities, social security offices and other social agencies on behalf of individual users, but very few of them were involved in policy research, public education or advocacy to highlight concerns with policy makers. The main reason for this is that they have not been afforded real opportunities to do so. A lack of resources is another contributory factor, as is their very limited time.

As with RCOs in the provinces, they were performing more of a 'defensive' function for their users. Only a few of them were able to offer high level services to help users enter the labour market and even fewer were dealing with the processes of refugees' participation in public policy. RCOs perceive themselves as having little influence on policies, both at local and national level.

Our research shows that RCOs tended to develop structures and institutions that reinforced traditional identities in a new and frequently hostile environment. They tend to develop in a variety of ways, sometimes not dissimilarly to those of mainstream organisations<sup>2</sup>. For example, they tend to progress from a downward type of accountability to upwards accountability. The research identified four characteristic forms of:

- (a) moving from amateur to stability
- (b) founder syndrome
- (c) harnessing community expertise
- (d) identifying a market niche.

Many RCOs were starting from a low base. Their management systems were generally poor, there was room for improvement in their human management systems, and their monitoring and evaluation arrangements were weak. Much of their activity was reactive. Less than half of the London sample had written plans, and among those, one third of the plans had no mission statements. Almost none had any way of systematically prioritising need. One or two organisations had carried out surveys, but they lacked the skills to use the findings strategically. As a consequence, staff and funders tended to be the driving force when it came to deciding future work programmes. Few of the RCOs had quality assurance systems or means of learning from their activities. These results suggest that there is a need to help build their capacity.

## Conclusions

Our research shows that RCOs are meeting the basic needs of their users and creating opportunities for them to feel part of the community, but there is little activity to enable asylum seekers and refugees to participate in society. In order to do this, RCOs need to develop stronger mutual links with mainstream organisations so that effectively they are not marginalised by them.

Integration was considered by refugees to be a slow process and employment was seen as the main obstacle. Routes to integration were seen as the provision of English language classes; changing attitudes; recognition and respect for

<sup>2</sup> *Consultancy as an Effective Model for Managing Diversity and Integration of Refugee and Migrant Community Organisations*, Evelyn Oldfield Unit, 2002

cultural differences; orientation classes to understand the UK system; education; and employment. But there is a difference between refugee integration in respect of individuals, and as RCOs, suggesting that there is a need to strengthen the RCOs in their integrative role.

The overriding message from RCOs was that they themselves felt marginal from the process of integration. They observed gaps in relationships with other agencies, yet they knew that their work with mainstream agencies was vital if they were to make a difference.

There is a need for more investment in RCOs, not just money but training and consultancy in organisational development, evaluation and accountability.

It was evident that mainstream organisations are not geared up for dealing with refugee communities and need to adjust their behaviour, particularly in matters of education and employment.

There is a need for investment in civic infrastructure so that refugee interests are taken into account when decisions are made about regeneration, planning and service delivery. The Evelyn Oldfield Unit's work with Renewal in West London provides ample evidence of how to put refugee community members and their organisations at the centre of integrative learning and thereby 'transformative' performance.

## Recommendations

The current perspective on the refugee question is that it is a problem. One of the ways forward is to cast the issue of refugees as part of the solution in creating a vibrant multi-cultural society. Our study reveals that refugees and asylum seekers have highly sophisticated political know-how and skills that have value in the labour market.

Being given the opportunity to learn about engaging at different levels in the UK, including at the policy level, must also be a pre-requisite for developing transformative action. The following recommendations stem from this perspective:

### *Home Office*

- Increase its capacity to deal with refugee settlement and integration issues by funding research into grassroots issues.
- Ensure that refugees are represented in the regeneration partnerships locally and at other regional government policy and strategy levels.
- Create a special fund to enable new and emerging RCOs in the regions.
- Include refugee matters in the strategy for funding opportunities from government departments.

### *Refugee intermediaries*

- Train a group of trainers, advisers and technical experts in matters of refugee community organisational development.
- Target participation as a key result area by, for example, including credible refugees on strategic committees as per the example of the Home Office's Integration Unit.

*RCOs*

- In the provinces, infiltrate the networks in partnership with intermediaries.
- London RCOs to help less well-developed RCOs in the regions by resourcing the dissemination of established good practice models of relevant training and development that have been proved successful.

*Host community*

- Sensitise itself to the needs of refugees by putting refugees' issues on the agenda of all development agencies and including refugees in all levels of government programmes.



*Demonstration outside the offices of the Daily Mail protesting against coverage of asylum seekers' issues, July 2000*

# 1 Introduction

This report documents the findings of joint research carried out during 2000 and 2001 by Charities Evaluation Services and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit. The purpose of the research was to assess the contribution of refugee community organisations (RCOs) to the settlement in the UK of the increased numbers of asylum seekers and refugees who are affected by the dispersal policy in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The findings test the commonly held belief that the presence of community groups is central to the successful settlement of refugees<sup>3</sup>.

The main unit of analysis for the study is refugee community groups (RCOs). Typically, these are formed by a small number of committed refugees. They often start out from a private residence or a church hall before gradually acquiring premises and funding. These groups tend to be predominantly nationality groups and often begin their activities by providing mother tongue classes and supplementary schools as part of helping refugees to maintain their cultural identity. Their gatherings enable asylum seekers and refugees to come together, share information about their country of origin and discuss issues of concern to them.

The main research questions were:

- What is the capacity of RCOs to deliver services and other benefits, such as reinforcement of linguistic and cultural identity, to their refugee communities?
- To what extent do these services contribute to the process of settlement?
- How have these organisations been affected by the new legislation?
- To what extent have new refugee support services been developed in three areas of England where asylum seekers are being dispersed?
- What are the organisational development needs of RCOs?
- What are the most appropriate support services for asylum seekers and refugees in dispersed areas?

The research was carried out through in-depth interviews with members of 22 RCOs in London. The purpose of the interviews was to benchmark their activities. See Appendix A for criteria and details of sample. In-depth interviews were also conducted with members of local support services for dispersed asylum seekers and refugees in three cities - Newcastle, Liverpool and Margate. See Appendix B for interview schedules for existing RCOs.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, L. Joly, D. *Refugees reception and settlement in Britain. A report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999*

The remainder of this chapter looks at the legislation affecting asylum seekers and refugees in the UK today. Chapter Two studies refugee community groups in three areas of the country (Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool and Margate). Chapter Three documents the findings of interviews with RCOs in London and Chapter Four draws out recommendations, including those for support structures in the dispersal areas.

### Legislation

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, which formed the background to our research, introduced fundamental changes to the asylum system concerning treatment of asylum seekers and the process of claiming asylum. Key measures in the Act included:

- Creating a single comprehensive right of appeal to speed up the system.
- Home Office led support arrangements, meeting essential living needs either in kind or the provision of vouchers, with limited cash payments to reduce the incentive for individuals to enter the country as economic migrants.
- Dispersal of destitute asylum seekers around the UK, allocating accommodation on a no choice basis.
- Tough new measures to combat clandestine immigration.
- Improving the quality of advice available to applicants by regulating immigration advisers.

The Act removed local authorities' responsibility for asylum seekers under the National Assistance Act 1948 and the homeless legislation. Instead, a new national agency, the National Asylum Support Services (NASS), was established on 1 April 2000 with overall responsibility for asylum seekers and for dispersal.

The new policy had two main aims. The first was to deter asylum seekers from entering the UK and to reduce the level of welfare benefits paid to them, and the second was to relieve the burden from London and the South East by dispersing asylum seekers to other metropolitan areas in England, Wales and Scotland.

However, during 1999, the number of applications for asylum was considerably higher than in the previous twelve months,<sup>4</sup> and a report by the Audit Commission pointed out that there was no simple relationship between the level of welfare benefits and the number of people seeking asylum<sup>5</sup>. For example, around 60% of applicants continued to claim asylum after entering the country in 1999 even though they could not access welfare benefits.

**A report by the Audit Commission pointed out that there was no simple relationship between the level of welfare benefits and the number of people seeking asylum**

<sup>4</sup> Applications for asylum received in the UK by the end of 1999 were 71,160, some 25,145 more than the previous 12 months. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 2000.

<sup>5</sup> The Audit Commission, *Another Country*, pages 9-10, 2000

Table 1: Asylum Applications 1991-2000 <sup>6</sup> <sup>6</sup> The Times, 26 May 2001

Years	Applications	Decision backlog	Acceptance to stay	Removed from UK
1991	44,840	72,070	2,695	-
1992	24,605	49,110	16,430	1,345
1993	22,370	45,805	12,715	1,820
1994	32,830	55,255	4,485	2,220
1995	43,965	69,650	5,705	3,170
1996	29,640	57,405	7,295	4,845
1997	32,500	51,795	7,100	7,160
1998	46,015	64,770	9,255	6,910
1999	71,160	101,475	10,280	7,605
2000	76,040	66,195	21,550	8,900

Table 1 above shows that, of the total number of applications received in the ten year period from 1991 to 2000, only 97,530 were given asylum or exceptional leave to remain (24% of total applications).

Turning now to the second aim, namely dispersal of large numbers of asylum seekers to areas outside London, this required complex negotiations between national asylum support services and local authorities. Local authorities were given the task of setting up local consortia composed of private and voluntary organisations to implement government policy. At the centre of this complex relationship was the need to find ways of identifying appropriate accommodation for asylum seekers, and to ensure that other services, such as education and health, were also available. When the Act became operational, local authorities were at different levels of readiness to provide the required services for asylum seekers, and it took ten months for the authorities to set up appropriate structures.

Between 1 April 2000 and end of March 2001, only 19,541 asylum seekers were confirmed as dispersed, most of whom were dispersed to six regions. Within these regions, the following cities received the most asylum seekers: Glasgow (2,396); Liverpool (1,728); Newcastle (1,147); Birmingham (1,144); Bradford (1,033); Nottingham (693); Plymouth (372); Hastings & St Leonards (151); Wrexham (21).

Tables 2 and 3 give details of dispersal numbers and nationalities of asylum seekers.

Table 2: Numbers dispersed between April 2000 and March 2001 <sup>7</sup> IAP newsletter, May 2001

Region	Confirmed arrival	% of total
Yorkshire & Humberside	4,845	24.79
North West	4,581	23.44
North East	3,208	16.42
Scotland	2,396	12.26
West Midlands	2,124	10.87
East Midlands	1,140	5.83
South West	423	2.16
Greater London	405	2.07
South Central	219	1.12
East of England	139	0.71
Northern Ireland	40	0.20
Wales	21	0.11
Grand Total	19,541	100.0

Table 3: Top 20 Nationalities Dispersed April 2000 to March 2001 <sup>8</sup> ibid

Nationality	Total
Iraq	5,097
Iran	3,503
Afghanistan	1,900
Czech Republic	897
Somalia	592
Turkey	587
Zimbabwe	511
DR Congo	499
Albania	477
Kosovo	444
Pakistan	384
Sri Lanka	335
Yugoslavia	299
Algeria	283
Poland	263
Angola	249
Romania	218
Palestine	174
Eritrea	167

<sup>9</sup> The Audit Commission, *Another Country*, p44, 2000

Home Secretary David Blunkett noted that there was 'a clamour that something must be done'

<sup>10</sup> Blunkett, D. *Give me time to get asylum right*. Observer, 9 September 2001

The tables show that the dispersal system was not working properly. The number of asylum seekers dispersed was very low. Originally, the government estimated that there would be 70,000 bed spaces available for accommodation in the first year. This number had to be reduced to 35,000.

Recent developments indicated a breakdown in negotiations between the Home Office and the regional consortia. There was much anxiety and mistrust on the part of some consortia, which asserted that the low dispersal figures were not due to low demand, but to the high level of disappearance of asylum seekers who preferred not to leave London and the South East. They also suggested that asylum seekers preferred cash and vouchers rather than accommodation.

The Audit Commission gave a gloomy picture of the dispersal situation:

*To date, the needs of asylum seekers have not been addressed in a systematic way, operational pressures combined with scant information and inadequate joint working have too often impeded a strategic approach. Despite some examples of innovative good practices, many barriers to services and inequities in service provision persist.* <sup>9</sup>

In October 2000, the government launched a new strategy for integrating refugees in the United Kingdom. It envisaged that the strategy would evolve over time, but that the National Refugee Integration Forum would initially take it forward. The forum was chaired by the Minister of State and involved other government departments at high levels, the voluntary sector, regional consortia and other interested parties. The aims of the integration strategy were:

- To include refugees as equal members of society
- To help them develop their potential and contribute to the cultural and economic life of the country
- To set out a clear framework to support the integration process across the United Kingdom
- To facilitate access to the support necessary for the integration of refugees nationally and regionally.

The strategy intended to meet the needs of refugees in terms of accommodation, education and training, employment, access to health care and community development. To this end, the government would provide three funding streams to help resource refugee organisations.

Nevertheless, during the research period, it became clear that certain aspects of the strategy were in disarray and, by September 2001, Home Secretary David Blunkett noted that there was 'a clamour that something must be done'.<sup>10</sup> Just over a month later, on 29th October 2001, he made a statement to the House of Commons that there would be a

'fundamental reform of our asylum and immigration policy'. This would entail a White Paper and new legislation, modifying the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

It will be recalled that there were two main aspects to the 1999 legislation: vouchers and dispersal. Under the new proposals, vouchers would be abolished, and the dispersal system would be radically overhauled. Reforms of the dispersal system would include:

- Dispersal through induction centres, allowing greater control and support

- Emphasis on dispersing to areas that meet asylum seekers' needs and to 'language clusters'
- An improved regional structure for NASS
- Improved contact with asylum seekers to facilitate better integration and services
- Better co-ordination between local authorities and better arrangements with voluntary organisations

A White Paper '*Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with diversity in modern Britain*' was published on 7 February 2002 setting out more detailed proposals. The main ones were:

- A radical new system of induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres to secure a seamless asylum process which monitors and provides the appropriate measures at every stage of the process
- A resettlement programme, operated with the UNHCR, to establish legal gateways for certified refugees in need of protection, avoiding dangerous and highly visible illegal methods of entry
- The Application Registration Card - launched last week - that will prevent fraud and provide more secure evidence of identity and nationality
- Tough measures to prevent delay and obstruction in the appeals system and unmeritorious applications for judicial reviews - including making the Immigration Appeals Tribunal a Superior Court of Record; setting closure dates on appeals to stop multiple adjournments; tighter time limits on appeals; and measures to ensure the merits test for public funding of legal representation is being applied properly
- A 50% expansion in the number of appeals that can be heard every month
- An increase of 40% in secure removals centre places to 4,000 by Spring 2003
- Refugee integration - cutting out bureaucratic delay with simplified integration procedures
- A new Immigration Hotline - through which members of the public can report immigration offences.

As the Refugee Council has pointed out, the new proposals mean the fourth radical shake-up of the asylum system in less than a decade<sup>11</sup>. What tends to get less attention is the process of implementation. Delivery is the test of any policy, and implementation is likely to be disturbed by constant changes in policy.

This study centres on RCOs, as one of a number of other agents with some responsibility for delivering integration.

What are the other main agents of delivery? Central government, local

Research shows that asylum seekers and refugees tend to prefer to live in areas where there are others from the same background, and that the presence of a strong community group can help to reduce adjustment problems.

<sup>11</sup> The Refugee Council's web site considers these matters in depth. See <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

government, mainstream voluntary organisations, refugee umbrella organisations and RCOs are the main institutions and agencies. The private sector tends only to become involved in specific areas, such as housing or employment.

How should such agencies work? The United Nations High Commission for Refugees identified the most important factors for successful refugee integration.<sup>12</sup> The factors were: employment, income, language, support in developing links with own community members, support of and unification with family members, good settlement services, good physical and mental health and access to appropriate health care, access to education and appropriate housing. Emotional factors that mitigate against successful settlement are continued separation from the family, reversal of family roles, mental illness caused by factors leading to the individual becoming a refugee, depression and mental health problems caused by their new situation.

Research shows that asylum seekers and refugees tend to prefer to live in areas where there are others from the same background, and that the presence of a strong community group can help to reduce adjustment problems.<sup>13</sup>

The following chapters address the question 'to what extent do RCOs contribute to the mission of supporting and assisting asylum seekers and refugees to settle in the UK?'

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, *Broad Survey on the integration of resettled refugees*, UNHCR Resettlement section, division of international protection. Geneva, 7 May 1997

<sup>13</sup> Field, Simon, *Resettling refugees: the lessons of research*, Home Office research study 87, HMSO, London, 1985



Roma refugees at a church hall gathering, Kentish Town, London, 1998

## 2 The situation in the regions

This chapter studies refugee community groups in three areas of the country (Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool, and Margate). The main question to be answered was:

**What is the capacity of refugee community groups to deliver services and other benefits, such as reinforcement of linguistic and cultural identity, to their refugee communities?**

This question yielded a number of supplementary questions, including:

1. How many RCOs now exist in the three areas?
2. In what ways have they changed and can we map their growth patterns and ups and downs (e.g. how long does it take to develop a refugee community organisation, what determines their growth patterns)?
3. What drives and what constrains the organisational development of RCOs?
4. What forms of refugee support initiatives are there?
5. How do these organisations find appropriate support for their development?
6. On the premise that community building can only occur when there are sufficient numbers, what is seen as a sufficient number of refugees for the development of a refugee community organisation?
7. To what extent do the structure, resources and capacity of RCOs reflect the changing patterns of immigration?
8. How have the changes in legislation affected the capacity of RCOs to plan ahead, develop their services, think strategically and pursue a proactive approach to their work?
9. How have the changes in legislation affected the services they are able to offer to their communities? What are the variations in service delivery over time that may be caused by the changes in legislation? Have the needs of asylum seekers impinged on RCOs' abilities to focus on settlement issues?
10. How have the changes in legislation affected their user groups? What services are difficult to access?



*Rwandan refugee living in temporary accommodation, Liverpool, 2000*

## Choice of study areas

Three different geographical areas were chosen: Newcastle in the North East with low Black and Ethnic Minority settled communities, Liverpool in the North West with relatively high Black and Ethnic Minority settled communities, and Margate in the South East which is not an area into which asylum seekers and refugees are dispersed but into which they arrive.

Newcastle upon Tyne, with a population of 275,000 people, is the regional capital of the North East of England, and sits at the heart of the conurbation of Tyne and Wear, with its five boroughs and 1.3 million people.<sup>14</sup> The area was once a vibrant industrial centre, based on coal mining and shipbuilding. Such industry has now disappeared, and, despite a Tyneside revival based on inward investment, technology, and a successful entertainment industry, unemployment is twice the national average. Poverty indicators are above the national average and the region has received considerable funding from the European Commission and British government to combat social exclusion. A notable characteristic of the area is its stable population with low rates of immigration and emigration. With 95% of the population classed as 'white', minorities are almost entirely of Asian origin, particularly from the Southern Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and from China.<sup>15</sup>

Liverpool lies at the centre of the Merseyside conurbation, which is composed of four additional boroughs: Knowsley, St Helens, Wirral, and Sefton. The wealth of Liverpool was based on slavery and shipping, based on the comparative advantage of being a west-facing port for trade with the Americas. In the second part of the 20th century, Liverpool experienced a catastrophic economic decline, resulting not only in very high rates of unemployment and poverty, but also by the 1980s in social disorder, riots, and the near collapse of public administration. Problems appeared so intractable at one point that the Secretary of State for the Environment contemplated grassing over the city and decanting the population. Since then, the city has made something of a recovery, and boasts some of the best examples of urban regeneration in the UK. Nevertheless, chronic poverty and unemployment remain. Unlike Newcastle, there is a long-standing black community which, despite centuries of living in the city, has yet to experience anything like full integration.

Margate is a seaside town in Kent, the garden of England. Once an important market town and port, it took advantage of the fashion in sea bathing, which took hold in England from 1750, to become a thriving seaside resort. In the succeeding two centuries, the attractions of the Pavilion, Winter Gardens, and beautiful beaches acted as a magnet to Londoners who visited for day trips as well as more extended stays in the traditional holiday fortnight in the last week of July and first week in August. In the second half of the 20th century, however, the lure of Spain and other exotic destinations meant that the bottom fell out of the British seaside tourism industry. Margate was not immune, and went into sharp decline. There has been no other industry to replace it, but the shock has been softened by the growth in service industries in the South East, so that chronic unemployment is not a feature of the town in the way that it is in the two northern conurbations in the study.

Although it is not possible on the basis of three geographical studies to draw conclusions about the whole of England, they offer good insights into the kinds of issues that arise in the dispersal system.

<sup>14</sup> Census, 1991

<sup>15</sup> Key Facts about Newcastle, <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/>

## A new system

The research was conducted early in the life of the new legislation. In all three areas, the legislation had created enormous changes. Let us take the North East region as an example. Until the beginning of 1998, some 150 refugees arrived each year. The North of England Refugee Service had successful working partnerships with regional and local statutory and voluntary organisations, including the seven RCOs in the region. During 1998, the numbers arriving in the region increased through the activities of the Refugee Arrivals Project, and increased again during 1999 through the interim dispersal system. Since then, numbers have increased by a factor of 16, with 3,208 arriving in the region during the last year. Liverpool has experienced similar increases.

To cope with the increased numbers, new arrangements were needed. These included new contracting arrangements (e.g. between local authorities and NASS to deliver housing), a response to new demands for statutory services among a new group of clients, and adjustments by the voluntary and community organisations to include new residents within their activities and support framework. It was clear from our research that the organisations concerned were experiencing a steep learning curve.

## Arriving to a grey outlook

The speed with which legislative changes have had to be implemented has meant that asylum seekers were settled into localities where few agencies had experience of hosting them and where networks of support are absent or under-developed. It is not surprising, therefore, that stress and organisational difficulties have resulted. In Liverpool, for example, everyone interviewed mentioned 'confusion', 'lack of co-ordination', 'lack of monitoring of services', and 'poor information'. Similar institutional disturbance was reported in the other two areas.

**Abuse of refugees was said to be a common problem in all three areas, with Margate standing out as having a particularly serious problem in this respect.**

As well as asylum seekers being pitched into a situation where agencies were unprepared, life was made harder for asylum seekers because they tended to be housed in hard-to-let housing in the poorest areas. This situation was particularly true of the two Northern areas. In Liverpool, there is a high prevalence of asylum seekers in Granby ward in Toxteth, described by one refugee as 'a town destroyed by war'; and in Newcastle, in the West End of the City, which rates as one of the largest areas of inner city deprivation in the UK.

This somewhat harsh reception was made worse by the fact that people in the three areas had little previous experience of multi-culturalism in general, and of refugee issues in particular. In all areas, overt racism has been a significant problem. A search of the press in the North East revealed a number of reports of xenophobic attacks, a BBC television programme showed local people physically attacking refugees in Liverpool, and the national press have reported serious public dissatisfaction with the high numbers of refugees being put into bed and breakfast in Kent in readiness for dispersal. Abuse of refugees was said to be a common problem in all three areas, with Margate standing out as having a particularly serious problem in this respect.

Given these adverse factors, asylum seekers tended to be pre-occupied with getting by as best they could. The settlement context was therefore very different from London and had an effect on the capacity for self-organisation and support for the integration process by refugee organisations themselves. The preconditions for successful settlement and integration were therefore unfavourable. As one indicator for this, most interviewees said that many asylum seekers left the regions as soon as they could and drifted back to London in search of work and a more hospitable reception from the host community. Although we have no figures to support that this 'trickle back factor' was occurring, we were told time and time again that this was happening in Liverpool and Newcastle, though not in Margate where the prospects for work were greater.

## The contribution of community groups

Despite this unfavourable climate, there was evidence that refugee community groups were making a significant contribution to the settlement of refugees. There were four distinctive contributions that refugee community groups were able to make.

The **first** was to provide cultural and emotional support and opportunities for developing identity. There were three main ways in which refugee community groups were able to do this:

- Refugees provide a vital source of emotional, cultural, social, educational and advisory support through establishing their own community organisations where people who share the refugee experience and culture can meet and support each other.
- Within a very short period of time people feel stronger if they have the opportunity to meet in this way, support each other and celebrate their cultures.
- Such community groups and organisations can also provide points of contact with host community groups and afford refugees the chance to confer about local cultural rules, and give the host community a chance to understand the ways of different cultures.

The **second** means was to deliver practical assistance. There were a wide range of services on offer that meant that refugee community groups were often a first port of call for meeting basic needs. There were two distinctive contributions here:

- Refugees know what constitutes essential advice and the orientation problems that the particular configuration of the host system presents to people from their own countries.
- Refugees provide interpretation, communication and cultural mediation across information gaps and problems in access to and delivery of services.

The **third** involved raising awareness and understanding and promoting positive attitudes in the community. This showed itself in a number of ways:

- Having direct contact with and participation in the community – getting to know people personally and as individuals, breaking down barriers through 'meeting places'.

- Forming social groups for interaction, organising workshops, film shows, seminars, talks and dramatic and musical events so that the host community could get to know more about refugees and their backgrounds. Social events, like barbecues, are very important – where people can eat and drink and party together.
- Through school visits by refugees, and events organised so that children get to know people who are refugees.
- Through representing themselves at meetings with community leaders, organisations and local authority committees.
- Through talking to the media about their personal stories, achievements, and contributions.

The **fourth** was to provide expert and regional knowledge to inform policy development. There were three main facets to this:

- Refugees are the voice of experience. If these voices are heard they will identify the needs, tell of the problems created by inappropriately designed policies and will offer solutions.
- Refugees themselves have a focal role to play in defining what inclusion strategies are appropriate for them in relation to their self-identified needs.
- Refugees can compare each others' experiences in integration across Europe to identify examples of good practice from other national or regional contexts.

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We were unable, in the context of the current study, to provide detailed evidence of impacts on each of these roles. However, there was universal agreement among those interviewed that problems of capacity impaired the ability of RCOs to perform these roles.

## Limitations of community groups

Despite evident achievements, there was an overwhelming sense of fragility about the RCOs found in each locality. They faced a wide range of demands with very limited resources. They commonly had weak structures, little money, sometimes with no meeting place, limited knowledge of the British system, and

dependency on a small number of enthusiastic individuals whose dedication led them to work very hard, bringing them, in some cases, close to 'burn out'.

In part, the situation reflects the fragility of all community groups and this assessment could equally apply to the average mainstream residents' association, community co-operative, or self-help group. However, in the case of asylum seekers and refugees, the problem was made worse because they tended to be in a weak position in accessing factors supportive to successful organisation development. These include: personal resources, money, energy, contentment, surplus resources, wide contacts, access to networks, knowledge of the system, management support and good living space among others.

The consequence was that refugee community groups were able to perform what Narayan (2000) has called a 'defensive' function in enabling asylum seekers to contend with the situation that they found themselves in.<sup>16</sup> What they were not

<sup>16</sup> Narayan, D, *Voices of the Poor: Can anyone hear us?* Oxford University Press for the World Bank, New York, 2000

able to do was to perform a 'transformative' function which, Narayan suggests, is vital if refugee communities are to effect the changes in local power necessary for true integration. Taking this theme further, Knight, Chigudu, and Tandon (2002) have developed a model of a good society based on three interlocking forces. A good society occurs when people are able to fulfil their requirements for basic needs, association, and participation.<sup>17</sup> Although refugee community groups are able to meet many of the basic needs of refugees, and provide opportunities for them to meet together, they have not so far, in Liverpool, Newcastle, and Margate, enabled refugees to participate in the political processes that would speed their integration and create a rich multi-cultural society in these provincial areas.

In part, the reason is that RCOs are too small. In addition, they are too few in number to have much impact. There were only eight refugee community groups in Newcastle, nine in Liverpool, and one in Margate that involved refugees but was set up by the host community. Moreover, we found that some communities were too small to sustain a community group, and were isolated and fragmented as a result. It is clear that a critical mass is necessary to form and develop an RCO. It was impossible, however, from the limited data available to estimate the numerical 'tipping point' for an RCO to come into existence.

## Organisation development matters

Refugee community groups in the three provincial areas varied. Some were old, having reflected earlier migration patterns, and had transformed themselves into cultural organisations or fallen into disuse so that they had become largely moribund. The new and recent arrivals had in many cases led to the reactivation of old groups, giving them a new lease of life while challenging them to the organisational limits.

In those cases where there was no host community to welcome refugees, new arrivals had taken some time to form groups. In part, this was because during the period of waiting for the asylum decision, people had too little energy to engage in collective planning for a future that might not happen. When they did begin the process of forming groups, they were more interested in meeting with one another than in adopting a formal constitution. They were commonly content to work as an informal and unincorporated association. It was when they needed money and resources that the exigencies of formal registration became necessary. At this point, they generally needed external assistance because they were usually unaware of the demands of charity law.

Support services for refugee community groups, while present in all three areas, were under-developed. For many established agencies the refugee sector was invisible. As part of this research, a survey of 17 local development agencies in the statutory, voluntary, and private sectors was undertaken. None of these agencies referred to the notion of refugees in their published reports or literature. Even the

<sup>17</sup> Knight, B. Chigudu, H. and Tandon, R., *Reviving Democracy*, Earthscan, London, 2002

**Even the voluntary sector, with its sensitivity to issues of diversity, sometimes inappropriately conflated the notion of asylum seekers with race and equal opportunities issues – a view that told only a small part of the story.**

voluntary sector, with its sensitivity to issues of diversity, sometimes inappropriately conflated the notion of asylum seekers with race and equal opportunities issues – a view that told only a small part of the story.

At the same time, there were dedicated refugee agencies that seemed to offer RCOs support and development. In Liverpool, Refugee Action was active; in the North East, there was the Northern Refugee Service, an organisation that was developing an independent refugee forum; and in Margate there was the Kent Refugee Support Network that gave support to RCOs. Such support services were vital to the development of RCOs, particularly in offering training and technical assistance and helping RCOs adjust to the British system.

## Conclusion

The overall conclusion from the three provincial areas is a sense of struggle. Refugees are making valiant efforts to assist asylum seekers, sometimes at huge cost to themselves, but without much in the way of support from the system, which is itself struggling to cope. The mainstream agencies are more or less unaware of the issue of asylum seekers, and so have yet to adjust their operations to take their needs into account.

*Somali women at a conference organised by the Evelyn Oldfield Unit*



### 3 Refugee community organisations in London



*Unaccompanied Eritrean children being taught English at Heythrop College in London, 1992*

<sup>18</sup> Gameledin-Ashami, M, Cooper, L, *A Benchmark for Refugee Community Organisations in London*, Evelyn Oldfield Unit and Charities Evaluation Services, 2001

Having looked at the situation in the three areas of England, our research turned to the role of RCOs in the settlement of refugees in London. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, London witnessed the emergence of RCOs as a response to refugee migrations to the UK. At that point in time, charitable trusts and local authorities (which then had statutory responsibility to assist with the settlement of refugees) had limited knowledge about the cultural background of refugees and their organisations, which made it difficult for RCOs to access financial resources.

We estimate that today there are between 400 and 500 RCOs in London alone and their structures and networks have become more complex and sophisticated over time. In the early days, there were only nationality specific groups, but during the late 1980s, 'refugee consortia' were established followed by 'generic refugee organisations' and 'refugee forums' in the early 1990s, leading to the encouragement of 'borough based networks' in the late 1990s. These developments, particularly those involving strategic networks, were stimulated by the activity of funders and the larger refugee organisations, such as the Refugee Council. For instance, in the mid 1980s, the Refugee Council's community development team provided infrastructural support for new and emerging organisations, and in the late 1980s, the organisation placed trainees in RCOs and gave them equipment. These were some of the strategies that helped to build the capacity of the organisations to deliver their services. In the mid 1980s, City Parochial Foundation (CPF) and Trust for London (TfL) were pioneers for providing money to London-based RCOs and later provided support in kind by way of free consultants to help in their organisational development. In the mid 1990s, the big funders, notably CPF, London Boroughs Grants and Thames Telethon, together with the Refugee Council, formed a consortium which established the Evelyn Oldfield Unit to provide technical support for the further development of RCOs. This was designed to fill a gap in management and organisational support. TfL established the Resource Unit for Supplementary and Mother Tongue Schools.

By way of creating a benchmark for RCOs, our research looked in-depth at 22 London-based RCOs in order to understand their growth patterns and to assess to what extent they support the process of settlement.<sup>18</sup> Appendix C gives details of each RCO in the sample on their legal status, date of establishment and registration as a charity, the number of males and females on committees, how board members are elected and the number of management meetings they have each year. Eight of the RCOs were established between 1980 and 1986, and 14 between 1987 and 1995, which was a time when the major legislation was introduced.

We originally planned to interview 30 RCOs in great depth, but only managed 22. The eight missing cases had either closed down, were too overworked, or were experiencing difficulties. Our sample cannot be thought of as truly representative,

because, with an interview failure rate of 25%, there is bound to be non-response bias. However, many of the issues raised by the results from the 22 RCOs are germane to the RCO sector.

From the findings, two very important differences between London and the provinces stand out. The first is the level of membership and volunteering. According to what London RCOs said, membership and volunteering was very high and probably higher than in most mainstream small voluntary bodies. The average membership was 1,048 and was said to have increased from an average of 835 in 1995. Two extreme cases reported a membership of 4,000 and 12,000 respectively. Similarly, organisations reported a high prevalence of volunteers. The organisations had an average of 12 and a maximum of 40 volunteers. Indeed, many other RCOs were said to be run solely by volunteers, though in our sample, this was not the case where each RCO employed an average of three full-time and two part-time staff.

The second factor distinguishing between London and the provinces was finance. Unlike RCOs in the provinces, which had very little money, the London sample had significant funding. Since this finding conditions others, we will deal with the matter of money first.

### Organisations' resources

The average amount of funding an RCO received in our sample was £121,410 per year, most of which is geared to project funding rather than core funding (four organisations gave no details of funding). The least amount that an organisation received per year was £30,000, and the largest amount £345,064.<sup>19</sup>

These figures suggest that RCOs in the capital are more robust than their provincial counterparts, although a relatively high proportion of volunteers also suggests that paid work may not be as well resourced as it might be. Funding sources are given in Table 4 below.

<sup>19</sup> In a survey of 106 local London voluntary organisations carried out by L Cooper in 1999, 53% of them had an income of up to £100,000 and 47% received between £100,000 and £3 million.

Table 4: Funding sources for RCOs

Funding source	Number of RCOs receiving funding	% of total number of RCOs
Local Authority/LBG	21	95
Trust and Foundation	15	68
Lottery and Millennium	15	68
Health Authority	5	23
Voluntary organisations	5	23
Refugee Council	5	23
Europe	4	18
Other*	4	18
TEC	2	9
Own income	2	9
Legal Service Commission	1	5
Private	1	5

\* Other includes Catering Training, Capital Radio, Workers Education Association and RSA.

Contrary to expectation, the majority of RCOs (95%) received funding from their local authority – a higher proportion than the voluntary organisations researched in the above-mentioned survey. Unlike other mainstream organisations, there was no government funding, but a higher proportion received funding from trusts and foundations and the Lottery/Millennium than other mainstream voluntary agencies in London.<sup>20</sup> A regression analysis of the funding details shows that age of organisation predicted income: the older the RCO, the greater the annual funding.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* In 1999, the income from local authorities and LBGU for mainstream organisations had dropped 33% in ten years. Sixty per cent of the sample surveyed received income from Trusts and only 9% received Lottery funding.

Such funding enabled RCOs to rent offices in a way that would have been unthinkable for their provincial counterparts. An average of £13,006 was paid for rent per year for an average of four to five rooms. The minimum cost was £1,200, and the maximum £39,277. More than three-quarters of the organisations had access to private interview rooms for work with clients, two-thirds (68%) had access to training rooms and nearly half (46%) had access to community halls.

### RCO activities

The scale of funding among London RCOs enabled a scale of activity greatly in excess of that found in the provinces. Systematic analysis of RCO activities found that service delivery dominated. The rationale for this was, according to RCOs interviewed, that services would assist new arrivals to adapt to their new environment. Advice work was the dominant form of service delivery.

There appeared to be three main types of advice. The first type of advice was how to access the UK welfare system. This might involve short interventions of advice or long time-consuming casework interventions, with follow-up and referral to other agencies. In this role, RCOs helped beneficiaries to make claims and defend their interests.

To do this effectively, staff required considerable training. The 1999 legislation was having a significant impact upon RCOs because of its demands for organisations to implement the new 'Quality Mark'<sup>21</sup> before they could offer professional advice. Most interviewees were extremely worried about developing the capacity to do so within the stipulated time period. Although many people who set up RCOs had acquired some experience of social administration in the UK, the knowledge base was normally limited to individual personal encounters with the system rather than practical work experience within statutory or voluntary organisations. A minority of the founders and organisers of RCOs had been bureaucrats, political activists or students in their own countries. They often had organisational skills, gained through student, trade union activity or as leaders of national liberation movements. These individuals were often mature and dynamic with a strong vision and a particular world view of their role in their communities, as well as of their members' role as extensions of larger communities which they left behind. At the same time, they had little direct experience of the complexities of the rules and regulations of British social administration.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The Asylum & Immigration Act 1999 introduced new regulations in respect of providing immigration advice, including the Community Legal Service Quality Mark launched in 2000

<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Oldfield Unit ...op.cit

Table 5 displays the distribution of advice focusing on access to welfare in the sample of 22 RCOs.

**Table 5: Advice and information in accessing statutory and local services**

Type of activity	Number of RCOs	% of RCOs	Number with records for number helped	Average no. * of users helped per year per RCO
Housing	22	100	15	686
Welfare	22	100	13	1071
Legal / immigration	22	100	11	911
Health	19	86.4	10	1160
Education	18	81.8	8	145
Vocational	12	54.5	6	235
Court	10	45.5	4	245
Mental health	9	40.9	3	225

\*In Table 5 above, the average number of users helped per year per RCO is calculated only from those that collect monitoring statistics. It is calculated by taking the total number of users helped and dividing that figure by the number of RCOs that have records.

All of the 22 RCOs provided advice and information on housing, welfare and immigration. Although a slightly lower number (19) provided advice and information on health, the average number of users helped per year in this area was the highest. The number of RCOs providing advice and information on mental health was noticeably high, suggesting marked levels of stress experienced by refugees.

The second type of advice was more informal and focused on culture and confidence building. Commonly, this aimed to develop and maintain the cultural identity of users, promote positive attitudes and create stability in communities. Some of this work also began to tackle more intricate aspects of settlement, and how to deal with aspects of British culture. Taken collectively, these activities contributed to community development.

**Table 6: Cultural and confidence-building activities**

Type of activity	Number of RCOs	% of RCOs	Number with records for number helped	Average no. of users helped per year per RCO
Mother tongue classes	12	55	9	233
Supplementary classes	11	50	6	57
Youth work	10	45	7	505
Cultural identity	8	36	1	500
Lunch clubs	8	36	5	1101
Counselling	6	27	2	362
Positive images	5	22	0	-

In the above table, 'Supplementary classes' is defined as 'activities designed to give additional help with school work for children and young adults'. There were two important findings about supplementary classes: (i) over half of the sample

ran mother tongue schools and (ii) there were indications that some RCOs were providing support on more detailed settlement issues. These findings were reflected in the setting up of provision for young and elderly people and the provision of counselling for those with mental health problems.

The third type of advice, more akin to the first, helped with access to the labour market. It was only the most skilled RCOs that could engage with this because it needed considerable resources, much contact with host agencies, partnerships with educational and training agencies, and high skills in reporting and managing money. Results are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Help with access to employment**

Type of activity	Number of RCOs	% of RCOs	Number with records for number helped	Average no. of users helped per year per RCO
Help with English	12	55	10	61
Vocational training	7	32	7	114
Development of skills	6	27	6	87

The table shows that over half of the sample provided help with learning English, either directly or in collaboration with local colleges, to help their users settle into the host community. Much smaller numbers of RCOs provided vocational training or skills training to help users enter the labour market. Indeed, on further analysis, the vocational training extended no further than training on information technology, help with basic computer skills, training in nursing care or career guidance; and skills development focussed on interview skills, literacy classes, sewing classes and an accredited course on catering. Some of these were provided as NVQ level 1 and 2 accredited courses.

We compared the income of RCOs that provide vocational training with other organisations in the sample and found that training providers tended to be larger organisations with an average income £57,000 per annum higher than those not providing vocational training. Two of the successful RCOs that provided vocational training demonstrated that they had identified a market niche following detailed research.

### Users of RCOs

We found that RCOs had very high numbers of users from 30 different countries, speaking 27 languages (probably higher numbers than most small mainstream voluntary agencies) with an average of 3,469 per year, from a minimum of 400 and a maximum of 15,000 users.<sup>23</sup> However, these figures need to be treated with caution, since we were unable to validate them. During interviews, it became clear that RCOs did not have highly developed systems of monitoring.

<sup>23</sup> Gameledin - Ashami, M, Cooper, L. op.cit.

RCOs worked both with asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers dominated the user groups. Only 30% of the organisations worked 'mainly' with settled communities.

RCOs said that demand had increased. The most dominant feeling was that the overcrowding of housing, with families welcoming other members of their community to live with them to avoid moving out of London, had led to higher levels of mental illness. They also considered that they were responding to crisis situations more often than previously. Part of the increased demand was due to asylum seekers who had been dispersed to the North moving back to London. As we saw in Chapter Two, poor quality accommodation, lack of community support and racial harassment were said to be significant problems experienced by refugees when they are dispersed and the problems are often too great, causing them to return to London. This was a big issue for London-based RCOs, since they said that it increased their workload considerably.

RCOs also stated that they had experienced an increase in requests for help from outside London but their lack of monitoring made it difficult to identify exactly what changes had occurred. In some cases, London-based organisations had developed contacts with groups in other regions and felt pressured to offer more support from a distance.

## Other activities

About three-quarters (73%) were involved in representational activities. This involved taking up issues with local authorities, social security offices and other social agencies on behalf of individual users. At the same time, very few RCOs (three of 22) were involved in policy research, public education or advocacy to highlight concerns with policy makers. RCOs concentrated on coping with day-to-day matters, and there was little time or resource to engage in public debate. Mainstream institutions need to think about how they engage with marginalised groups.

Our benchmark exercise seems to support the assertion in Chapter Two that RCOs are performing a 'defensive' function for their users by meeting their basic need to access advice on housing, welfare, immigration, health and education. Not only are RCOs performing these functions with great commitment but they are also meeting the basic needs of very large numbers. Few of them are able to offer higher level services to help users enter the labour market and even fewer are dealing with the processes of refugees' participation in public policy. There is a strong tendency to leave these aspects of their work to the larger organisations. Indeed, these groups perceive themselves as having little influence on policies, both at local and national level, and this view has been confirmed by other research.<sup>24</sup>

**Few RCOs are able to offer higher level services to help users enter the labour market and even fewer are dealing with the processes of refugees' participation in public policy.**

<sup>24</sup> This finding was also reported by Ese-Feka, R, in *Community based initiatives with the capacity to assist integration of refugees and asylum seekers in London*, Home Office, 2001

## Organisation development

We saw earlier that refugee community groups are typically formed by a small number of committed refugees who often operate from a private residence or a church hall before gradually acquiring premises and funding. These groups tend to be predominantly nationality groups and often begin their activities by providing mother tongue classes and supplementary schools as part of helping refugees to maintain their cultural identity. Their gatherings enable asylum seekers and refugees to come together, share information about their country of origin and discuss issues of concern to them.

How do they develop? And what factors help or hinder their development?

Our research suggested that RCOs had a tendency to develop structures and institutions that reinforced traditional identities in a new and frequently hostile environment. The old cultural forms, which regulated social relationships in their countries of origin, such as kinship, conflict resolution, weddings and funerals, continued. As members began to adapt to the new situation, activities tended to assume new meanings and functions. RCOs develop in a variety of ways, sometimes not dissimilarly to those of mainstream organisations. As an illustration of this, let us take the matter of accountability. This is an area where RCOs tend to progress from one form of accountability to another.

Accountability in voluntary organisations may be divided into two types: upwards and downwards. Upward accountability tends to be directed through trustees to regulatory authorities, such as the Charity Commission, and to funding agencies. Downward accountability tends to be directed towards members and users. The dynamics of the two types may pull an organisation in opposite directions. Until recently, RCOs, more than any other type of voluntary organisation, have tended to rely more on the downward type of accountability since their leitmotif has tended to be solidarity with compatriots, rather than compliance with an externally-imposed UK-centric system. This has sometimes caused difficulty with those funders who fail to understand how RCOs operate. This is not because of a lack of checks and balances within the organisation, but because the accountability structures are different. These checks and balances rest on culturally-organised processes based on negotiation of community attachment and identity and on peer validation of process that enhance participation and accountability.

The research uncovered a changing balance. A number of interviews with people from RCOs suggested that they were beginning to take upward accountability more seriously. As one indicator of this, they were now spending a great deal more of their time completing accountability reports.

In organisation development, there appeared to be four characteristic forms of development. We have named the types:

- (a) *moving from amateur to stability*
- (b) *founder syndrome*
- (c) *harnessing community expertise*
- (d) *identifying a market niche.*

We will now give a case study of each type. Each of the four studies shows how important it is (a) to develop a clear vision and strategic plan of what the organisation can achieve, (b) invest in the training and support of all staff and volunteers rather than only the founder or co-ordinator, (c) harness the expertise of local community members, and (d) identify a market niche and base decisions on research findings.

## Casestudy

### Moving from amateur to stability

*This organisation started in 1991 with no funding. During the first year, the small group of refugees who were working together used their own money to support their activities. Users were encouraged to become members and their small contributions were used for rent and telephone. After one year, funding was received from the British Refugee Council and two trusts. This attracted a new group of volunteers who were able to deal with large numbers of immigration cases.*

*As time went by, they started to address new problems associated with settlement, such as health, social and welfare issues. In 1993, the organisation started to campaign against the asylum bill. In 1994, funding was received for a caseworker and an HIV project was developed. The work became regular and the organisation began to stabilise with around £30,000 to £40,000 per annum. However, by 1997, their vision had gone, the management committee went through a crisis and volunteers disappeared because they no longer found the work appealing. The small number of people who remained with the organisation were not clear what they were trying to achieve and they were prepared to close the organisation down.*

*At the end of 1997, a new management committee was elected and they decided to put quality time into reviewing the organisation in order to determine what the real problems were. Although some progress occurred at that time, with a new office that briefly motivated people, it was not until 1999 when the Department of Health commissioned a capacity building programme for organisations working on HIV issues that things began to change. It was during this time that the management committee, co-ordinator and staff were able to work on developing a clear strategy for sustainability. For the staff team it seemed like a last chance!*

*As a consequence of taking time out to think through the development of their organisation, the team was able to produce a strategic plan, human resource management system and a monitoring system for collecting evidence about their efficiency. Their funding doubled, new funding from trusts and the Lottery were forthcoming, a stronger, tight-knit staff team was formed and applications for European funding were drawn up.*

## Casestudy

### Founder syndrome and stagnation

*A refugee who was concerned about asylum seekers from his country founded this organisation in 1982. The founder was familiar with the UK system and the way in which it operates. At the time, there was no other community organisation serving his compatriots in London. The establishment of the organisation coincided with the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers from his country, and during the 1980s, it became the first point of call for many of them. In 1989, he acquired charitable status for the organisation.*

*Funders who were concerned about the plight of these particular newcomers soon found their way to this organisation. The first funding came from a trust for volunteer expenses and running costs. This was followed by a grant from the local authority to cover the salary of a co-ordinator – a position which was then filled by the founder. He developed good connections with funders as well as politicians and, in 1990, an additional full-time worker was funded – they also had one volunteer. The income was £28,000. However, although the number of asylum seekers from this particular country had not fallen during the past 10 years, the organisation did not grow. No investment was made in developing policies for supporting and training staff and no appropriate monitoring system for service development existed. This organisation is still run by one worker and its income has increased only from £28,000 in 1990 to a mere £53,000 in 2000. Activities have stagnated. The personality and connections, which had served the community so well in the early days, may well have since become the key factor for the organisation's lack of growth.*

## Casestudy

### Harnessing community expertise

*This organisation was established to serve new arrivals by a group of concerned individuals in 1986. It was officially launched in 1987 and registered as a charity a year later. It started as a mother tongue school and gradually began to offer advice on welfare issues. The first funding was quickly received from two trusts to cover the salary of a part-time co-ordinator and running costs. By 1990, it had this one staff member and two volunteers with an income of £35,000. The community, which this organisation represents, is endowed with a large number of highly educated people whose skills were welcomed by the co-ordinator. The RCO quickly moved from a small organisation with a single activity to a multifunctional organisation providing a wide range of services. In doing so, it drew upon the expertise, skills, and knowledge of members of the community. By the year*

2000, it had employed four full-time and three part-time staff and two session workers. Thirty-seven volunteers were involved with the organisation, including ten teachers who teach at four mother tongue schools in four London boroughs.

Its income is now £246,000. This is a remarkable achievement. Its services have expanded to cover advice in a variety of areas. It runs a health centre, which provides information on health, undertakes translation of health information, and organises seminars by health professionals. It also runs an elderly and youth project. The RCO publishes a newspaper, which has a wide circulation, and this enables it to maintain regular contact with members. In the past six years, the RCO has carried out two major pieces of research into the needs of their users. In 1996, it published a survey of the profile, structure, and needs of its community, which was the first study by an RCO in London. In 1999, it carried out another study on the health needs of their users. Thus the organisation is aware that evidence-based work is essential for making priorities and for raising its profile. Although its client group has been among the top five nationalities seeking asylum for the past few years, the management has chosen to direct its energy and resources to settlement issues. The maintenance of cultural identity and the education of children remains the central focus of the organisation.

## Casestudy

### Identifying a market niche

This organisation was set up in 1992 by a group of concerned individuals in an outer London Borough. It started as a mother tongue and supplementary school and received its first funding from a small Trust to cover the running costs of mother tongue classes. The Refugee Council also provided work placement for its trainees and paid supervision fees. The RCO became a charity in 1994 as high numbers of asylum seekers arrived in the borough and its work expanded into the area of advice around immigration, housing and welfare issues.

The organisation then identified a specific need to help unemployed refugees gain entry into the labour market so that they could become more independent. They also wanted to help school children engage more effectively in the school system by helping to overcome language and cultural barriers. Thus the management had found a niche in the area of education, training and employment, which they realised could attract local, national and European funding provided that they opened their services to unemployed refugees and non-refugees alike. While maintaining and in some cases expanding its advice work and outreach work for housebound women, the RCO decided to open a new

education, training and employment department. They changed their name, amended the constitution to reflect their new role and within a short period of time were overwhelmed by the high demands from refugees and non-refugees who were keen to improve their employability opportunities. The new department provides support classes for school children, ESOL classes with basic computer skills for the unemployed adults, training courses in IT at NVQ Level I and II for unemployed adults, and advice and career guidance. They employ 34 staff members and have an income of £350,000 per year, which is a remarkable achievement for a group that started only nine years ago. The organisation is now well connected to local service providers and receives funds from DFEE, SRB, TEC, and ESF.

These case studies demonstrate a variety of issues that have to be overcome by RCOs. A major one is the management of growth and increased demand.

A number of the London sample RCOs were starting from a low base. Management systems were generally poor. There were few human resource management systems, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements were weak.

Much activity was reactive. Less than half of the sample had written plans. Even among those with written plans, one third of the plans had no mission statements, and almost none had any way of systematically prioritising need. One or two organisations had carried out surveys, but they lacked the skills to use the findings strategically. As a consequence, staff and funders tended to be the driving force when it came to deciding future work programmes. Few of the sample RCOs had quality assurance systems at the time of the research or means of learning from their activities. The previously mentioned requirements of the Community Legal Service means that many are now having to implement such systems.

These results suggest that there is a need to help build their capacity. RCOs were often aware of this, but said that the everyday resources available for the traditional voluntary sector were rarely made available for RCOs. This included access to management support as well as access to funding. Our study shows that more than 50% of our sample believe that commitment of staff and volunteers is the most important variable that will help to strengthen their organisations. What tends to be missing is a strategic approach.

## 4 First steps to integration



Asylum seekers at English classes, Liverpool 2000

So far in this report, we have presented our findings in a factual manner, and have kept our interpretations to a minimum. In this chapter, we remove this restriction of detachment, and reflect on the findings giving some normative judgements in an effort to find a way forward. In this process, we have been helped considerably by a conference organized by the Evelyn Oldfield Unit on 18 July 2001 at which participants were asked to reflect on the findings of the research and come up with recommendations.

Before we begin to think about the future, we need first to return to the central question of this enquiry. We asked "Can communities cope?". Part of the answer depends on what we are asking communities to cope with. Our starting point was the issue of refugee "settlement". However, an important study conducted for the Immigration Research and Statistics Service (IRSS/NASS) at the Home Office at much the same time as the current one focused on the somewhat stronger notion of "integration".<sup>27</sup>

It will be recalled that, in this report, we have used the Home Office definition of integration:

'a long-term, complex, two-way process in which refugees take part in all aspects of life, while UK society benefits from the potential of the newcomers: this requires adaptation on both sides. Integration involves the process of acquiring civil, social, political, human and cultural rights for refugees, while maintaining their cultural and ethnic diversity. Integration, while encompassing both the organic and functional aspects of settlement, is not synonymous with assimilation that is the loss of the refugee's identity within the host culture'.

This is a useful starting point about what integration is, but tells us little about how to achieve it, nor how to relate the role of RCOs or any other agency towards achieving integration.

### Criteria for integration

A model of successful integration in society has been developed by Knight, Chigudu and Tandon.<sup>28</sup> The model is based on empirical work in 47 countries across the globe, and has been developed and tested with more than 10,000 citizens, many of whom were refugees. In brief, the study suggests that three factors need to be met before integration can occur.

First, basic needs have to be met. These include material factors such as food, clothing and shelter, but also include basic human rights and security. Second, the need for human association, to have relationships within communities and between communities where different communities are free to express their

<sup>27</sup> Lawry-White, J, *Synthesis of Seven IRSS/NASS Integration Research Projects*, for the Home Office, 2001

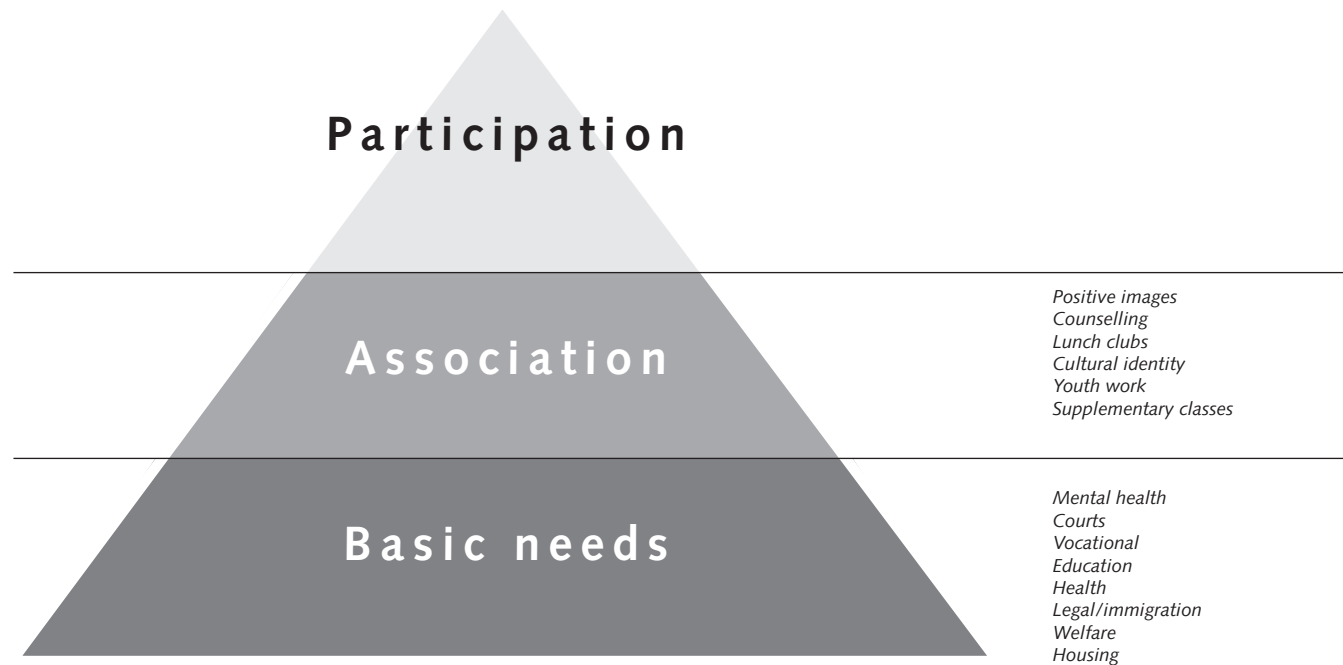
<sup>28</sup> Knight, B, Chigudu, H, and Tandon, R, *Reviving Democracy*, Earthscan, London, 2002

cultural identities while respecting the different culture of others. Third, people need to be citizens in the fullest sense, and have the opportunity to have their voices heard and their views respected.

These three factors – basic needs, association, and participation – were, according to Knight and colleagues, the cornerstone of a good society. The three factors were interlinked, and formed a series of three building blocks, with basic needs forming the bedrock, association in the middle, and participation at the top.

A visual representation of the model is shown in Diagram 1. This relates the activities performed by RCOs to the model developed.

Diagram 1



From Diagram 1, we can see that RCOs are meeting the 'basic needs' of their users and they are creating opportunities for them to 'associate' and feel part of a community. There is little activity, however, in that area identified as the need to 'participate'. The RCOs' apparent lack of access to policy analysis material, dispersal statistics and information about policy and procedures of statutory bodies confirms this.

RCOs can provide 'basic needs' and 'associational' activities, which enable members to celebrate and interact, without having many relationships or partnerships with host agencies. But in order to effect change so that asylum seekers and refugees can have a stake in society, a place in the public domain and a possibility to influence policy, RCOs have to develop stronger links with mainstream organisations particularly at policy-making and strategic level.

In order to help their client group settle and become integrated into the host society, it is important that RCOs are not marginalised by funders or other mainstream organisations. Analysis of our data shows that RCOs have good links with other refugee agencies, forums and networks but when it comes to relationships or partnerships with local authorities, housing departments, health authorities, local CVS, and other mainstream organisations, there is little contact apart from funding and referral relationships. In fact, RCOs felt disempowered by their fragile contacts. Only three organisations sat on local authority steering committees and one on that of an education department. They sometimes felt that they were not true partners and were nothing more than symbolic participants.

Our research suggests that RCOs have had much to contribute towards refugee settlement, but have done much less in terms of integration. We have found that RCOs have performed vital functions in meeting the basic needs of refugees and enabling them to associate with one another. This has enabled refugees to settle. However, they were much less effective in creating the mechanisms for participation in the political processes that would redress power imbalances and enable them to take part as full and equal members of society. To put this a slightly different way, RCOs were strong on "within group" activity, yet weak on "between groups" activity. The consequence is that RCOs provide a safe haven; not a means for changing the system. As far as traditional UK power structures go, RCOs are marginal. Like many community groups, RCOs enable refugees to contend with their adverse situation, but they can do little to transform the situation so that refugees feel part of normal life.

Our meetings with individual refugees confirmed these findings. Almost all said that they were not integrated into the host society and that they often felt isolated. Cultural barriers are difficult to overcome. Refugees, for instance, often

**Refugees often say that Britain can be a lonely place and they automatically feel excluded.**

say that Britain can be a lonely place and they automatically feel excluded. There were, of course, distinctions made between the old and the young. Older people still have lingering feelings about going back to their country of origin and are pre-occupied by the need to have the problems back home solved in order to acquire peace of mind. Young people have more chance to settle. The most significant turning point was said to be when young people acquire the right kind of education to lead to

employment. Interviewees said that young people would have little problem provided they receive an education where they can mix with other children from the host community to develop shared understandings and gain qualifications to find employment. However, interviewees asserted that some schools were turning children away and that, as a consequence, the dropouts were finding it difficult to cope with the system.

Integration was considered by refugees to be a slow process, beginning at the moment of arrival, continuing through the asylum period, and way beyond. Employment was seen as the main obstacle. This was true of refugees regardless of their education level since unemployment rates among educated refugees are of major concern. Routes to integration were seen as the provision of English language classes; changing attitudes; recognition and respect for cultural differences; orientation classes to understand the UK system; education; and employment.

But the overriding message from RCOs was that they themselves felt marginal from the process of integration. They observed gaps in their relationships with

other agencies, yet they knew that their work with mainstream agencies was vital if they were to make a difference for the settlement and integration of their user groups.

The best answer may be to take two vital steps to make the process of integration more effective. The first step concerns the RCOs themselves, to help them do what they do best, which is to help refugees with their basic needs and to associate among themselves. There is a clear agenda for building the capacity of RCOs so that they can perform these jobs better. There is a case for more investment in RCOs, though it is not just a question of money. There needs to be much more training and consultancy available to RCOs to prevent burn-out of the leadership, to work on matters of organizational development, and to help with evaluation and accountability. Many RCOs are working at full-stretch and have little time to stand back and evaluate their work. What they do in terms of providing for basic needs and association could be strengthened.

As we have seen, meeting basic needs and assisting with the processes of association help considerably with settlement. However, such activities appear to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition of integration. If we go back to the Home Office sponsored study, which suggested that: *'integration should be recognised as a two-way process in which both parties are players'*, it becomes clear that the second step therefore concerns getting the host community to play its part both in terms of supporting individual refugees and in terms of supporting their RCOs.

It was evident, particularly in the dispersal areas, that mainstream institutions were not geared up to deal with the issue of refugees. Institutions were, for the most part, pursuing their agenda without regard to the needs of the new communities among them. They need to adjust their behaviour so that refugees become one of their target groups. This applies particularly to matters of education and employment which carry the greatest potential benefits for matters of real integration. There is a need for investment in the civic infrastructure so that refugee interests are present in the minds of the various elites who take decisions about regeneration, planning and service delivery. The place to begin here is with regional government, perhaps by increasing the Home Office capacity – staff and funding packages - in regional offices to ensure that the voice of RCOs is represented at strategic and regional or local policy-making levels. The objective would be to ensure that refugee issues are firmly placed in criteria for funding programmes and included in community participation strategies of a variety of initiatives including Regional Development Agencies, Local Strategic Partnerships, and New Deal for Communities Programmes and other initiatives that address civic issues of health and safety within the local and health authorities and Police. Down the track, this would ensure that RCOs not only get a fairer slice of the funding cake – which they do not at present – but also that refugee issues would have greater legitimacy in the search for a better society in which all citizens, regardless of their origins, feel that they have a stake in a vibrant multi-cultural and multi-racial society that is Britain in the future.



Zairean refugee protesting against the Asylum Bill outside the Home Office.

# 5 Recommendations

It is clear from the foregoing analyses that the matter of refugee integration is difficult. There can be no quick fix or set of policy recommendations that will deliver a strategy to solve the refugee question in the short term. The issue is far too complex.

Nevertheless, there are some pointers that can be derived from the data. One key factor is the perception of the issue. At present, the refugee question is perceived a problem. Why need it be? One of the ways forward is to cast the issue of refugees as part of the solution in creating a vibrant multi-cultural society in which people learn to live with one another and benefit from the differences between different backgrounds.

The fact is that many refugees have highly sophisticated political know-how and skills that have value in the labour market. The current study reveals that refugees – through their own self-organising in RCOs - are part of the solution of the skills gap. At present, this solution can only be partial because the skills and talents of such refugees derive first and foremost from their own cultural perspectives. Being given the opportunity to learn about engaging at different levels in the UK, including at the policy level, must also be a pre-requisite for developing transformative action.

Our recommendations stem from this perspective. They are addressed to different levels within the system, beginning with the government.

## Home Office

The Home Office has the lead responsibility within government for refugees. It follows that recommendations to government must be addressed to them, though the success of any integration strategy needs to involve many other government departments.

We recommend that the Home Office increases its capacity to deal with refugee settlement and integration issues. This would involve designation of responsibilities for refugees within regional offices, involving the appointment of an official at middle management level, plus logistical and administrative support, a development fund, and a working brief to ensure that refugees' issues are included in arrangements for the neighbourhood regeneration strategy. The Home Office could use its good offices to ensure that refugees are represented in the regeneration partnerships locally. The unique Home Office contribution could be to create an RCO fund to enable new and emerging RCOs. An additional strategy would be to ensure that refugee matters are included in the portal strategy for funding opportunities from government departments.

## Refugee intermediaries

A key task for organisations whose prime purpose is to help refugees is to increase the skill levels available to RCOs. One of the best ways to do this would be to train a cadre of refugees to become trainers, advisers and technical experts in matters of organisation development, much in the same way as the Evelyn Oldfield Unit equipped refugee community members with these relevant skills, through their university-accredited course 'Training the Trainers'. This would not only mean that RCOs could have access to advisers who have shared similar experiences to their own, but it would develop a career route for those refugees who have been involved in social organisation and development in their own countries to bring the benefit of their experience to the British scene.

At present, in the delivery of technical assistance, the information flow tends to be one-way, with British experience being transmitted to RCOs. This is of limited usefulness, since many RCOs do some things very much better than their host counterparts. An example from the research is the large number of members, users and volunteers and their involvement in the development of RCOs. Although many RCOs lack the trappings of corporate governance and may therefore leave something to be desired in terms of efficiency, they more than make up for this in terms of energy. Many British community organisations could learn from this. A cadre of refugee advisers would open the door to two-way learning between host communities and refugee communities, since they could also work with host community and voluntary organisations. The Evelyn Oldfield Unit's West London Project is evidence of achievement of this kind, in which it helped to develop civic action mechanisms and structures in the region, for the purpose of strategic engagement from grass roots level. Indeed, one route for refugee advisers might be to join strategic partnerships such as the panel of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers recruited by the Neighbourhood Regeneration Unit. This would add value to the processes of neighbourhood renewal.

A second important task for intermediaries is to target participation as a key result area. We have seen that RCOs themselves were too busy with fulfilling basic needs and association to do this. Getting refugees on to the right committees and similar ways of increasing refugee 'voice' in society is a key task for intermediary organisations such as the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, Refugee Action, and Refugee Council.

## RCOs

It is difficult to generalise about what RCOs should do. Because RCOs are often working at the limit of their capacity, it is difficult to suggest that they do more. Moreover, RCOs are heterogeneous. As we have seen, some RCOs are large and well-established with a significant amount of funding, while others are small, new, and struggling to obtain resources. A critical divide is between London-based RCOs and those in the provinces.

The greatest need is in the provinces and that is where the bulk of the effort should be targeted. It is important that RCOs there, in partnership with intermediaries, infiltrate the networks, so that they can influence the host community and obtain resources from their work. At present, it is all too easy for host communities to ignore refugee issues in the regions, and RCOs need to create a voice to make themselves heard by, for instance, standing for election to the boards of regeneration partnerships and other government schemes. This is

difficult and cannot be done without help. RCOs in London have been fortunate in having a number of enlightened funders, both in the charitable and in the statutory sector, and similar enlightened funders are needed in the regions.

There may be some mileage in using well-established RCOs in London to help less well-developed RCOs in the regions. This is only a partial solution since London-based RCOs are themselves stretched, and it would cost money to travel to the regions. However, there are good practice role models that could be disseminated in the regions. With the provision of funding, RCOs could be enabled to contribute to the dissemination itself. But this could only happen with additional resourcing, perhaps as part of sectoral civic action projects.

## Host community

The host community holds the key. It has a job to do to sensitise itself to the needs of refugees within its midst. Without the perspective of RCOs, any initiative would be a one-sided affair, at best a jumping-on-the-band-wagon. There is an onus on host community institutions to generate opportunities for mutual learning that might stimulate integrative engagement. The Home Office should adopt a strategy to make sure that refugee issues are on the agenda of all development agencies and that refugees are included in all levels of government programmes. Refugees need to be in the mainstream, not on the margins.

*Roma refugee family in temporary accommodation as part of the dispersal programme, Liverpool, September 2000*



## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE USED FOR THE LONDON INTERVIEWS

Twenty-two RCOs were interviewed in London. The criteria used for their selection were:

- RCOs that serve new arrivals.
- RCOs that serve the most frequent nationalities seeking refuge in Great Britain. This information is derived from the Home Office statistics taken over the past two years.
- RCOs whose users live in the London boroughs with the highest numbers of refugees (see Appendix B for details).

The original planned size of the sample was 30 but the number interviewed was reduced to 22 because three RCOs were closing down, and five were too overworked to participate, or were having difficulties within their organisation. Therefore, we consider that the remaining 22 organisations that took part in this research can be regarded as stable organisations.

The following organisations were interviewed:

- Afghan Association of London
- Association for Sierra Leonean Refugees
- Barnet Somali Community Group
- Chinese Information and Advice Centre
- CORA
- East London Somali Association
- Eritrean Community in Haringey
- Ethiopian Community in Britain
- Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre
- Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Association
- Iranian Association
- Iraqi Community Association
- Islington Zairian Group
- Refugee Advice Centre
- Society of Afghan Residents in the UK
- South London Tamil Group
- Sudanese Community and Information Centre
- Tamil Refugee Action Group
- Tamil Relief Centre
- Turkish Education Group
- West London Kurdish Association
- Zairian Congolese Cultural and Community Association

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

### ORGANISATION:

1. Address

.....  
.....

2. Legal status

.....

3. Do you know how your organisation started?

.....  
.....

4. Date established

.....

5. Date of registration as a charity or other (specify) organisation

.....

6. Do you have a board of management?

.....

7. How many men and how many women members of the board are there?

.....

8. How are they recruited?

.....

9. How often do you have: management committee meetings?

.....

An AGM?

.....

10. When was your last AGM?

.....

11. What is your Mission?

.....

12. How many staff do you have?

Full-time:

.....

Part-time:

.....

13. Volunteers?

.....

14. Do you have a list of Members?

.....

15. How many do you have currently?

.....

16. How many did you have five years ago?

.....

17. How many rooms do you have available to you?

.....

Do you have:

*Total number of rooms*

	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Number</i>
Community hall		
Interview rooms		
Training/education rooms		
Other non-office (specify)		

18. What is your rent (per annum)?

.....

19. What funding do you have at the moment?

.....

<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Amount</i>	
	<i>Core funding</i>	<i>Project (s)</i>

(Pick up copy of Annual report and Accounts: 1999/00 finances)

20. Which policies and procedures do you find difficult to implement?

.....

.....

.....

.....

21. Why?

.....

.....

.....

22. Do you have a plan?

.....

Three year or one year?

Written

Verbal

None

.....

23. Can you describe some of the most important milestones in the development of your organisation?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Prompt with following after answer.

- e.g.
- 1st meeting: when; who was involved?
- 1st funding: when
- 1st paid staff: when; which posts?

**USERS**

24. Which borough(s) do most of your users come from?

.....  
.....

25. How many used the project in the past year?

.....

26. Do you keep records of users?

.....

Countries of origin

.....  
.....

Ethnic background

.....

Religion

.....

Languages

.....

27. Of the numbers of people you worked with last year, what percentage were

Asylum seekers

Settled communities

Check key historical points of evolution of community in relation to the development of the organisation.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- For computer:
- newly arrived communities
  - or history of exile

**NEEDS/PROBLEMS OF USERS**

28. What are the most important needs of your users at the moment?

.....  
.....

29. How have the needs of your users changed over the years?

.....  
.....

30. How do you assess needs?

Researcher note: have any formal needs assessment been carried out - yes/no

.....  
.....

31. How do you prioritise the needs that you are able to respond to?

.....  
.....

32. Do your users feel integrated into the host community?

.....  
.....

33. If yes, what factors help this to happen?

.....  
.....

34. What things need to happen before your users can become integrated?

---



---

35. Where do your referrals come from?

---



---



---

36. To whom do you refer your users?

---



---

**ACTIVITIES**

37. Do you offer your users any material support (check for access to Trust small grants)?

---

Help in accessing statutory/local services:

---

38. Do you offer advice in the following and who are the main users of each service?

ACTIVITIES	NUMBERS	MAIN BENEFICIARIES
Health – primary, secondary		
Mental health		
Housing		
Education		
Vocational training		
Welfare benefits		
Legal services (immigration)		
Accompany to courts		

Probe – check whether the numbers include repeat users and separate if possible – use statistics for 1999 (same as annual report)

39. What amount of time is given to these activities?

Researcher – try to get rough estimate e.g. one day a week for housing advice, half a day for welfare benefits.

*Community advocacy and community development activities:*

ACTIVITIES	NUMBERS	MAIN BENEFICIARIES
Mother-tongue classes		
Supplementary classes		
Positive images work		
Youth work		
Psychological/counselling		
Cultural identity work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Arts</li> </ul>		
Lunch clubs		

40. What amount of time is given to these activities?

---

*Access to employment:*

ACTIVITIES	NUMBERS	MAIN BENEFICIARIES
Vocational training		
English classes		
Skills development		

41. What amount of time is given to these activities?

---

42. Do you carry out advocacy, campaigning, lobbying? How much?

---

43. Do you carry out any other Public policy work? (If so, probe, e.g., research, briefings)

---

44. Do you provide housing units?  
(If so, probe)

.....  
.....  
.....

45. Out of all of the activities that you do, which are the three most important?

.....  
.....  
.....

**ADDITIONAL WORK DUE TO LEGISLATION**

46. What have been the changing needs of your organisation over the years?  
(Probe and get beneath money and try to reveal how the needs have changed)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

47. What additional work did you expect because of the new legislation?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

48. Can you identify requests you have had to respond to as a result of the legislation?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

49. Or any specific activities you have had to develop

.....  
.....  
.....

50. In what ways are they triggered by the new legislation?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

51. Have you seen any changes for your client group as a result of the new legislation?

.....  
.....

52. What major changes for your client group do you foresee in the next two years as a result of the legislation?

.....  
.....  
.....

53. What major changes for your organisation do you foresee in the next two years as a result of the legislation?

.....  
.....  
.....

**NEEDS/PROBLEMS OF ORGANISATION**

54. How has your organisation changed over the years in response to community changes?

.....  
.....  
.....

55. What are the needs of the organisation at the moment?

.....  
.....  
.....

56. What support is required to help solve these problems?

.....  
.....  
.....

57. Where do you get that support at the moment?

.....  
.....  
.....

58. What are the three main factors that help the development of your organisation?

.....  
.....  
.....

59. What are the three factors that hinder that development?

.....  
.....  
.....

**RELATIONSHIPS/NETWORKS WITH OTHERS**

60. What kind of partnerships or relationships do you have with:  
*(Probe how they are formalised)*

Local authorities:

.....

Education departments:

.....

Social services:

.....

Housing departments:

.....

Local schools:

.....

Health authorities/trusts:

.....

Refugee agencies:

.....

Refugee forums:

.....

Refugee networks:

.....

CVS:

.....

Mainstream voluntary organisations:

.....

61. How do these relationships contribute to the effectiveness of your work?

.....  
.....  
.....

62. What gaps are there?

.....  
.....  
.....

63. How could these gaps be filled? (Relate this question to the future role of EOU)

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

64. Impact:

- how do you see your own achievements since the organisation began?

.....

- what impact do you think you have made?

.....

- upon whom?

.....

65. What kind of user involvement do you have in your organisation?

.....

66. How do you ensure the quality of services to your users?  
Researcher: check if they are using a quality assurance system

.....

Refugee Settlement: can communities cope?

## APPENDIX C

### THE ORGANISATIONS IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

<i>Legal status</i>	<i>Date established</i>	<i>Date of charity registration</i>	<i>Males on Board</i>	<i>Females on Board</i>	<i>How board members are elected</i>	<i>Management meetings per year</i>
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1981	.	6	7	By appt and nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1983	.	.	.	.	.
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1984	1990	6	3	Nomination and election at AGM	52
Charity	1984	1984	6	1	Nomination and election at AGM	8
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1984	1984	2	5	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1985	1993	14	4	By appt and nomination and election at AGM	9
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1985	1991	8	3	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1985	1991	5	2	Nomination and election at AGM	6
Charity	1987	1988	6	7	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1989	1989	6	3	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1989	1990	8	2	Nomination and election at AGM	6
Charity	1990	.	7	2	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1991	1994	6	2	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1991	1997	.	3	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1992	.	3	4	Nomination and election at AGM	6
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1992	1993	5	4	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1992	1994	10	2	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1993	1993	6	7	Nomination and election at AGM	6
Charity and company limited by guarantee	1993	1996	8	1	Nomination and election at AGM	4
Not yet a charity	1994	.	9	4	Nomination and election at AGM	12
Charity	1994	1994	5	2	Nomination and election at AGM	12
	1995	1996	5	3	Nomination and election at AGM	6
<b>Total</b>			<b>131</b>	<b>71</b>		