

working with

refugee community
organisations

a guide for **local infrastructure organisations**

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Working with refugee community organisations: A guide for local infrastructure organisations

First edition, April 2008
© Charities Evaluation Services, 2008
ISBN 978-0-9555404-6-2

A publication for the Improving Reach project by Charities Evaluation Services with the Refugee Council.

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Company limited by guarantee
Registered office 4 Coldbath Square,
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Registered in England and Wales number 2510318
Registered charity number 803602

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Working with refugee community organisations

A guide for local infrastructure organisations

By Ceri Hutton and Sue Lukes for
Charities Evaluation Services with the Refugee Council



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank **Capacitybuilders** for their financial help with this publication, which was provided under Capacitybuilders' Improving Reach pilot programme.

We would also like to thank the following people for commenting on the text:

Rowan Astbury, Charities Evaluation Services
 Talitha Bassett, Charities Evaluation Services
 Shehnaaz Latif, Charities Evaluation Services
 Colin Nee, Charities Evaluation Services
 Ashley Gamble, Performance Hub
 Sue Rudkin, Performance Hub
 Shakila Sherif, NAVCA
 Patricia Garcia, Refugee Council
 Dick Williams, Refugee Council

Thanks also to all the following people and organisations who offered their knowledge, experience and insight to help us develop this guide:

ACANE: Gabi Kitoko
Barking and Dagenham CVS: Carl Blackburn
Blythe Valley CVS: Pauline Blake
BrAVA (Brent Association for Voluntary Action): Jacyntha Stewart
Brent Refugee Forum: Falustin Yassin
CAVSA (Hammersmith and Fulham CVS): Shad Haibatou
CORECOG (Community of Congolese Refugees in Great Britain): Dr Wa Gamoka Pambu
Craven Voluntary Action: Paul English
East London Refugee and Migrant Forum: Rita Chadha
Evelyn Oldfield Unit: Stefanie Borkum
GARAS (Gloucester Association for Refugees and Asylum Seekers): Adele Owen
Gloucester Association for Voluntary and Community Action: Sally Pickering
Hackney CVS: Jake Ferguson
Hackney Refugee Forum: Ali Aksoy
HACT: Devan Kanthasamy
Harrogate CVS: Nina Muir
Harrow CVS: Abdi Ahmed
Hillingdon CVS: Gurpreet Sidhu
Iraqi Community Association: Amir Al Nakash
Latinos Help Centre/Latinoamerican Housing Cooperative: Luis Maya
Liberian Community Organisation: Prince Taylor

Middlesbrough Voluntary Development

Agency: Sian Balsom

Newcastle CVS: Carole Howells

Open Door Project, North East Lincolnshire: Angela Faulding

PARCA (Poor African Refugees Community Association): Moez Nathum

Peterborough CVS: Sarah Fletcher

REAP (Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership): Poornima Karunacadacharan

Refugee Action: Caroline Gashi

Refugee Council/Basis: Emily Kippax

Refugee Council/Regional Development

Team: Patricia Garcia and Dick Williams

Ripon CVS: Lynette Barnes

Tandem: Ruth Wilson

Tees Valley Women's Voice: Phoebe Mwesigwa

Voluntary Action Camden: Maureen Brewster

Voluntary Action Sheffield: Ian-Paul Ashworth, Keith Levy, Vivienne Brown and Paul Harvey

Waswahili Community Trust: Mr Bwantumu

Welsh Refugee Voice: Pierrot Ngadi

We would also like to thank all those involved in the consultation event which was organised to draw on the experience of both specialist and generic infrastructure organisations, as well as frontline RCOs, to inform the aims, target audience, format and content of this guide:

ADP Consultancy: Alison Lamb

Charities Evaluation Services: Colin Nee and Talitha Bassett

Enfield Voluntary Action: Jo Ikhelef

Evelyn Oldfield Unit: Komlan Gnamatsi

HACT: Devan Kanthasamy

Horn of Africa Women's Development Network: Grace Odorg

NAVCA: Shakila Sherif

Redbridge Refugee and Migrant Forum: Rita Chadha

Refugee Action: Caroline Gashi

Refugee Council: Dick Williams and Alicia Zavala

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About this guide

This guide is designed for managers and development workers within Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) and other generic support agencies wishing to engage with refugee community organisations (RCOs) or review their current approach to interacting with these organisations.

The guide was developed following extensive research which included: a desktop review of current literature; consultation of relevant parties; and interviews with representatives of RCOs, local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) and specialist organisations working in the voluntary and community sector in England. A list of all those interviewed is given on page 2.

Those interviewed were loud in their praise of the work of RCOs. However, the research also found that working with RCOs, as with working with other small community groups, brings its challenges. This guide is intended to help workers in LIOs navigate some of these challenges by providing information, hints and tips that address the key issues.

The guide provides eight bite-sized units to help infrastructure workers find the information that they need quickly and easily. Any or all of these can be used as a source of reference and information. Each unit takes a theme identified through the research as being of either interest or concern to those working in LIOs.

Throughout the UK we have found evidence of LIOs using creative approaches to engaging RCOs. However, while LIOs view accessibility as a critically important issue, the research suggested a mismatch between the support LIOs felt they were offering and what RCOs felt was available. In some areas of the country, LIOs and RCOs reported very different levels of engagement. It is hoped that this guide will help to bridge this gap and encourage busy workers and organisations to assess their current level of engagement with their local RCOs or to review their current approach in order to identify scope for further development.

Terms used in this guide

RCO	Throughout this guide, we use the acronym 'RCO' to refer to refugee community organisations.
LIO	We use the term 'LIO' – local infrastructure organisation – to refer to Councils for Voluntary Service and other locally based generic support agencies.
Refugee	We use the term 'refugee' to refer both to asylum-seekers and refugees (unless otherwise specified). This reflects the fact that RCOs often work both with refugees and with asylum-seekers whose applications have not yet been decided.

Who is the guide for?

This guide should be useful if you are based in an LIO which currently works with, or would like to work with, RCOs. Specifically, we hope it will interest you if:

- you are doing capacity-building work with RCOs or would like to start
- you are developing the strategic and policy work of your LIO and would like to include a focus on RCOs or refugee issues
- you want to ensure that your services are accessible and appropriate for RCOs
- you are fundraising to develop work within your LIO and want to include a focus on RCOs *or*
- you are engaged in promoting and publicising the work of your LIO to an audience of RCOs.

Why has it been produced?

The guide has been produced for the following reasons.

- Working with RCOs can bring considerable rewards. For example, some LIOs report that thinking about how they work with RCOs has brought benefits to the LIO's own work overall.
- There is evidence to show that RCOs can get left out of strategies to support the voluntary and community sector in general, or the black and minority ethnic (BME) sector in particular.
- Although RCOs have much in common with other community groups, working with them can be a complex task, and some LIO workers report that they are uncertain about how to engage with them sensitively and productively.
- Around the country, LIOs have very different degrees of experience and confidence in working with RCOs. Some LIOs are based in areas where there are substantial numbers of refugees (and therefore more RCOs), whereas in other areas there are only small numbers of refugees. Some LIOs only began to engage with newly-emerging RCOs as a result of fairly recent dispersal arrangements, which saw the sudden arrival of asylum-seekers to their area. As a result, there is a lot of expertise among LIOs but some are still relatively new to this work and may benefit from practical information on this specialist area.
- Many LIOs find themselves increasingly engaging with migrant populations. A word of warning: this resource focuses on refugees, not migrants (see Unit 2 for information on the difference between refugees and migrants) and in many respects the needs of RCOs are distinct. However, some of the advice and information contained in this guide may also help LIOs think about new ways of working with migrant populations in general.

How to use the guide

Each unit takes a different theme. First it explains what the theme is, gives some background information to help provide a context for the unit and identifies the key issues for LIOs to consider in some detail. It then gives a list of ‘tips’ for infrastructure support workers.

The units are as follows:

Unit 1: Why work with refugee community organisations (RCOs)?

Introducing a rationale for working with RCOs

Unit 2: Who are refugees?

Understanding who asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants are

Unit 3: How do we find refugees in our area?

How to identify where refugee communities and their organisations are located

Unit 4: What are RCOs?

Understanding the characteristics of refugee community organisations

Unit 5: How do we build a relationship?

Reaching out to RCOs and establishing mutual trust and confidence

Unit 6: How do we build RCO issues into our work?

Making sure that your planning and operations benefit from a sharpened focus on refugee issues

Unit 7: Is a specialist approach needed?

Adapting your capacity-building support to RCOs

Unit 8: How do we communicate effectively?

Being confident and clear when working with RCOs

There is inevitably some repetition between units as many of the issues overlap. Material has been repeated where necessary so that each unit can stand on its own when used as a briefing or training resource.

Each section is illustrated by quotes and brief case examples – some focusing on achievements and others on challenges. These serve to highlight a point, or to prompt thinking about an issue. All the quotes and case studies are real, although we have made them all anonymous in the interests of confidentiality and fairness. If you use this resource in a training environment, you may wish to use these case examples to prompt discussion.

A glossary of terms is given on page 7.

Further resources are given on page 59.

Note: This guide provides general guidance on aspects of the law relating to refugees, but it does not claim to offer a complete or authoritative interpretation of relevant law.

Glossary

A2 The shorthand term for the two countries – Bulgaria and Romania – that joined the European Union (EU) in 2007. People from those countries now have freedom of movement within the EU, but most have to get authorisation to start work in the UK.

A8 The shorthand term for the eight Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and whose nationals have to register on the Worker Registration Scheme during their first year of work in the UK. The A8 countries are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Apart from the rules about work, these countries are full members of the EU, with all other rights including the right to freedom of movement within the EU.

Asylum-seeker Anyone who has applied for asylum in the UK and is still waiting for a decision on their claim. (See *Refugee* for more information on the possible outcomes of this decision.)

BIA See *Border and Immigration Agency*.

BME Black and minority ethnic is a shorthand term used by official bodies dealing with race and ethnicity issues.

BMER organisations Black and minority ethnic and refugee organisations are primarily led by and serve people from black and minority ethnic and refugee communities.

Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) The agency that dealt with immigration, asylum and refugee issues until April 2008. From April 2008 known as the UK Border Agency.

Case Resolution Directorate (CRD)

The part of the Home Office that is responsible for all unresolved asylum applications that are not being dealt with under the New Asylum Model.

CEN See *Community Empowerment Network*.

Community Empowerment Network

A network of voluntary and community sector organisations set up under the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (published in 2001) which brought together representatives of the voluntary and community sector to ensure representation of the sector at key local strategic partnership groupings and, in some cases, to distribute small grant funding.

Compact A framework and agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector to work in partnership, respecting the independence of the sector. There are compacts in most local authority areas.

Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)

A local infrastructure organisation offering support to the voluntary and community sector within a particular area. A CVS is the most common example of a local infrastructure organisation (LIO), which is the term used throughout this resource and which includes all CVS. CVS vary in terms of their size, the initiatives they run, their funding sources and the environment within which they are working.

CRD See *Case Resolution Directorate*.

CVS See *Council for Voluntary Service*.

ESOL English for speakers of other languages. The sort of English language teaching offered to migrants and refugees in order to equip them for living in the UK.

Gateway Protection Programme

The UK government-supported programme run in partnership with local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to bring refugees to the UK from camps (currently in Africa and Asia) via a structured reception and resettlement programme. Participating local authorities in the UK include Bolton, Sheffield, Norfolk, Hull and Lanarkshire.

LAA See *Local area agreement*.

Learning and Skills Council

A government-appointed body which funds education and training for adults outside universities, covering everything from evening classes to further education colleges, including English for speakers of other languages.

Legacy cases A term often used to describe the backlog of asylum cases (about 250,000 in March 2008) not yet determined by the Home Office. Now dealt with by the Case Resolution Directorate.

LIO See *Local infrastructure organisation*.

Local area agreement (LAA) A three-year agreement setting out the priorities for local areas agreed between central government and the local area (the local authority and the local strategic partnership) as well as other key partners at a local level. The aim of the agreement is to make decision making more local, and to reduce centralised bureaucracy.

Local infrastructure organisation (LIO) Sometimes called local 'second-tier' organisations, they exist to support the development of the voluntary and community sector in a given geographical area. The most common form of local infrastructure organisation is a CVS (Council for Voluntary Service), but volunteer

bureaux may also be classified as LIOs, particularly if they deliver support work with groups.

Local strategic partnership (LSP)

A non-statutory, multi-agency partnership which matches local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together at a local level the different parts of the public and private sectors, and the voluntary and community sector, allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively. *(Definition provided by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.)*

LSP See *Local strategic partnership*.

Migrant Anyone who leaves his or her country to go and live in another country. In the UK, the word migrant is often used to distinguish people who leave for economic or family reasons from people whose migration is forced – for example, to flee political persecution. For more information on this, see Unit 2.

NAM See *New Asylum Model*.

New Asylum Model (NAM) A model which describes the system under which asylum applications are now dealt with. Each case has a case owner responsible for decision making, keeping to deadlines, and progressing the case through the system.

RCO See *Refugee community organisation*.

Refugee A refugee is narrowly and technically defined as someone who has been granted refugee status and leave to remain in the UK in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. However, in this guide the term refugee is used to refer both to asylum-seekers and refugees (unless otherwise specified). This reflects the fact that RCOs often work both

with refugees and with asylum-seekers whose applications have not yet been decided. The distinction between refugees and asylum-seekers can be very important. For more information on this, see Unit 2.

Refugee community organisation (RCO) Any group, run by refugees and working primarily with asylum-seekers or refugees, either with or without a constitution. See Unit 4 for information on different types of RCOs.

Refugee forum A name given to various local refugee-led community organisations. Some refugee forums are federations or groupings of local refugee organisations which have come together to make joint efforts or representations. Some refugee-run forums offer more, including, for example, capacity-building support for new organisations, and sometimes a policy function. Confusingly, there are also organisations called refugee forums that are not run by refugees but are a grouping of agencies working with or concerned about refugees, and which may include a range of representatives from the local voluntary sector, statutory sector, faith communities and campaigning organisations.

RIES See *Refugee Integration and Employment Service*.

Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) Due to start in 2008, this service will be run nationally by agencies contracted regionally by the Border and Immigration Agency to provide integrated signposting, advice and planning support to refugees who have just received their asylum decision, but not to people dealt with via the Case Resolution Directorate (the backlog or 'legacy' cases).

Specialist infrastructure organisation

Sometimes called a specialist second-tier organisation. An organisation which delivers infrastructure support to a particular sub-sector of the voluntary and community sector, in this case the refugee sub-sector. Refugee forums are examples of specialist infrastructure bodies or organisations. Many forums lack any specific resources and function mainly as representative bodies, while other organisations, both national and local, provide specialist development support for RCOs.

Specialist second-tier organisation

See *Specialist infrastructure organisation*.

SUNRISE Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services was a Home Office pilot programme. It operated in four areas of the UK, offering newly recognised refugees coherent integration support and planning for the first months after they got their asylum decision. It is now being replaced by the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (see above).

UK Border Agency (UKBA) The agency that deals with immigration, asylum and refugee issues. Formerly known as the Border and Immigration Agency.

Unconstituted group or organisation

A group or organisation that has no formal constitution or governing document. This is usually the first stage in the development of an organisation, when a group of people come together over an issue of common concern or interest. However, when a group is unconstituted it can be unstable, because it has no agreed processes for decision making, representation, accepting and being accountable for responsibility, or dealing with money.

VCS Voluntary and community sector.

Unit 1

Why work with refugee community organisations (RCOs)?

Introducing a rationale for working with RCOs

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- enhance your understanding of how working with refugee community organisations (RCOs) can bring benefits both to the RCOs and to your local infrastructure organisation (LIO).

Why?

- LIOs are often under-resourced and over-worked and have to cope with short-term funding issues. In spite of a strong desire within the organisation to adapt and expand services that engage with RCOs, some encouragement may be needed to highlight the benefits of doing so.
- Working with RCOs brings mutual benefits for RCOs and LIOs.

Example

‘We talked to a variety of RCOs in our area. Several of them are delivering out-of-hours support at supplementary schools. So we brought them in for a meeting and have organised a network to support them. It doesn’t take much effort – they use our office space for a meeting where they discuss what they need and we help them follow up on any issues of relevance. We’ve learnt a lot about what goes on in refugee communities.’

Key issues

Benefits to LIOs

LIOs who work successfully with RCOs can look forward to the following benefits.

They will:

- further their work to help disadvantaged communities
- expand into new areas of strategy and policy
- have more influence with statutory commissioners
- develop new partnerships
- learn more about diversity and mutual understanding
- advance the social cohesion and integration agendas.

Helping disadvantaged communities to engage in planning and strategy work

LIOs play crucial social and practical roles by helping the voluntary and community sector to reach individuals and communities which may be particularly disadvantaged. Both refugees and asylum-seekers fall into this category. (See Unit 2 for information on the difference between refugees and asylum-seekers.)

Working with RCOs can help to engage RCOs in planning and strategy work. There is evidence to show that RCOs can get left out of strategies to support the voluntary and community sector in general, or the black and minority ethnic (BME) sector in particular. The refugee sector is one of the least understood sectors within the voluntary and community sector. Recent work undertaken by Capacitybuilders¹

revealed that refugee and migrant communities are often under-represented in terms of involvement in planning and strategic work. For example, ChangeUp consortia do not always succeed in involving them, and local strategic partnerships may engage representatives from the BME community but may not always consider that newly-arrived communities have different needs.

Example

A local authority has reserved a place for RCOs at sub-committees taking forward the local area agreement. This commitment was nurtured by the CVS and the umbrella refugee organisation in the area in recognition of the fact that RCOs found it particularly difficult to get accepted into the mainstream of strategic and policy work. It guarantees that the voice of refugees in the area is reflected at all levels of strategic work, and also that the particular issues of newly arrived communities get an adequate strategic airing.

Some LIOs report that they find working with RCOs particularly challenging. Where the LIO's capacity is already stretched, this can mean that RCOs have a low profile in LIO support strategies. However, those LIOs which have made efforts to listen to RCOs report considerable benefits in terms of reviewing their ways of working, both concerning the practical support the LIO offers to all groups and the relevance and inclusivity of their strategic work.

¹ See *Priority Sub-sectors for Infrastructure Support*, published by LVSC (see page 59 for details)

Expansion into new areas of strategy and policy

Some LIOs report that as a result of working with refugees they have expanded into areas of strategy and policy which they had not previously worked in. The presence of refugees or indeed migrant communities in an area can provide the LIO with the opportunity to review its local strategy, and the strategy may well benefit as a result. Areas which commonly emerge during such a review include education (see the example below), employment, children and families strategies, crime and disorder, and health – particularly women’s health.

Example

‘We hadn’t done anything with the education department before then, but it was clear that we needed to get involved, and develop a way of supporting refugees to get involved, in the education strands of the local strategic partnership programme. The major issue for the refugees we were talking with was that their children were not gaining access to schools, or not being taught properly, or meeting opposition and mistrust, or not getting proper language teaching. So we started to help refugees develop initiatives and we took this issue to the strategic groups within the council. As a result we have developed a much greater understanding about education issues generally, which has benefited a number of our members who were working with children and young people, not just the refugee groups.’

Increased influence with statutory commissioners

Some LIOs have experienced increased influence with commissioners as a result of thinking through issues from a refugee perspective, opening out their strategic programme to include new areas of relevance to refugees (such as education), and supporting refugees themselves in representing their issues at local strategic level.

New partnerships

Innovative working with RCOs can lead to the formation of new partnerships, and an ability to find funding for delivering new strands of work.

Example

One CVS heard from refugee women in its area that they were very concerned about the behaviour of their children. They feared that they were ‘going off the rails’, and not being served well by the local education system. The CVS organised an event to bring together women from a range of children’s and parenting groups (not just refugees) to discuss the issues. The event was social, and held over tea and supper one evening. Parents – both refugee parents and others – were asked to voice their concerns. During the discussion and the tea breaks it emerged that the problems were in fact common to all parents in the area and to do with a range of problems including lack of facilities. Refugees felt reassured that they were not the only people experiencing these problems. Generally parents bonded over the problems of having wayward teenagers! Projects were formed, which included refugees – such as projects to create out-of-hours activities for young people. And new relationships were formed which went on to help in future work planning.

Example

A consultation on a local employment strategy brought together refugee groups to comment. The passion and commitment in the room was inspiring to all those who attended, and resulted in the formation of new, funded programmes to take forward refugee work in the area.

Learning about diversity and mutual understanding

Some LIOs report that working with RCOs can help them learn much about diversity and mutual understanding. Several workers reported that they had set up projects which brought RCOs ‘in-house’ to deliver services (such as providing a desk for the local refugee forum worker, who will have contacts with a range of RCOs). This approach facilitates interaction between LIOs and RCOs and can be a good way for LIOs gradually to learn about the concerns of RCOs, break down any barriers that may exist and inspire and reinvigorate staff teams.

Example

One CVS organised a small but successful project in which it shares, with a local RCO, a worker who promotes volunteering within refugee communities. This has proved instructive for both organisations: the CVS has learnt more about refugee issues through the presence of the worker, and the RCO feels more connected with the work of the CVS.

Advancing the social cohesion and integration agendas

LIOs promote community cohesion which benefits the wider community as part of their broader strategic agenda. By responding to the needs of all communities, including newly arrived communities, it is possible to achieve benefit for the whole of an LIO’s area. Doing this may help your organisation to engage more productively and knowledgeably with the government’s social cohesion and integration agenda.

Some LIOs report a need to ensure that RCOs are included at all levels when developing LIO services. They see this as part of their commitment to furthering a social cohesion agenda locally, and also to ensuring that RCOs are not excluded at a strategic level. The LIO may need to take active steps to promote the inclusion of RCOs within local ChangeUp, Compact or local area agreement working. (See also Unit 6 *How do we build RCO issues into our work?*)

Some LIOs develop social initiatives which promote joint working between a range of local groups to foster understanding between communities – both established and newly-arrived. Examples of such initiatives include sports events, Peace Weeks and cultural fairs. Involving RCOs in social or community-focused events can help tackle prejudice, which in turn can lead to social and cultural benefits for all. Such work can also help promote understanding between new and more established refugee or migrant communities. New projects can also be used as a way of building relationships between RCOs, as well as among the sector more widely. (See Unit 5 *How do we build a relationship?*)

Examples

One CVS organises a Peace Week in which all communities, including refugee communities, are invited to have stalls and participate.

Another CVS has set up a Kashmiri Cricket Club to play the local cricket team. (Kashmiris are a particularly numerous migrant community in the local area.)

Another CVS organised disaster relief events (following hurricanes, cyclones or earthquakes) where it was clear that the families or friends of refugee communities in their area were being affected by events in the country of origin.

Example

Many mainstream organisations support Refugee Week – an annual national programme of local events held in June. The week offers an excellent opportunity for LIOs to engage with RCOs².

While work concerning social cohesion principles may be a lower priority for LIOs than capacity building, LIOs may usefully encourage and organise more social and cultural events such as those described above to support the government's social cohesion policy.

Additional benefits

LIO workers at all levels can gain much from the process of engagement with RCOs. RCOs are often on the margins of the voluntary and community sector, possibly unconstituted, unfunded and without obvious access to any support. In spite of this they deliver much, often working with communities experiencing ongoing upheaval. For infrastructure workers, this is interesting learning which can also be inspiring.

Many refugees have a way of thinking creatively about how to get things done. RCOs can often contribute much in terms of an 'ideas swap shop' on 'how to get things done without asking for money'. You can find some of the projects they have developed in the *Ideas Annual* produced by Community Links called *Small Places, Close to Home: Community Projects Led by or Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (see *Further resources*, on page 59).

Several CVS workers we spoke to during the research for this guide mentioned how eager RCOs are to engage and make progress. This level of motivation had proved inspiring to the CVS workers and also to workers in other community organisations who had met RCO workers, for example, at training courses. In trying to understand why this may be, one RCO worker suggested that many refugees can feel at least two things that established communities do not: relief and even gratitude at having been given refuge, and the ability to bring a fresh pair of eyes to look at strategies and systems from an outside perspective.

Some LIOs report that, in trying to make their capacity-building programmes more direct, friendly and clear for RCOs, a wide range of other small community organisations have also benefited.

Unit 2

Who are refugees?

Understanding who asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants are

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- understand the differences between refugees, asylum-seekers and other migrants.

Why?

- Differences in legal status have important effects on individuals and the organisations they set up.
- These differences have implications for funding streams.

Example

A CVS had been working with a small, new refugee organisation and went to it delighted to announce that they had secured some funding for a project which would meet some needs identified by the group and enable them to employ a part-time worker. However, after they had started the planning and recruitment process, the RCO found out that the beneficiaries of the funding had to be people with refugee status or other types of longer-term leave. Ninety per cent of their members (who were the people who needed the service) were asylum-seekers and were therefore ineligible. Both the CVS and the RCO felt they had wasted a lot of time and resources, and the funder was not impressed.

Key issues

Definitions

- Anyone who moves from one country to another is called a **migrant**. Within the European Union, people who leave one country to work in another are called **migrant workers**.
- In the UK, a **refugee** is someone who has been forced to leave his or her own country because of persecution and seeks safety in another **and** has been given refugee status and leave to remain in the UK, in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees.
- An **asylum-seeker** is someone who has arrived in the UK and has applied to stay as a refugee.

If someone is not recognised as a refugee, s/he may be granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave to stay in the UK. More information on this is available from the Refugee Council Information Service (details on page 61).

Refugees (or people who may eventually become refugees) arrive into the UK in two ways:

- Some arrive through **official refugee programmes** organised by the Government, such as the Gateway Protection Programme. These programmes bring people already recognised as refugees through organised resettlement programmes. Those refugees are given indefinite leave to remain and permanent residence immediately.
- Others make their own way to the UK (arriving as a visitor or student, or in transit to other countries, or evading immigration control) and then **apply for asylum**. This may result in official refugee status, some other sort of leave that allows the person to stay in the UK, or refusal. **It is illegal to**

enter the UK without appropriate documentation. However, the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees does recognise that this may be unavoidable for people fleeing persecution.

Once given refugee status (or other types of leave after an asylum application), people have additional entitlements concerning employment and social security. Eventually they may be able to get long-term settled status and apply for British citizenship.

These legal definitions do not necessarily map well on to people's experiences and feelings. For example, a refugee who has become a British citizen may still be getting treatment for the trauma they suffered many years ago. A person who arrived through the asylum system and who gained refugee status may choose not to identify as a refugee. Also, some people may change the way they think of themselves as their lives in the UK develop, or as they get older. However, it is apparent that most asylum-seekers consider themselves as refugees, even if the Government has not assigned them that status.

In addition to the implications for individuals, accurate legal definitions are important in relation to many funders, especially statutory funders. Most funding for employment and training programmes will only be available to those who are allowed to work in the UK. Government programmes to fund work with refugees usually exclude asylum-seekers and other migrants. Also, funding from voluntary organisations – for example for setting up advice services or support services – may be restricted to refugees only (as in the example on page 15).

How many migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are there?

The simple answer is that no-one knows, because the UK government does not currently record details of all people entering or leaving the UK. The numbers of European Union (EU) citizens entering or leaving the UK are not counted because there is freedom of movement within the EU, so citizens can go freely to any other country in the EU.

Also, numbers today are not an indication of numbers tomorrow. The number of people from particular communities can go either up or down. For example, about 80% of the Chilean community who arrived in the UK in the 1970s are thought to have returned to Chile after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1989. In the 1991 census, there were about 6,000 Sierra Leoneans in the UK, and according to the 2001 census there were over 16,000.

How does the asylum process work?

There are currently two main asylum processes:

- the New Asylum Model (NAM), introduced in May 2005, which processes all new cases
- the Case Resolution Directorate, which is responsible for all cases that have not been dealt with under the New Asylum Model process.

There are separate arrangements for unaccompanied children who apply for asylum.

The older cases which are being considered by the Case Resolution Directorate are expected to be cleared by June 2011. Many have had their cases refused, and an unknown number of them are destitute,

with no rights to accommodation or support. They may be living with friends or family, supported by charity, or helped by the local authority if they have children or are ill, elderly or disabled, or homeless. The Case Resolution Directorate has granted indefinite leave to remain to about a third of the cases it has reviewed so far.

Newer cases are likely to be determined much more quickly. They are assigned a 'case owner', who makes all the decisions about asylum, accommodation, support and enforcement action. Asylum-seekers are usually required to report regularly to an immigration office, and may be tagged. They may also be detained in special Immigration Removal Centres at any point in the asylum process.

While in the asylum process, people are offered support and accommodation, although they may also be allowed to opt for support only and choose to stay with friends or family, which about a third do.

The Government is currently setting up a new Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) that will advise new refugees and help them gain access to, for example, housing and employment as part of personal plans for settlement in the UK.

(For information on this see www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Background and experience of refugees: similarities and differences

Refugees of varying ages, origins, educational achievement and socio-economic status reside in the UK. The diversity of refugees is such that it includes people who have held posts as government ministers or heads of non-governmental organisations, been political or religious

One colleague was accompanying a refugee due to speak before a large audience. 'Are you nervous?' he asked. 'Yes, but not as nervous as when I addressed the UN General Assembly,' he replied.

A worker at a Refugee Agency

leaders, or pursued successful careers as doctors, teachers, university lecturers or in other highly-skilled professions or manual trades.

The political situation in the country of origin may still be a very raw issue for refugees, and political, religious, ethnic or other differences may exist within the same refugee community in the UK and be important.

An example of the political complexity that can be encountered was highlighted in the research carried out for this guide. A CVS worker who had provided capacity-building support to various RCOs was asked, by other refugees from the same community, 'Why are you supporting that armed group?'

These situations can be challenging, but you can communicate sensitively that your job is to help groups to help their communities in the UK, in accordance with their charitable purposes.

As an LIO worker, you are not expected to understand all the complexities of the political backgrounds of the RCOs you are engaging with. It is the responsibility of the asylum system to deal with the rare instances of individuals who claim asylum, having themselves been implicated in human rights abuses in their country of origin. Well-documented concerns about groups in the UK supporting repressive activities outside the UK may fall within the remit of the Charity Commission. If someone raises such a concern with the LIO, the LIO may need to refer the person to the Charity Commission, emphasising that documentation will be essential.

Example

The Somali community is one of the largest refugee communities in the UK. Somalis are often organised on the basis of clan, but there are also important ethnic divisions, with, for example, the Bravanese, Riverine and Bajuni Somalis organised separately. These divisions may be reflected in language, religious observance and dress, but may not be obvious to an outsider. Somalis have been arriving in the UK over the past two centuries. Many arrived in the late 1800s as seamen coming to ports like Cardiff, London and Liverpool; in the 1980s refugees from the dictatorship of Siad Barre started arriving; and refugees from the civil war arrived in the 1990s. Each of these groups is likely to have a different view about what is going on inside Somalia at the moment and the roles played by themselves and others.

While the background and experience of refugees is very varied, they do share one common reason for fleeing their country of origin, namely that of loss. Loss of:

- home
- family
- status
- place
- culture
- understanding and being understood.

All refugees also have to adjust to living in a new environment. British society may operate very differently from that of the refugees' place of origin. Adapting to British society may result in new challenges, as well as opportunities for refugees to express themselves, or to make changes in their lives that may not have been possible previously.

Political considerations

The issue of refugees in the UK is still politically contentious. This may influence people's willingness to talk to you about their own legal status, or about the legal status of their community.

The asylum determination process in the UK has been the object of major criticism throughout the last decade, with concerns

about the accuracy of decisions, access to adequate legal advice for asylum-seekers and fast-track procedures based on country of origin. The result is often anger at the way people feel they have been treated by the system. That, in turn, may lead to more general mistrust and frustration.

Tips for understanding more about refugees

- Be very clear about why you may need to know about people's status – for example, whether they are asylum-seekers or refugees – before asking about it. For example: 'We need to know how many of your users are destitute, because local faith organisations are putting together a project to help destitute asylum-seekers and need to know how many people are involved.'
- Be aware that legal definitions of status may not reflect the individual's own perceptions of their status. People who have fled dangerous situations in their home country may well think of themselves as refugees before they are given refugee status, or even after they have been refused it or are no longer formally considered to hold that status.
- Some people may be concerned to maintain a high level of anonymity regarding their official status and may not wish to identify themselves as refugees. For example, they may be concerned that if their status is known they will be viewed as 'traitors' by other people from the same community.
- Be aware that political, religious, ethnic and other differences may exist within the same community. So it may not be appropriate to expect people to set up a single organisation just because they are all from the same community. But you also need to be realistic with community groups: one larger organisation is likely to be more successful at attracting resources than several smaller ones, and community members may not be aware of this. (See Unit 4 for more information on RCOs.)
- Don't worry if you are not familiar with all the details of the asylum process, the immigration status of refugees, and the various entitlements that depend on this. Some of it will affect the groups you work with, or their funding, but a broad understanding of who refugees are and why they come here is enough to be getting on with. Don't let lack of knowledge be an obstacle to engagement. You can pick things up as you go along, and there are many resources available to help you out. (See *Further resources*, on page 59.)

Unit 3

How do we find refugees in our area?

How to identify where refugee communities and their organisations are located

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- find out about the refugees you have in your area and the organisations they create
- understand what data sources, national resources and sources of information are available to help you identify them
- find out how refugees and asylum-seekers may be organising, meeting and networking if their presence is not immediately obvious.

Why?

- Finding out about the refugee community organisations (RCOs) in your area will enable you to promote your services, make your services more accessible to RCOs, and may increase their uptake of those services.
- Refugees (and sometimes other groups of new migrants) may be quite small in number compared with other communities in your area that you already know about, but they may well have as great a need for support.

Example

'I suppose we don't think that there's anything in particular we can do for refugees round here – we don't really know of any groups or organisations except for really informal ones and we are not geared up to helping them.'

Key issues

How do refugees arrive in an area?

When refugees arrive in the UK, they may not have a choice about where they reside because some programmes, such as the Gateway Protection Programme, settle refugees in partnership with particular local authorities. When refugees do have a choice, like anyone else, they tend to go to areas where they have existing contacts: friends, family, community or faith groups. If they have none, the area they go to may be a matter of chance. For example, some may be studying in the UK when they have to seek refuge, and may stay near the university where they were studying.

Communities do not necessarily form only in places where there are already refugees. For example, large numbers of Zimbabweans and Tamils arrived in many areas of the UK to work or study and settled there. Later on refugees coming to the UK naturally gravitated around these areas.

Where there has been a refugee programme, this has usually been run in co-operation or partnership with local authorities which have volunteered to become a settlement hub for the relevant communities, as described in Unit 2.

Until 2000, the great majority of asylum-seekers (and so, eventually, refugees) were in London and the South East, simply because that is where the major ports and airports in the UK are. London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, and so provides a natural home for new arrivals, who will find people speaking the same language, as well as shops, places of worship and community centres that they are familiar with.

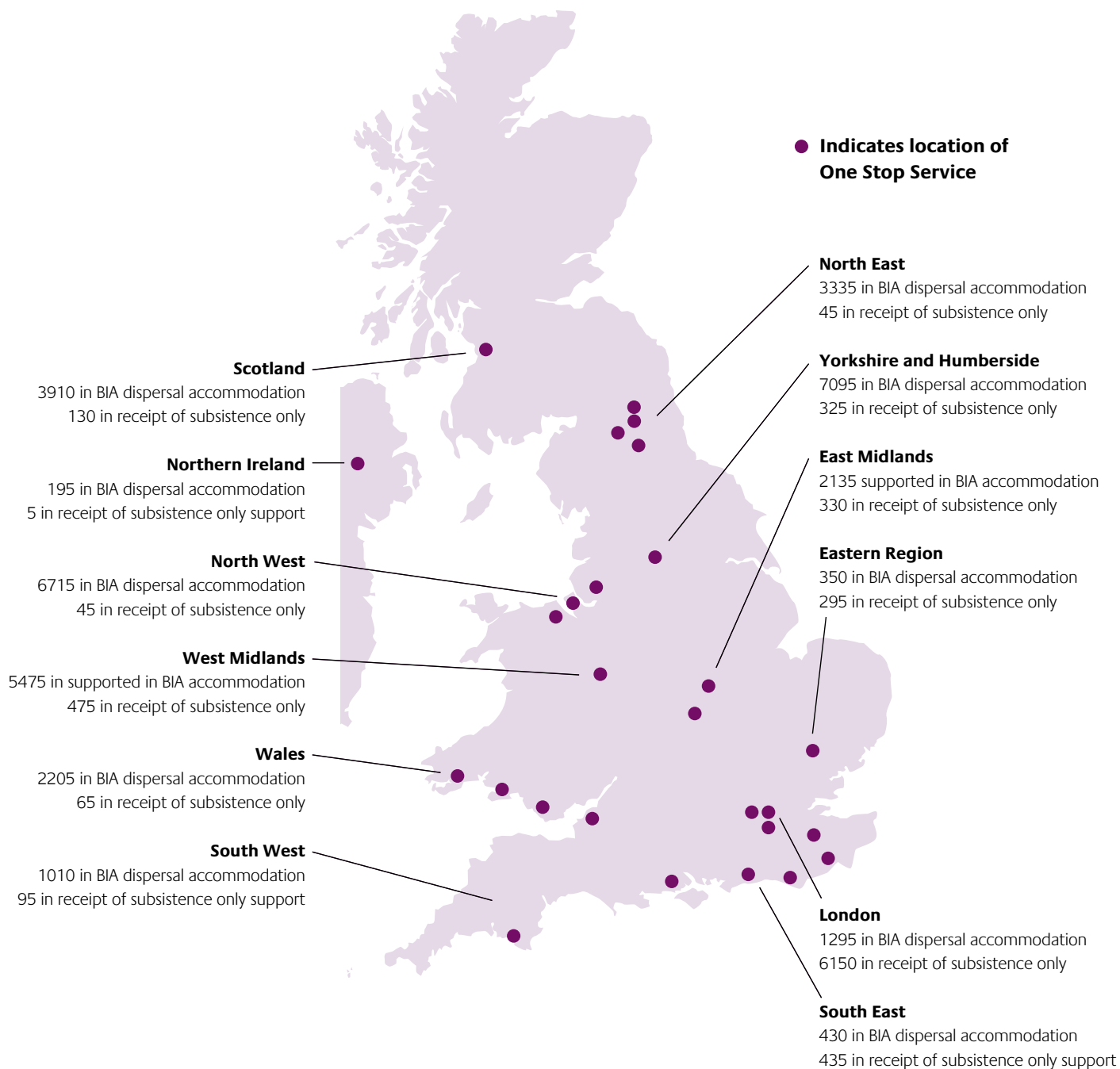
Since 2000, the government has had a mandatory dispersal programme in operation for all asylum-seekers who need accommodation. The map on page 22 shows where known asylum-seekers were at the end of December 2007.³ This includes those accommodated by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) formerly known as the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA), and those receiving subsistence-only support (ie, those staying with friends or family) and receiving support from the UKBA. Of those receiving subsistence-only support, 70% were in London. The map does not show destitute asylum-seekers or refugees who are unable to access housing.

‘The official line round here is that there are no RCOs, and in a formal sense there may not be. But there are numerous communities which are still living here, many from the dispersal programme. All you have to do is go to the local shop to hear people organising events and support and trying to get by outside the formal networks and funding support.’

CVS worker

³ Source: Refugee Council (*ASP News*, the Newsletter produced by the Asylum Support Partnership Team (ASPT) available on the Refugee Council website. Map provided by the ASPT with statistics provided by the UK Border Agency

Number of asylum seekers in BIA dispersal accommodation or in receipt of subsistence only support at the end of December 2007



- Total number of asylum seekers in BIA dispersal accommodation: 34,150
- Total number of asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only support: 8,900
- Total number of asylum seekers supported by BIA: 43,050

Notes: One stop services are the services provided by the Asylum Support Partnership under contract with the UK Border Agency. BIA was renamed UKBA in April 2008.

Census data

Although the last census, carried out in 2001, is now quite out of date, it provides a very limited snapshot of what was happening at the time. A good way to review the information from it is to use a mini-site developed by the BBC called Born Abroad. (Go to www.bbc.co.uk and search for 'born abroad'.) This site has used the census information to develop maps and tables about most nationalities living in Britain, and the most popular regions and areas of settlement.

Local authority data on asylum-seekers

To obtain the latest figures on asylum-seekers for a particular local authority area, you can ask the regional consortium that deals with asylum-seekers and refugees. These consortia are now working within the **Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships** set up by the UK Border Agency, (previously known as the Border and Immigration Agency) in each region. (Contact details for these are available from your local authority or regional development agency.) The figures are also held by the Asylum Support Partnership (a partnership of organisations that offer support to asylum-seekers), coordinated by the Asylum Support Partnership Team at the Refugee Council. Maps like the one on page 22 are regularly published in their newsletter, which is on the Refugee Council website, www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Who can help me find out more?

The main organisations working with refugees are likely to be good sources of information:

- The Refugee Council (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk) is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum-seekers and refugees, and in some areas also works with RCOs.
- The Scottish Refugee Council (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk) and Welsh Refugee Council (www.welshrefugeecouncil.org) play similar roles in their respective countries.
- Refugee Action (www.refugee-action.org.uk) has a national remit and offices across England, all of which offer community development services.

Some local authorities have conducted research in their areas that may tell you more about refugee and migrant communities. In London, the Researching Asylum in London website (www.researchasylum.org.uk) is an independent database of research on refugee and asylum issues relevant to London and may be useful. Similarly, the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (www.icar.org.uk) is an academic research and information organisation situated in the School of Social Sciences at City University. ICAR provides a number of online resources including up-to-date and accurate information on UK asylum statistics.

Other agencies in your area may already be in touch with refugees. Talk to any that specialise in work with asylum-seekers and refugees, or with black and minority ethnic communities.

Many areas have local **multi-agency forums** on refugee and migrant issues which are attended by voluntary organisations working with refugees, or by RCOs themselves. Many local authorities also have asylum-seeker teams, or (less frequently) **refugee integration projects**. Some areas have a local RCO forum (a forum of refugee-led community organisations – see *Glossary* on page 7), which may be supported by a specialist infrastructure organisation.

The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership in your region (details above) may also be a source of information.

See also *Further resources* on page 59, for details of other organisations working with refugees.

What else can I do to find refugee communities in my area?

Other places where refugees may go include:

- the local college where English for speakers of other languages is taught
- places of worship: find them through your local faiths forum
- sports and leisure facilities
- shops and cafés, especially those offering food from the refugees' countries of origin, internet facilities and international newspapers
- advice agencies.

The UK refugee population is continuously changing and evolving. It is difficult to get up-to-date and accurate information on the number and type of RCOs in a specific area (see Unit 4.) Despite this, it is possible to build up a picture of the type of refugee communities in your area by developing a mix of:

- proactively seeking particular communities (perhaps the ones that appear most in the statistics)
- responding to organisations and individuals that approach you
- advertising your organisation's services, making it clear that the door is open for refugees (and other migrants where appropriate) to encourage them to access your services.

Tips for finding out about refugees in your area

- Settlement statistics are useful, but only as a starting point. Be aware that the numbers of particular communities can change dramatically. Use statistics to fill the gaps if you have not been contacted by RCOs themselves.
- Keep looking. New information will be produced and new communities will be arriving. Keep asking.
- Look for community leaders, faith groups and sports teams in new communities rather than looking for formally constituted RCOs. Refugees may not be organised: they may have informal networks or no structures at all.
- RCOs may not know about LIOs, or about how LIOs can help them. Find ways to identify RCOs' agendas and attract their interest. Development workers are used to dealing with organisations that approach them for support, but who do not realise that they also need assistance in other areas of organisational development. RCOs are no different.

Unit 4

What are RCOs?

Understanding the characteristics of refugee community organisations

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- identify refugee community organisations (RCOs)
- understand the different ways RCOs may organise
- consider some common challenges faced by RCOs and by the people who work with them
- learn about some practical approaches to these challenges.

Why?

- It is helpful to understand and appreciate how RCOs are currently organised before you suggest new ways of organising.
- People you approach for funding or resources may want to know what is different about RCOs.
- You will want to avoid common mistakes and misconceptions about RCOs.

Example

‘How would I typify the RCOs round here? People just don’t realise what they are getting on with. They work at weekends, and often fit in large programmes of voluntary work between jobs. You’d be amazed if I took you to see the activity at the local community centre on a Saturday – refugees busy all day doing one thing or another. Many RCOs are trying to provide advice and support, often to destitute people. They get very tired, but they feel that if they don’t do it, nobody else will.’

Key issues

Definition of an RCO

There is no hard and fast definition of a **refugee community organisation** (RCO). Usually, we describe an RCO as an organisation run by refugees and for them, but it is worth pointing out some other features.

- While the organisation will **represent and involve** refugees, membership and leadership may involve people who, although from the same community, are not refugees themselves, but other migrants, British nationals from that background, or the children of refugees.
- The organisation may have a **general remit** to support a particular community (for example, the Anytown Eritrean Community). Or the organisation may be for a **specific purpose or group** within a specific community (for example, Anytown Dynamos FC – a refugee football team and club; or the Anytown Liberian Women’s Organisation).
- Occasionally RCOs cover **several different nationalities or ethnic groups**. For example, refugee women’s groups (such as Women Asylum Seekers Together, in Manchester and London) have formed across nationalities to campaign on issues of common interest.
- In one local area there may be **several different RCOs representing what looks to an outsider like one community**. (See Unit 2 for more information on this.) Reasons for this include the following:
 - There may be ethnic divides that are not apparent to outsiders – for example, Somali Bravanese, Iraqi Kurds or Chilean Mapuches may organise themselves separately from other community groups from the same country.
 - Groups may choose to organise separately because they do not feel they have a voice in other organisations – typically women and young people.
 - There may also be religious differences, or separate organisations for secular and religious groups from the same country.
 - There may be political differences. People may have arrived at different times and may also support opposing political positions or different regimes.
 - There may be other deeply felt and historic divides, for example, in different Somali clans (see page 18).
 - Disagreements about how the RCO should develop, personality clashes or disputes may have caused RCOs to split, as may happen with any voluntary or community organisation.

Of course, more than one reason may be involved in divisions, and different people’s versions of what was the cause may vary greatly.

How do RCOs differ from other small voluntary and community organisations?

RCOs often have the same issues as other voluntary and community organisations, but in some respects they are different. For example:

- RCOs, like other organisations, often have multiple focuses. The key difference is that events in their country of origin may affect the staff or volunteers of RCOs and the people they aim to support. While all organisations are affected by the external environment, for an RCO this can have a variety of knock-on effects on the organisation – for example, a change in focus, increased stress levels, and occasionally a fracturing of the organisation.

Example

One CVS reported that it had learnt that the concept of governance had no equivalent in the Somali community, the predominant refugee group in their area. As a result, they needed to explain that it is a shorthand term to cover the ways in which an organisation plans, manages itself and provides accountability, but they also had to provide a metaphor to explain it. They therefore explained that, when we look at ‘governance’, we are effectively checking it to see that its machinery works properly.

- RCOs may have to deal with problems that can make their work more difficult and that other organisations may not encounter. The experience for the RCO often reflects that of the refugees who volunteer and run the organisation – for example, they rarely have fixed premises. Destitution and the restrictions on asylum-seekers can be critical and unique issues for them to overcome.
 - In RCOs (as in some other small voluntary organisations), the key members are likely to be juggling other work commitments. This may make it difficult to keep the organisation going.
 - As with all small organisations, there can be a blurring between enterprise and community organisation which reflects the entrepreneurial skills needed to set up a community organisation. RCOs may differ from other small organisations in that they may have a lack of understanding and knowledge of the importance of such distinctions (which, in any case, are getting increasingly difficult to maintain in the UK voluntary sector). See Unit 5 *How do we build a*
- relationship?* for more information on the issues that this may raise.
- There is potentially a difference between how RCOs view their role in the voluntary and community sector and how others view it. A number of CVS workers report that refugee organisations find it particularly challenging to understand the context in which they are working and to establish themselves as part of the voluntary and community sector, and that many in effect work outside ‘the system.’

How do RCOs differ from BME organisations?

There is no easily drawn line between RCOs and other BME (black and minority ethnic) organisations. RCOs are identified separately because they may:

- have unique needs as a result of forced exile (for example, mental health needs due to bereavement, torture or rape)
- be newer
- represent less established communities (although this is not always the case)
- concentrate more on what is happening in the country of origin.

Many RCOs will also:

- know less about services, regulations or options than other community organisations
- be less likely to base themselves on any known UK models of organisational development
- feel that they have fewer entitlements, or be less confident about asking for help, particularly if they come from countries with ‘non-democratic’ regimes or institutions.

Apart from the differences noted above, there is a lot of crossover. For example, many organisations representing Tamils fit both definitions, representing both a long established ‘traditional’ ethnic minority and refugees. Also, a long established RCO may become much more like a ‘traditional’ BME organisation after a while. Some organisations are now using the term BMER (black and minority ethnic and refugees) in order to include refugees within this sector as a specific group.

How are RCOs formed?

Each RCO has its own story about how it was created. Some examples that we collected in the course of the research for this guide show the wide variety of origins of RCOs:

- an organisation set up by a group of women who had formed the women’s peace commission in their home country and wanted to promote the status of women in exile
- football teams set up by a young man who was worried that young people might ‘go astray’ if they had nothing to do
- an organisation set up as a national welfare body by a coalition of political parties representing the opposition in exile in Britain
- a group set up by an individual who realised that there were large numbers of new refugees from her country arriving in town, for whom she was being asked to interpret, and who had nowhere to go and no-one to help them
- a local group set up with help from a London-based established organisation after dispersal of asylum-seekers into the area had started

- an organisation encouraged to form from a group of users of an advice service.

Some RCOs get help from refugee agencies (for example, the Refugee Council, Refugee Action or Praxis), refugee forums, other refugee organisations or local generalist capacity-building agencies such as CVS. Many start with a core group of people who have set up organisations or run voluntary sector organisations – usually non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – or political organisations in their country of origin. Some may, in effect, be UK branches of the organisations they have left behind.

Most RCOs develop or have a membership structure, but some may be formed around a leader or significant individual. Or, someone may simply assume representation of a particular group because that is how things operated in their country of origin. Some RCOs that do have a membership structure may rely on their members for a regular income.

Infrastructure workers are likely to be aware that often the founders of RCOs are highly qualified individuals who may have extensive experience of running an NGO or government department before coming to the UK, or who have relevant experience in the UK. One RCO we interviewed was set up by someone who had retired from his job at the Charity Commission, another by a doctor. Some research into refugees and employment over the last 10 years has suggested that refugees have higher than average educational, skills and qualification levels.⁴ (Refugees find it more difficult to get into the labour market, so it is likely that a large number of people with diverse skills have the time to devote to community organisations. Some of them also recognise this as a useful route for developing their skills and for further integration.)

⁴ See *What Skills, Qualifications and Expectations do Refugees have?* Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, www.icar.org.uk/?lid=60

What RCOs do

Most RCOs start by acting as:

- informal befriending structures
- organisers of sports or cultural activities
- representatives of their community to local agencies
- providers of ad hoc emergency services such as accommodation and informal advice.

Many go on (usually with some funding) to provide:

- advice services
- interpreting and translating services
- advocacy services
- services for children, especially supplementary schools.

Some (once more secure and funded) may also offer:

- training and employment services
- housing services
- services to support people, and other care services.

Do RCOs promote integration?

Integration is a two-way process and RCOs play a critical role supporting newly-arrived individuals and helping them to orientate themselves and adjust to the UK way of life.

In an academic paper written in 2004, Griffiths, Sidona and Zetter carried out a 'social capital analysis' of refugee community organisations and found that those RCOs which were generally excluded from many networks appeared to be less effective in promoting integration. 'While it is clear that RCOs provide vital welfare services it is not clear

how far they act to promote the long-term integration of refugees, given the increasing short-termism of their activity.' This is also reflected in the comments made by many RCO workers about their feelings of exclusion from the mainstream. However, it should be recognised that the primary aim of RCOs may not be to facilitate integration of their community into the UK population. Instead, they may be more concerned with coming together to support each other and maintain their cultural heritage.

How are they funded?

Initially, RCOs rely on donations, time and effort from members, and fundraising activities, and many remain at this level. Some may seek one-off funding for specific events or projects. Sources of funding may include:

- funds for Refugee Week (in June each year) in some localities
- 'community chest'-type local funding, offered as one-off grants from local authorities
- one-off small grants from larger funders, especially from the Big Lottery Fund
- entrance fees and donations.

Once a need for more consistent services is established, RCOs may seek money for them. This may be found via:

- standard local grant funding for projects such as advice services, supplementary schools or training projects
- sub-contracting with other providers for some services, such as refugee integration services, supporting people, or interpreting and translation services
- direct contracts, for example for training and employment, once the RCO has become more established.

LIOs can effectively support RCOs by using the LIOs' extensive knowledge about funding sources and local sub-contracting arrangements. This can also be the key to ending some of the feelings of exclusion that RCOs report.

RCO case studies

The two case studies below illustrate the way that some RCOs are created, and highlight the different roles they can play in their communities.

Tees Valley Women's Voice

Tees Valley Women's Voice (TVWV) was set up in 2004 by five African women who were concerned about the disadvantages and high levels of isolation that African women were facing within the North East region, and particularly in Stockton. TVWV organised their first event with funding from Neighbourhood Renewal in 2005. Since then, TVWV has expanded and by 2007 had 30 members and a very active multicultural management committee.

TVWV does not currently receive any funding. Instead it relies completely on personal, small donations which are just enough to cover room hire for one Saturday a month. In spite of their limited resources, the organisation provides a range of services including:

- referrals and signposting – with help ranging from identifying voluntary organisations that can help asylum-seekers find solicitors, to signposting to infrastructure organisations and other relevant local services
- encouraging voluntary organisations and solicitors to take on cases of detention, denied support and deportation
- providing phone cards for women while they are in detention
- liaising with education providers to enable access to classes which include English language skills and computing
- accompanying African women on visits to local service providers such as GPs
- organising cultural events.

TVWV has received some infrastructure support. The Refugee Council has helped by putting TVWV in contact with other RCOs providing one-to-one support; enabling them to access training, and helping them to get involved with local initiatives such as the local community carnival. The North of England Refugee Service has also provided them with one-to-one support, and the Regional Refugee Forum North East has signposted them to funders and provided support on funding applications. TVWV hopes to secure funding to enable them to support more African women.

TVWV demonstrates how much small community organisations can, and do, achieve with very limited resources.

The Poor African Refugees Community Association

The Poor African Refugees Community Association (PARCA), formerly known as Peterborough African Refugee Community Association, was the first RCO in Peterborough. It was founded in 2002 by a group of refugees concerned about the lack of support for asylum-seekers dispersed outside London. Support was also received from Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS). Since then, PARCA has supported refugees and asylum-seekers and plays an important role in the community. In 2006 it supported 1,072 refugees and asylum-seekers.

PARCA's services, all provided on a voluntary basis, include signposting to sources of advice on immigration and welfare benefits. They also offer training and educational activities.

The UK Driving Licence Education Programme for 17-19 year olds has been particularly successful. Free workshops help young people to understand the UK driving licence and car requirements. The course provides young people with driving lessons, information about driving licence requirements, and help with filling in provisional driving licence application forms.

Other services offered by PARCA focus on employment, health and leisure activities. These include careers advice, help with preparing CVs, and information on HIV/AIDS.

Tips for finding out more about RCOs in your area

- Find out where the RCOs in your area are. (See Unit 3 for more information on how to do this.) Once you have identified the RCOs, treat them as you would treat any other group and consider:
 - what they are currently doing
 - why they have chosen to do that now
 - what they say they might like to do in the future
 - what possibilities they have not considered because they did not know about them
 - how you can help them.
- Many small organisations struggle with understanding basic concepts of the voluntary sector, such as governance. You will need to think very carefully about how to explain these concepts because RCOs are likely to find them daunting, especially if there is no equivalent in their experience or country of origin. This approach will help a lot of organisations, not just RCOs.
- Don't expect all RCOs to be set up by people with formal refugee status. (See Unit 2.)
- If you are concerned that key individuals are not fully representing the interests of an RCO, consider the appropriateness of encouraging involvement from a range of individuals and explain that some sources of support will be forthcoming only if the organisation involves a variety of individuals, in particular at governance level. Sometimes it may also be helpful to spell out the difference between a community entrepreneur and a community organisation, and the implications of going down one route or another.
- Avoid making assumptions about RCOs, and try to consider the 'why' as well as the 'what'. For example, if you find that RCO participants are late for events, be sensitive and receptive to the reasons why. For example, it may be that people have jobs that are negatively labelled in their own communities (for example, early morning cleaning jobs), and which they may be embarrassed about.
- Use your extensive knowledge about sources of funding and about local sub-contracting arrangements as a means of supporting RCOs.

Unit 5

How do we build a relationship?

Reaching out to RCOs and establishing mutual trust and confidence

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- identify some of the common reasons why refugee community organisations (RCOs) do not approach local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) and use their services
- think through how and why you should differentiate strategies for refugees from strategies for other BME groups
- consider the best ways to build relationships with RCOs in your area
- to be perceived as a welcoming and proactive organisation.

Why?

- Refugees may be more reluctant to ask for help than other small organisations that you have experience of working with.
- As an LIO, you need to reach out to all disadvantaged communities in your area, including refugees.
- Building a relationship with refugee communities requires more than offering services – it is also about demonstrating that you understand and are interested.

Example

‘Anybody can access our current outreach and capacity-building programme – our doors are open to all. Refugees get included in our general BME work and that seems to work.’

This was the view of the local CVS. However, an RCO in the same area working to deliver advice, education and lobbying work had never heard of the CVS and did not know that they could access any support at all: ‘We’ve just tried to do it ourselves.’

Key issues

‘We keep getting asked if we want X training or Y training ... All we know is that we are just getting on with it and that, on a day-to-day basis, half the people I am working with are destitute. I don’t know what kind of training I want – I need funding, I know, but I haven’t got time to help [the LIO] think through what they should be doing for me and my community.’

Worker at an RCO working mainly with destitute asylum-seekers

Communication – common concerns

Refugees may be reluctant to approach agencies for support, particularly if they regard the agency as an official organisation. Communication failures can occur and RCOs may misunderstand the nature of their LIO if the LIO does not proactively reach out and clearly communicate to refugee communities in its area, in order to overcome any possible suspicion or perceived officialdom. (For example, one RCO told us they thought the local CVS was part of the Council.) LIOs that are often under-resourced and over-stretched may feel that they are open and accessible and that no specific outreach work is required to target RCO engagement. While this will work to some extent, it can also result in some RCOs in the area being unaware of the services and support available.

LIO workers will be aware that refugees have often been through relatively recent experiences of flight, trauma and survival. Workers may not know how to acknowledge this.

The key to working with RCOs is to ensure that this does not become a barrier, but instead offers an opportunity to learn and develop mutual understanding.

Languages, interpreting and translation

Language is an obvious barrier to communication, particularly for newer arrivals. There are usually some individuals who can interpret or translate, but be aware that in some cases impartiality may be required. In working with new groups who are still learning English, an interpreter or translator may be needed, but some

CVS have come up with inventive ways of avoiding the cost of this, such as creating a pool of volunteer ‘community interpreters’, who get support from the LIO and who can use the experience on their CV. At one CVS we interviewed, RCOs offer voluntary translation work in return for use of IT facilities and support in creating a CV. (See Unit 8 for more on languages, interpreting and translation.)

How can LIOs effectively promote their services to RCOs?

Find out more about the main priorities of the RCOs

If RCOs are to be successfully engaged, specific and targeted initiatives need to be planned to consider how RCOs operate. LIOs need to find out what are the main priorities of the RCO (see Unit 4 for more on this), because RCOs will not respond unless they can see a reason for doing so.

Explain to RCOs how they can benefit from LIO support

When promoting the services available from your LIO, highlight what the concrete benefits will be for the RCO. Like other small voluntary and community organisations RCOs are often unable to identify the type of help and support that they need. Instead they tend to focus on the needs of their community, and may not appreciate that the support available could help them to do this more effectively. (See page 48 for more information on this issue.)

Example

'There are highly visible refugee communities around here, but very few of them have organisations with any substantial funding at all. Part of the reason for this I think is that people just don't come forward for funding. Maybe they mistrust the system, or maybe they are just used to getting on without. They contact the CVS when they reach some kind of physical limit to what they are doing – maybe they've been running a community transport service but have run out of spaces in their car for instance.'

You may also need to explain terms and concepts such as 'constitution' and 'governance' in detail. We explain more about this in Unit 7 (see page 48).

Information provided, either verbally or in written form, needs to take account of the fact that refugees may often need to have the question 'Why?' answered before the question 'What?' For example, setting up a training course around good governance may not attract any refugees if the importance of governance has not been explained to them in the first place – that a particular form of governance is the defining characteristic of the voluntary sector, that it is the key method by which organisations demonstrate accountability, and that without it virtually no funders will consider giving them funding.

[The CVS] needs to be clear with us – no false hopes. We have many false hopes, like the amnesty [for rejected asylum-seekers]. People don't know where they are in terms of local support – everyone needs to be straight with us and help us.'

RCO worker

Explain the context of the voluntary sector in the UK

In order for refugees to understand the support available from LIOs, they first need to know about the context of the voluntary sector in general in the UK. Consider questions such as:

- What is the UK voluntary sector?
- What are its values and history, and who does it include?
- Why does a community organisation need to demonstrate that there is a need for its services?
- What is governance and why is there such an emphasis on it?
- Why do you need to prove a need when it may seem obvious to you that there is one?
- How does the UK voluntary sector compare to that of the country of origin of the refugees?
- Once you have identified similarities and differences, are there any implications for building a relationship with the RCO?

Acknowledge the importance of RCOs

To further encourage engagement and understanding, try to identify ways to acknowledge the importance your organisation places on RCOs and on the issues that are important to them. One CVS we spoke with had put out a statement to the effect that refugees and their organisations belong within the voluntary and community sector, and are viewed by the CVS as essential to the regeneration of their area. It's a small but important step to making RCOs feel included and valued. Other CVS include, in their newsletters, issues of relevance to refugees – for example, the recent cuts in ESOL teaching. Another publicised the progress of the *Still Human, Still Here* campaign on destitution among asylum-seekers. It all goes towards demonstrating commitment.

Be straightforward with RCOs

Be straight with RCOs about what you can and can't do.

‘We are all human, and not exempt from at least wariness of the new and unknown.’

CVS worker

Gaining confidence in communicating with RCOs

Our research shows that LIO workers are aware that refugees may have experienced a great deal of trauma, and the workers can feel nervous or uncertain about how to engage with RCOs to ensure that they do not cause offence.

Although it is right to be concerned about being appropriate and sensitive, the recommended approach is to acknowledge honestly those areas you may not understand or may not have adequate information on – such as cultural, historical or political issues.

Building confidence among LIO workers is key, and can often be achieved through small things. With some groups, particularly those new to the UK and still learning English, LIO workers who learn greetings in relevant languages may break down barriers and enable them to show they are interested and care (but be aware that some people may find this patronising). For example, one CVS learns a greeting a week at its staff meeting.

Methods of communication

When considering your method of communication, be vigilant about getting in touch and staying in touch. Linguistic and cultural barriers may be of particular significance to refugees. Email and automated telephone answering systems may impede communication, and questionnaires are unlikely to be returned unless it is very clear how they are relevant.

Examples

‘We thought that we would like to improve our capacity-building services, so I sent a questionnaire round to all the refugee groups we knew and then followed it up with a phone call... We offered them a range of training and support but they really weren’t interested’

‘We had a big consultation meeting on ‘Stronger, Prosperous Communities’. We invited loads of people, but out of nearly 100 participants only two were from refugee groups. I don’t think they are that interested in being seen as part of the voluntary sector.’

Both of these examples highlight how important the mode of communication is when engaging with RCOs. (See Unit 8 for more information and tips on effective communication.)

Getting RCOs through the door and building trust

Many small organisations may lack the confidence to directly access support, and an RCO may be very easily put off engaging with LIOs. Concentrating on building trust with the RCOs will give them confidence.

Show your interest and commitment

Attending meetings and gatherings which demonstrate your interest in and commitment to refugee issues is worth the time investment. (See Unit 3 for tips on how to locate refugees in your area, and Unit 4 for more information on RCOs.)

Offer use of a meeting room, IT facilities, or desk space

Paying particular attention to refugee forums can reap real benefits. Bringing a refugee forum in-house has yielded excellent results for some CVS.

Providing use of a meeting room, IT facilities or desk space for RCOs (hot-desking) is another good way of getting people through the door and building relationships. This approach will help you to develop a closer relationship which benefits both the LIO and the forum, with both sides learning much about the best ways of developing RCOs in the area.

Building relationships with key individuals

Building a relationship with key individuals who are trusted by a variety of organisations can prove one of the most effective ways of promoting understanding and trust. For example, the key individual may be a refugee champion, probably someone from an RCO but with a vision of promoting RCOs and their work in an area. Such an individual may act as an intermediary, bringing in other groups which may otherwise be unknown to the LIO.

Organising meetings of RCOs

Organising meetings of RCOs to keep up to date with what their issues are is another good way to demonstrate your commitment. You can also use it as an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution that RCOs make. Individuals will come together to respond to a need, often a refugee-specific one, such as supplementary schools teaching, women's health issues, issues around children and integrating them into communities, language support, or advice and guidance on immigration. Setting up a project in one of these areas, led by refugees themselves, can be a good way to get to know people and gain trust.

Offer jobsearch facilities⁵

Employment is often another major issue for refugees, so offering jobsearch facilities within your CVS, or providing training for community entrepreneurs, can be good ways to encourage RCOs to come to you.

Breaking down barriers

Example

A CVS organised for a local volunteer ESOL teacher to give conversation lessons for a six-week trial period in its office. They advertised this widely within the local migrant communities. Importantly, the lessons were billed as a chance to improve conversational English, but they also covered a variety of topics of relevance to RCOs, such as organising groups and making funding applications. 'People came because they wanted to improve their English, but once they had walked through the door they could see that we were friendly and accessible, and barriers were broken down.'

'We need to get clear about who does what with who and we need to tell people what information they need, and learn about their plans... People keep going to meetings and nothing happens. We need to know what is happening and who will do it...'

Worker at a specialist infrastructure organisation working with RCOs

Set up small-scale projects

Setting up small-scale projects with local RCOs is a good way to build relationships. For example, an RCO and the LIO sharing a worker who conducts research, or who oversees a volunteer placement scheme, can be a good way to build bridges and learn about each other.

Example

One CVS found that a local group of refugee women were interested in developing a network on women's health issues. The LIO gave them desk space and a small budget for travel and expenses, and contracted them to do a small feasibility study and develop a plan.

⁵ See Unit 2 for more information on the right to work

‘We need to raise money to get people into school. We need a dialogue. We need to know where we can operate. People in this community are hiding people but then they will surface. If we offered education or work, people would reappear. Then people would see that [LIOs] work in their interest.’

RCO worker

Respond to all contacts from RCOs

If an RCO approaches you, it is essential that you respond even if you are unable to help with the request. For example, RCOs may approach LIOs for funding, but few LIOs will be able to give direct financial support. In this situation, it is important where possible to signpost to other possible sources of support and use the request as a means of engaging with the RCO. If there is nowhere to signpost the RCO to, acknowledging the contact is an important step in ensuring that the RCOs are not put off contacting the LIO again to access other types of support that are available.

Example

One unconstituted group had organised trips for children in the community, to get them out of the inner city environment in which they were living, which was pretty much all they knew of the UK. ‘They [the RCO] didn’t ask us [the local CVS] for anything until they ran out of places in their car, and then it was only for a small contribution towards petrol.’

Working with existing RCOs

Working with existing RCOs can be a good way to build capacity and to help with the formation of new RCOs.

Example

One RCO was initially set up in the 1990s by people who had arrived as students or with previous refugee arrivals. A CVS had helped them by giving them advice about a constitution and other issues. Now long established, when a new and different community arrived in the area, the RCO was able to help them set up their own organisation and to devise their constitution. Members of the RCO have also chaired the local specialist refugee agency and the regional refugee forum.

Tips for building relationships with RCOs

- Identify key individuals. Bring them in-house, if possible, to act as a bridge to expand contacts between your LIO and the refugee communities in your area.
- Premises for meetings and work are often at a premium for RCOs, so providing RCOs with the use of work stations or a meeting room can help to establish a relationship.
- Establish a project which offers a service of relevance to refugees – for example, around ESOL or employment.
- Bring RCOs together to consider projects and issues of relevance to them. Set up issue-based meetings – for example, on supplementary schools provision, childcare or women’s health – and invite representatives of a handful of RCOs to attend.
- Provide information on the UK voluntary sector, and how RCOs form a part of this. This may be a critical step in getting them to feel involved and valued.

Tips for building relationships with RCOs (continued)

- When explaining concepts such as ‘governance’, remember to explain why they are important as well as what they are.
- Explain how RCOs can benefit from LIO support.
- Keep in touch with RCOs. Even if they cannot use you now, keep inviting them. This is key, since RCOs are often reticent about initiating contact.
- Always try to respond to contacts, even if it is just to acknowledge them. If you leave a telephone message remember to speak slowly and clearly, spelling names and other key information. When an LIO is over-stretched, it is possible that some contacts may get overlooked, especially if the RCO is requesting support that is not available. However, a non-response can deter RCOs from contacting you for support later on.
- Offer RCOs incentives to get in contact with the LIO – financial if necessary or if possible – but also by providing support, IT facilities, or an offer to help with employment-related work such as jobsearch.
- Take time to acknowledge RCOs’ achievements. It helps to develop trust and make RCOs feel confident.
- Review your publicity to see if you can include more issues of relevance to refugees – for example, including information on ESOL classes in your newsletter.
- Attend meetings of the local refugee forum, if one exists. Invite local RCOs to attend the Community Empowerment Network (if they do not already attend), with support from you.
- Paying attention to small things that are meaningful for the refugee communities will be really appreciated. For example, when organising events, carefully consider the catering and provide foods that refugees are familiar with. This will help RCOs to feel welcome and shared meals can also be a real aid in solidifying relationships.
- Don’t be overly cautious of causing offence. If you don’t know something, ask. If you do think you have caused offence, apologise.
- Arrange your own small in-house cultural training events such as learning greetings in other languages. These can result in big gains in LIO worker confidence and relationship building.
- Find out about the issues that are important to refugees, and see if you can engage with these as an LIO. If they are already organising around campaigns, join in.
- Be straight with RCOs about what you can and can’t do.

Unit 6

How do we build RCO issues into our work?

Making sure that your planning and operations benefit from a sharpened focus on refugee issues

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will:

- help you review work throughout your local infrastructure organisation (LIO) to ensure that refugee community organisation (RCO) issues are included at every possible opportunity
- help workers throughout the LIO, from chief executive to receptionist, understand the contribution they can make to furthering the refugee agenda in your area.

Why?

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of refugee issues enables your LIO to plan, fundraise and provide relevant information more effectively.
- LIOs take relevant issues to strategic and policy planning meetings. Having additional information on refugee issues will help LIOs develop this role.

Example

‘If we get a refugee group coming to us, we tend to refer them to the refugee forum.’

This may seem a logical way to proceed. However, this same CVS worker said that they did not know whether the forum was still going, or what the quality of its services was. Also, the forum had not been invited to participate in the ChangeUp consortium in the area although this would have been a useful way to develop joint working with them. Although there were many asylum-seekers and refugees in the area, the strategic work was perceived as having ‘no special slant needed for refugees – they are just part of the voluntary sector generally.’ When the CVS held an event for the voluntary sector, no RCOs came.

Key issues

Being creative

LIOs are experienced in doing joined-up thinking when considering how to reach out to small voluntary organisations and how to support them, refer them, identify their issues and invite their strategic participation. This kind of creative approach is also crucial if an LIO is to actively include the RCOs in their area in strategic and operational planning. Engaging with and demonstrating a commitment to understanding refugee issues, by using a varied approach to gain information and knowledge, will help to promote trust and engagement by RCOs. This is the best way to ensure that RCOs attend general strategic discussions and to allay any fears that they will not be listened to.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of refugees in the local area can bring benefits to both the LIO itself and to those in the wider area that the LIO works in. Core benefits include the following:

- Enhancing existing strategic and policy work can strengthen the voice of the LIO in their area.
- Fundraising work can be more informed and more effective as a result.
- LIO receptionists may be more confident if they feel they understand the communities in the area.
- The LIO's publicity and promotional work can reach a wider audience. Information such as newsletters and bulletins can include items relevant to

refugee communities, serving to raise awareness of key issues and possibly also increasing the pool of people interested in accessing these materials.

- Community and social inclusion work may benefit from forming relationships with all communities in the area, including refugees.

Review capacity-building work

Your LIO can also benefit from reviewing its capacity-building work in the light of the specific needs of RCOs. (For more on this issue, see Unit 7 *Is a specialist approach needed?*) This unit highlights areas other than capacity building, and gives examples of how an LIO can seek to further review and integrate refugee issues throughout its operations.

Involvement in local strategic initiatives

As an LIO you will be involved in a number of local strategic initiatives. While you may feel that there is already enough to do attending all of these meetings, it can be helpful to focus on the core questions to consider when representing your communities. For refugees, the key questions for your organisation to reflect on are:

- Do the existing initiatives and groupings include representation from refugee communities?
- How do refugee issues, as opposed to more general BME issues, get reflected at any of these forums?

‘We’ve invited RCOs along to various sessions we have had on procurement and commissioning, but not had much success. I think they are missing out in terms of getting partnership bids in.’

CVS worker

- If your local area is assessing the needs of disadvantaged communities, are refugees involved in the community research?
- Do you feel that the specific concerns of refugees in your area are clearly identified? Are there issues of race and social inclusion (for example, the hate crime agenda) which they could feed into more effectively?
- If there is a refugee forum in your area, is it actively representing refugee views at the appropriate events? Are you working well with your local refugee forum, or could you liaise more closely with it to ensure that issues are raised more effectively and consistently? This approach is particularly helpful for overstretched organisations that may not have the time or resources to send a representative to all events.

Identifying the strategic and policy forums relevant for refugee issues

Among the plethora of initiatives that an LIO has to keep track of, it can be particularly difficult to keep track of those that are most appropriate for refugees. In order to ensure that refugee issues are considered at every opportunity, it is suggested that you consider the following questions at your LIO:

- When new funding programmes for refugee work are announced, are they publicised to local groups?
- Are there any existing initiatives or forums that do not have RCO representation? If they don’t have representation, should they? If so, how could this be facilitated?
- If any local RCOs are not already engaged in policy or strategic forums, would it be helpful to have a brainstorming session with the RCOs to see which forums they could usefully be engaged with? What support would they need to participate?

- Are refugee issues being researched in your area? If they are, can you influence how these are conducted and, if refugees are not already involved in the work, can you get them involved?

If you find that RCOs are not participating in all the relevant strategic groupings, it may be helpful to consider ways to support the groups, while they build confidence. For example, offer to talk with them at a pre-meeting and at debriefings afterwards.

Example

A CVS had met with a range of local RCOs and outlined what the Local Strategic Partnership was and how various strategic forums fed into it. As a result of this, several forums had been identified as relevant. However, in order to participate fully, further work was needed, including a briefing session on local government, public accountability and policy work within the UK. The Director of the CVS then accompanied the RCO representatives to their first meeting and debriefed afterwards on any difficulties or problems. Such strategic work may feel labour-intensive, but the rewards reaped in terms of getting refugees involved with local strategic work can be great.

Involving RCOs in delivery partnerships

Now that local area agreements (LAAs) are becoming more established and starting to develop services, it is a good time to consider how far refugee groups are being encouraged to join and even lead partnerships for delivery. RCOs can provide a fresh perspective on issues that are important to them and, if they are involved in addressing these needs, the

RCOs themselves could form part of the solution to delivery. While the appropriate areas of engagement will vary, many RCOs do actively engage with youth issues (for example, with sports clubs, supplementary schools teaching, after-hours support and care, and anti-bullying initiatives) and their involvement could help projects to improve and build relationships across the voluntary and community sector.

Refugees may also have skills that they could bring to your board, and could directly feed into the governance of your LIO. Identifying individuals in your area whom you could approach to join your board is an interesting way of keeping refugee issues firmly on the agenda.

Accessing funding streams

If your fundraising workers are aware of the new communities in your area and their needs, this can reap dividends when developing a programme of work and submitting suitable bids.

Example

One CVS organises meetings of its fundraising and communication officers and the local refugee forum worker in order to brief them on new developments in the communities. 'It's an opportunity to question, and find out about real stories,' reported the forum worker. It makes the LIO workers feel involved, and more passionate, and opens up connections in their minds which to date have yielded more than £100,000 in successful funding bids. 'When the fundraising worker spots a new opportunity, now they come and find me and we see if RCOs can benefit from submitting a bid.'

Tips for building RCO issues into your work

- Review your involvement in local strategic work (a useful exercise anyway) to see if there are forums where refugee issues should be better represented. If there is a large migrant population locally, check to make sure you are raising issues of relevance to them at relevant Local Strategic Partnership meetings – for example, within the employment and children and families strategy.
- Consider if RCOs are represented in your local Community Empowerment Network and ChangeUp forums. If there is a refugee forum, is it involved? If not, why not? Can you do anything to facilitate further engagement?
- Try to keep up to date with the refugee forum so that you are aware of what it is doing and how it is working.
- When considering strategic issues, try to find ways to make sure that RCOs are not overlooked.
- Consulting with RCOs is a useful way to get information about RCO needs and interests. However, make sure that consultation will have a real impact on RCO concerns, and be aware that RCOs can find extensive consultation overwhelming. (For more on this, see Unit 8 *How do we communicate effectively?*)
- Try and get all LIO staff and volunteers involved in communication with RCOs. There are many ways to do this, including organising briefings for LIO fundraising, communication and administrative staff, and receptionists.
- RCOs may need to be supported if they are to get more involved in local strategic groupings. Providing a briefing to RCOs on public accountability and the importance of influencing policy in the UK will help to set the context for these meetings.
- Offer RCOs pre-meetings and debriefings as practical ways to help them to engage more effectively. Ask what other practical support needs they have.

Unit 7

Is a specialist approach needed?

Adapting your capacity-building support to RCOs

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- increase your understanding of the types of specialist advice and support which refugee community organisations (RCOs) may need
- become more aware of the types of interventions which may be relevant to developing the refugee (and also migrant) voluntary sector in your area.

Why?

- RCOs (like small voluntary organisations in other sectors) have certain characteristics which can require a tailored approach.
- Workers within infrastructure organisations can get frustrated when trying to help RCOs develop along 'traditional' lines.

Example

'There's no need to tailor our generalist capacity-building support – there's not really any specialist demand from refugees or refugee groups round here.'

Several CVS interviewed in the course of the research for this guide told us this. However, local refugee forums and refugee groups in their areas often disagreed.

Key issues

‘We’re used to dealing with the BME sector, so we understand RCO needs.’

CVS worker

Do RCOs have specific capacity-building needs?

The existence of specialist infrastructure organisations, which exist both at national and local level, reflects the particular developmental needs of the refugee sector. Specialist support includes support delivered by organisations that specialise in working with refugee organisations or support that is delivered by LIOs but adapted to meet specific RCO needs. The specific needs of RCOs which may require a specialist approach include help developing specific services (such as immigration advice), and a flexible approach to communicating what may be unfamiliar terms and concepts, such as governance. Specialist infrastructure organisations provide help and support that is tailored to the specific needs, level of knowledge, and language skills of RCO workers. They also create opportunities for RCOs to offer mutual support, while recognising the particular challenges that refugees may face, such as getting recognition for foreign qualifications.

Example

One CVS reported that it had been awarded a specific grant to do up to 10 days’ work on business planning with selected RCOs. Another reported that it regularly schedules in time to ensure that the concepts of needs assessment, impact analysis and coaching work in terms of ‘charitable objectives’, form a major part of their initial work with RCOs.

Many local infrastructure organisation (LIO) workers we interviewed in the course of the research for this guide started by stating that they felt that RCOs had no particular support needs, and that they could be reached and supported in exactly the same way as other small groups. However, after considering the issue further, several LIO workers noted that they could think of a number of factors which argued for a more tailored approach. For example, some came across specific and consistent difficulties when trying to support RCOs in starting up and developing. Others reported a frustration with trying to help RCOs with capacity building – constituting, formulating bids, and developing governance structures – when following a ‘traditional’ UK approach. However, finding ways to identify RCOs’ agendas and attract their interest can be very rewarding.

Different stages of sectoral development

The characteristics of RCOs are covered in Unit 4. As with any other groups, RCOs will be at different levels of development depending on a variety of factors, including the number of refugees in the area, how long their communities have been here, and the social and political context.

The local RCO sector in a particular area may consist of a number of highly informal and unconstituted groups which deliver a range of activities. However, once refugee communities get established and groups begin to take off, the refugee sector can burgeon, sometimes quite quickly. This is consistent with patterns of development in other sectors (and sub-sectors). In areas where there are many RCOs, an LIO may find itself working with a number of smaller groups, encouraging them to work together and pool resources.

Some LIO and RCO workers report that RCOs are often even less aware than other small organisations of the funding changes which may impact on them. They also find it difficult to join relevant partnerships to deliver on local area agreement priorities, for example. (For more on this, see Unit 5 *How do we build a relationship?*)

Developing a variety of skills within the refugee community

Sometimes it may be useful to consider organising initiatives or programmes which support **community champions and entrepreneurs**, rather than seeking to help groups establish. One CVS has established a ‘community champions’ project for refugees, coordinated by the refugee forum which is based at the CVS. The project offers training on the relevant social care sectors and key structures and power, develops skills designed to help people gain employment (for example, training in interpreting), and holds events which bring refugee champions together with champions from other communities to exchange ideas and make links across sectors.

Developing volunteer programmes specifically targeted at refugees is a good way to support individuals, who may in turn then participate in more formal community groups. Volunteering can provide a much needed stepping stone to paid employment. However, it can prove difficult for refugees to find placements with employers, who may be mistrustful of the legality and desirability of taking on refugees, even in a volunteer capacity. Various useful and imaginative projects on volunteering for asylum-seekers and refugees have been set up around the UK.

For ideas on projects like these, see *A Part of Society*, published by Tandem (see page 59 for details).

Your LIO may already offer services that can be easily tailored to meet RCO needs. Employment advice and support are good examples of services which can be of interest to RCOs and that would require little tailoring. Some LIOs offer ESOL lessons for a trial period, focusing on conversational English in order to help in interview situations. Other organisations, mainly London-based, provide support on work placements and requalification schemes that is tailored to meet the specialist advice and support needs of refugees. Examples include:

- Timebank, which runs a mentoring project around the country (www.timetogether.org.uk)
- Praxis, which has a variety of courses and support for refugee professionals (www.praxis.org.uk)
- the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU), which offers training for advisers working with refugees and asylum-seekers (www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu)
- the Employability Forum, which focuses on policy in the area of requalification and employment (www.employabilityforum.co.uk).

Supporting RCOs through your capacity-building work

The notion of capacity-building support can feel like a diversion for many RCOs. In common with other small groups, RCOs may find it hard to grasp the importance of capacity-building work.

Example

‘We devised a questionnaire – and took some time to send it out – asking RCOs what kind of capacity-building support they wanted. They really weren’t interested. I had to phone them again and again, and when I got through to some, the conversations I had were very difficult. They couldn’t see the point – they told me they needed support, not to be asked questions all the time.’

This example highlights how the needs of an LIO may not always match up with the needs of the RCOs that they are wishing to support. Communicating clearly with the RCOs (see Unit 8) and ensuring that what you are offering, as a support agency, to RCOs is both what they want and need, will help to get buy-in and overcome barriers.

Unit 5 highlighted some of the issues relating to capacity-building work in more detail and the importance of being aware that RCOs may not appreciate the link between what the LIO is offering and what they wish to achieve. **Explaining about the UK voluntary sector, its history and principles** can be an important step in helping RCOs understand the context within which they are working (see page 35), especially when coupled with a practical approach that emphasises how capacity building can help organisations to achieve their aims.

RCOs can also benefit from briefings which give an **overview of the key structures and public bodies** in the UK. As one CVS worker put it: ‘RCOs need a crash course on structures and power – who governs [the City], who is in charge, what those in charge expect.’ This level of information is less likely to be needed by other sectors whose leaders are likely to be more familiar with the UK system.

You may need to explain concepts or terms such as ‘constitution’ or ‘governance’, which many small organisations find confusing, and which may have no direct translation into the language or indeed culture of the refugee. Any training, information or outreach work usually needs to explain the principles behind these terms (why these things exist), as well as explaining what they are. RCOs are likely to need to know:

- Why do we have voluntary boards or management committees?
- Why is governance such an important issue for the voluntary sector?
- What does a board do that a staff team cannot do?
- What are the basic rules around being part of a board? (For example, not being a paid member of staff, taking collective decisions, and quorums.)
- Why do these rules exist?

If RCOs have difficulty understanding the terminology – for example, the concept of ‘governance’ – you may need to review the way you explain them. Thinking about how to explain key terms to an RCO may also have a beneficial knock-on effect for working with other small groups, some of whom also struggle with these concepts and terms. It is also very important to appreciate that many of these concepts are culture-specific to the UK and that other cultures may have quite different ways of achieving the same purposes.

Is there a need for specialist knowledge and expertise?

RCOs commonly work on specific issues and try to run similar types of projects. They therefore need certain types of expertise and knowledge about these areas – for example, how to organise volunteer-run support and advice services, how to set up advice services which can attract funding, or how to work with homelessness and destitution. Your LIO may already have expertise in these areas. If it does not, other specialist organisations may be able to help. For example, the Refugee Council and Refugee Action can offer lots of expert information about destitution and local initiatives on this issue.

Often the core activity of RCOs is **advice giving** about asylum and immigration. RCOs should know that they need to comply with the regulations of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) on advice giving (see www.oisc.gov.uk). The OISC offers a supportive approach to RCOs but organisations should be aware that failure to comply with the regulations may result in legal action. The OISC runs a lot of free training for OISC-regulated not-for-profit organisations and their advisers, and for those not-for-profit organisations whose applications are under consideration. It also produces many free leaflets, and an OISC representative may even be able to attend an event to explain what the OISC does and how organisations can register with them. RCOs will need to obtain specialist help and support to make sure they are giving their users support within the strict regulations, and that they are not daunted by the regulations.

Should RCOs be encouraged to formalise and expand?

RCOs are often unconstituted, and in many cases they are likely to remain so for a while and not wish to expand. Trying to embark on a path of charity registration may not be in keeping with the RCOs' priorities. This poses a strategic question for an LIO as it may be geared up to helping groups progress along a traditional development path, but may not be able to make provision for (nor have funding for) servicing and supporting groups which are likely to remain small and unconstituted. Considering these issues will enhance your work with all unconstituted groups.

Example

'I don't think we work very well with the small groups we see, including refugee groups, which are not really interested in getting workers or expanding, but just want to deliver an activity. I've raised this [within the CVS] but the services which are being developed are mainly on quality or governance or constitution ... What the small groups need is more advice on how to organise events, hold meetings, raise small sums of money, handle volunteers ... without pressure to develop further if they don't want to.'

'What I find frustrating with RCOs is that they won't pursue the business model ... They need to understand that they have to follow a certain path of development.'

CVS worker

‘We see some people who claim to have an organisation but, when you look into it, it’s just one individual working on their own.’

CVS worker

Other RCOs see expansion as an inevitable step. Some may want to expand because the activities developed by the organisation have proved particularly successful, or the reason for expanding may be in order to follow funding. But opening up services to those beyond their immediate community can raise questions of legitimacy and focus. Dealing with expansion is tricky, and discussing the issues with the RCO can be a real help.

Example

One RCO running a Saturday school for Tamils in its community opened its Saturday school to non-Tamils because of demand from other parents who saw the Tamil children achieve more in school.

Another issue that may need to be tackled is how to deal with proliferation of groups – a phenomenon in areas where there is a rapidly expanding population of newly arrived refugees or migrants, and many different RCOs are set up.

Example

‘We have a number of Iraqi organisations in the area. This has given rise to some difficulties, and we have had to pull groups together to discuss how best to proceed. The important thing is to be honest, and also to be robust with groups – there is limited public funding, and they need to justify their existence to receive it. Our capacity-building worker is originally from Iraq and this helps him be quite up front and challenging in terms of what he says.’

One refugee forum has recently had success with dealing with this proliferation, prompted by the refusal of a funder to continue to fund several groups working with the Somali community within the same area. The refugee forum worked with five groups, explaining the advantages of formulating joint bids and not duplicating services, and facilitating dialogue and planning sessions. These groups worked together and have led the way for other emerging groups in their area to follow suit and plan services alongside what already exists.

Tips for meeting specialist support needs

- Do briefings for RCOs on the context of the voluntary and community sector in the UK, of funding, of public bodies and accountability. Integrate such briefings into outreach work and relate them to the aims and objectives RCOs wish to achieve.
- Consider offering services to individuals as well as groups – help with jobsearch, support to become a community champion, or volunteering programmes.
- Take it slowly. Don't rush a small group to constitute before they have proved their track record on an activity, and have worked out whether (and why) they wish to do so.
- If an RCO wishes to expand, don't be afraid to ask them why it wishes to do so. There needs to be a good reason for this, and they need to know they can do what they say they can do.
- Bring RCOs together on commissioning and funding opportunities to discuss partnership working. Consider acting as the accountable body for a project if the opportunity arises.
- Carry out a review to find out if your capacity-building workers are keeping up to date on the areas of work undertaken by RCOs in your area. Remember that rapid changes can and do occur. For example, do relevant LIO staff know about the regulations on advice provision? Make sure you are fully aware of the rules and regulations around setting up different types of services. This applies particularly to advice services.
- Find out what other support agencies are doing, particularly local RCO forums and agencies specialising in work with refugees. You may encounter them by establishing contact with your local multi-agency forum on refugees or through your ChangeUp forum.
- When 'failures' occur, analyse them to facilitate learning. Refugees are normally keen to learn. Specialist providers (such as the Refugee Council) advocate having sessions to help analyse failures in particular. This is often a good prompt to get groups to understand principles and improve practice for the future. Providing support in overcoming setbacks also demonstrates the LIO's long-term commitment towards helping RCOs to achieve their aims.

Unit 8

How do we communicate effectively?

Being confident and clear when working with RCOs

What will this unit help you do and why?

What?

This unit will help you:

- communicate more effectively with refugee community organisations (RCOs)
- gain confidence in approaching RCOs.

Why?

- If you don't communicate effectively with RCOs, they won't listen to you or talk to you.
- If you are not confident about communicating with RCOs, you may not feel able to reach out to them.

Example

'We didn't want to go with a begging bowl. All we wanted was some help in getting £500, but in the end we decided that dealing with the bureaucracy involved was just too much bother so we did it ourselves.'

Key issues

Linking communication and publicity work

This unit looks at what you need to know about communicating effectively with refugees. Many of the issues in this unit have already been mentioned (in particular see Unit 5 *How do we build a relationship?*), but it is useful to draw all the issues together for those developing communication and publicity work in your local infrastructure organisation (LIO).

The main issues to consider are very similar to those on working with any group, particularly groups where the main language is not English. They are:

- cultural sensitivity
- dealing well with interpreting and translation
- helping organisations to communicate effectively, and
- making sure that the way that you communicate does not exclude certain groups.

Cultural sensitivity

People working in the voluntary sector generally accept that people have different ways of living their lives and that mutual respect is a fundamental basis for co-existence and working together.

When working with RCOs, don't expect to know exactly what to do in every situation. Being overly concerned about being appropriately sensitive can cause apprehension. Don't let this become a barrier. Instead, we suggest that you are honest about your limits and expectations. This approach will put you on the same footing as the refugees you are dealing with: you can ask them about things you don't know about, and they can ask about

the 'unwritten rules' that may cause them problems in their interactions with UK society.

Culture raises some complex issues. People's views may be determined by many factors, including personal experience and beliefs (religious or otherwise). People with the same background often have very different views on cultural mores and what is, or is not, acceptable. Discussing issues and differing viewpoints enables you to establish similarities and differences.

Languages, and interpreting and translation

Even within quite a small refugee community there may be four or five languages, and possibly also a lingua franca (a common language used in a country that has several linguistic traditions). Within communities there will often also be wide variations in language use.

Example

English is the official language in Liberia, but most people also use one of over 25 mother tongues spoken in the country. Some of those who have arrived in the UK speak, read and write standard English, but about half the Liberian population speak 'Liberian English' which is derived from American Black English. Many Liberians may be unable to read or write in Liberian English and/or their mother tongue.

The website www.ethnologue.com provides a comprehensive list of languages in use in each country. This, coupled with local information about which of these

'I'm nervous of causing offence – I know they have been through a lot already, and I don't want to be the straw that breaks the camel's back by breaking some taboo or other.'

CVS worker

'We've got a number of Iraqis in our area. I can't imagine what they have been through in recent times... You see the news, but it's impossible to put yourself in their shoes. Sometimes I feel like I'm treading on eggshells. I don't want to say anything which may upset them.'

CVS worker

languages are spoken by the people who have arrived in your area, will enable you to identify the key languages used by refugees in your area.

Once you know which languages are used, it is worth considering:

- the degree of literacy in those languages
- what sort of people will be excluded if material is not translated or interpreted, or if communication is in writing rather than verbal.

For example, in many communities, women may have lower literacy levels than men.

Age differences may also be important: older people may not have had access to schooling, or young people may have missed out on education because of war.

All organisations – including LIOs and RCOs – need to take decisions about how they communicate with users, including deciding which language (or languages) they will use. Most LIOs in the UK use English to communicate with RCOs and refugees, and in practice most organisations will not have the resources to produce materials that have been translated into different languages.

The government has recently produced guidance to local authorities in England about translating materials. This states that:

'a. There is no legal reason for all materials to be translated. The Race Relations Act simply says that all parts of the community should have access to services, and although that might involve translation, it does not always have to. The Human Rights Act only requires translation if someone is arrested or charged with a criminal offence.

b. Translation can never be a substitute for learning English. Whatever the considerations when translating printed materials, the whole issue needs to be seen in the context of a wider drive to improve English skills in all communities. And that means a greater focus on ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] and English language provision.

c. Translation should be reduced except where it builds integration and cohesion. Opinion is divided as to whether translation is a barrier to integration, or whether it is a stepping stone to better language skills. Local authorities will judge what is best – but our working assumption is that heading for the translators should not be an automatic first step in all cases.

d. Translation should be considered in the context of communications to all communities....It is important to keep communications channels open between community groups living in the same area. Local partners should therefore consider ways to use translated materials to underline their even-handed approach to all communities.'

For LIOs, the issues are rather different. While you may have no statutory obligations, the key priority will often be to ensure that services are accessible, especially to more excluded groups. Language may be a barrier to fully achieving this.

Professional interpreters or trained bilingual staff from specialist refugee infrastructure organisations are the ideal solution, but these may not be available or the cost may be prohibitive. As an alternative, you may need to find people from the refugee community who are willing to interpret

for some meetings. This brings its own challenges (and also rewards if it is done as part of expanding a pool of community volunteers). Below are some of the challenges to consider.

- Interpreting requires specialist skills and a high degree of linguistic competence. Apart from judging their competence in English, you will not be able to assess community interpreters. A good solution is to ask for two or more people to take turns at interpreting. They can then help each other and act as quality control for each other. Having more than one interpreter has other advantages too. Interpreting can be very tiring, so having a second interpreter available reduces the pressure. It also means that the interpreters themselves can participate more in the meetings. (This is not good practice for professional interpreters, but community interpreters will usually want to take part.)
- Is the interpreter ‘screening’ what is said? Again, having more than one interpreter will usually sort this out. Establishing ground rules with the interpreters will also help. Consult some of the resources on community interpretation for suggestions on how to do this. (See *Further resources*, on page 59.)
- How can we ensure that there is a plan to move on from interpreting to direct communication, which in turn will provide an incentive to community leaders to learn more English?

Children are often the best speakers of English in a family and are sometimes used as interpreters, especially where there is inadequate provision. However, this is not recommended practice for two reasons: firstly, because children may find themselves in all sorts of inappropriate situations, and secondly, the interpreting itself may be influenced by the child’s own needs or level of understanding.

Example

The newsletter of one CVS usually includes items of great interest to refugees and their organisations, such as news of the ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] rule changes and the campaigns around them. This ensures that refugee organisations not only read the newsletter, but also feel included and feel that they get value from their membership. When CVS workers accompany them to meetings, or help them write petitions, their feeling of solidarity and support is strengthened.

Helping RCOs to communicate effectively and facilitating their inclusion

In order for RCOs to play a role in the wider community, they will also need to communicate, often in public forums. To develop in this area they will need support, and LIOs are in a good position to offer this.

A good approach is to offer coaching in different areas, such as speaking at meetings, writing for a newsletter, taking minutes or writing annual reports – all of which may help them participate in wider meetings and contribute towards building their confidence. These coaching sessions can be used to make sure that concepts are properly translated and the ‘unwritten rules’ about meetings are understood, as well as offering a one-to-one situation in which RCO staff and volunteers can ask questions, test ideas and even role-play situations that may cause them difficulty. One CVS interviewed in the course of the research for this guide offered coaching sessions like those described above, but structured in the format of English conversation lessons.

Offering coaching sessions to RCOs has benefits for LIO staff. When planning the sessions, you will need to think carefully

about how to present material to RCO workers, and this will help develop your skills in communicating with other RCOs too. Also, the sessions provide opportunities for LIO staff to learn more about RCOs and RCO workers. Often the best approach is to hold a simple pre-meeting, where LIO staff and RCOs can discuss what they want out of the meeting and how to get it.

Learning from RCOs

Refugees are likely to arrive with all sorts of knowledge that may be of interest to others. LIOs may be able to provide opportunities for this to contribute to local cohesion and understanding, as well as the LIOs benefiting from opportunities to learn themselves. Seminars or less formal meetings on areas of interest could be offered to staff working in the LIO, other voluntary organisations in the area, public sector staff or indeed anyone else who is interested.

If you are lucky enough to have people in refugee communities with relevant experience, you could also organise discussions to compare how charities (or non-governmental organisations in an international context) organise in different countries. Other interesting discussions can be held on social issues such as the structure and concerns of local government, regeneration, inclusion or education.

Communications policy

When developing a general communications policy, LIOs need to ensure that the policy works across cultures and languages. It is recommended that LIOs include and consider:

- the languages in which you routinely produce core information and the reasons why those languages are used
- the way in which you review which languages you use
- your policy in relation to interpreting and translation, and payment for it (or payment of volunteer expenses for it)

- the ways in which you make sure your services are accessible to people with lower levels of literacy.

The communications policy needs to be regularly reviewed. Communities change, new communities arrive, and refugees themselves may change their views and needs.

How to address cultural differences and inclusivity

There are some core cultural issues which you may need to seek agreement on when you work with RCOs. These are fundamental issues which cannot be ignored. Examples of these issues include the role and involvement of women, and attitudes towards children and child protection.

The role and involvement of women

Some cultures separate the genders, either formally or informally. Looking beyond this to the roles that women are playing in the community, and ensuring that 'being separate' does not mean being excluded, can require clear communication and agreement. If women are not involved in the organisations you are working with, you need to ask why, and to find ways to secure that involvement. This may mean organising separate meetings with women, or raising issues that women may be particularly interested in – for example, their own or their children's health, or access to education.

Asking about the different experiences of women is a good way to open up the issue of their participation and to ask about their inclusion in community organisations. Exchanging ideas about how this has changed in the UK over the last few decades, and how it may have changed in other countries and why, is a sensitive way of raising the issue. How funders and potential partners will view an organisation that cannot show evidence of the active involvement of particular groups such as women, the young, disabled people, or people from ethnic minorities can also be discussed. Equally, refugee communities may be able to provide new and interesting ways of encouraging participation and voice.

Attitudes towards children and child protection

This includes issues of child safety and protection. A good way to start this discussion is by explaining that most organisations that work with children need to have a child protection policy. Refugee

families may have come from situations where children work from an early age, and so may be surprised to find that there are rules (some informal, but some based in law) against leaving children alone or in the care of young siblings.

Tips for effective communication

- When working with new communities, allow enough time to communicate and check understanding on both sides.
- Remember that some people may be able to understand spoken or written English well, even though they have difficulty speaking or writing in English.
- In delivering training or discussing specialist subjects, don't assume that limited English means little understanding of the subject.
- Acknowledge that any level of competence in English represents a considerable linguistic achievement, and be aware that refugees are often multi-lingual in other languages as well.
- Develop a policy on interpreting and translating and payment for it (or payment of volunteer expenses for it); consult to ensure the policy is fair, publicise it, and stick to it.
- Make sure that LIO staff have access to appropriate guidelines on interpreting and translations, and training on how to work with interpreters and translators⁶.
- At your first contact with an RCO, have a checklist of things you might want to ask the person, such as:
 - What is your full name?
 - How does the naming system work? Which part of the name is your family name? Which part is the individual name?
 - Are you happy with being the contact person, or should it be someone else?
 - Are you happy to be asked questions about the best way to communicate with the community? Are there other people who can help with that as well?
 - What languages are in use in the community in this area? How many people in the community can read and write in these languages? Is that different for older people, or women, or any other people?
 - Are there people within the community with particular areas of knowledge, or experience, or interest – for example, people who have led NGOs, been in government, or run trade unions or faith communities?
 - What rules do you think should be observed in interactions with people from your community? Do these rules apply to women and men, and to older and younger people?

⁶ The Refugee Council delivers a training course on how to work with interpreters

Tips for effective communication (continued)

- Ask practical questions too:
 - Is it OK to shake hands?
 - Is it OK to be alone in the same room?
 - Is it OK to use family or personal names?
- Only use business language or jargon when it is absolutely essential. If you do use it, make sure that you explain the terminology.
- Discuss with RCOs the expected outcomes of any joint working (for example, on a consultation). This will help you to get a commitment from the RCO and reduce any drop-out.
- RCOs can feel overwhelmed by extensive consultation, particularly when they are contacted by a variety of different initiatives. One-to-one communication and informal contact can be helpful ways to identify RCO needs, whilst providing them with support to encourage more formal engagement.
- Ask as much as you tell. Make it an equal exchange of views and information.
- Be prepared to listen and learn.
- Find out what people's interests are and address them as a way of generating interest.
- Challenge issues of equality sensitively. For example, if delivering governance training to a culture that is 'male dominated' consider giving tips on how to involve women in the decisions taken by the board.

Further resources

Research reports

- D'Onofrio, L and Munk, K (2004) *Understanding the Stranger*, ICAR (The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK), London.
- Evelyn Oldfield Unit (2006) *Sharing Ideas and Working Together*, Evelyn Oldfield Unit, London.
Available from www.evelynoldfield.co.uk
- Griffiths, D, Sigona, N and Zetter, R (2005) *Refugee Community Organisations and Dispersal: Networks, Resources and Social Capital*, Policy Press, London.
- Hutton C, with research by Nea, B (2007) *Priority Sub-sectors for Infrastructure Support, London Region*, London Volunteer Service Council on behalf of London Regional Changeup Consortium, London.
Available from www.lvsc.org.uk
- Jones, V (2007) *Change from Experience: A Pedagogy for Community-based Change*, Praxis, London.
- Refugee Action (2006) *The Destitution Trap: Research into Destitution among Refused Asylum Seekers in the UK*, Refugee Action, London.
Available from www.refugee-action.org.uk
- Tyler, P and Khan, N (2006) *Funding for Refugee and Asylum Related Projects: Availability and Access*, National Consortia Support Team on behalf of the National Consortia Co-ordinating Group.
Available from www.refugeeaccess.info
- Walker, L (2006) *I Could Use These Skills to Do Something...: Refugee Women and the Voluntary Sector on Merseyside*, Refugee Action, London.
Available from www.refugee-action.org.uk

Wilson, R and Lewis, H (2007) *A Part of Society: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Volunteering in the UK*, Tandem, Leeds.
Available from www.tandem-uk.com

Guidance and information resources

- Aldridge, F and Waddington, S (2001) *Asylum Seekers' Skills and Qualifications Audit – Pilot Project*, NIACE, Leicester.
Available from: www.niace.org.uk
- Bowgett, K and Gillett, L (undated) *Working with Volunteers: A Management Guide for Refugee Community Organisations*, Evelyn Oldfield Unit, London.
Available from www.evelynoldfield.co.uk
- Communities and Local Government (2007) *Guidance for Local Authorities on Translation of Publications*, Communities and Local Government, London.
Available from www.communities.gov.uk
- Community Links (undated) *Small Places, Close to Home: Community Links Ideas Annual*, Community Links, London.
Available from www.community-links.org
- Governance Hub (2007) *Is It Seaworthy? Assessing and Funding the Capacity of Voluntary and Community Organisations*, Governance Hub, London.
Available from www.governancehub.org.uk
- Hayes, R and Reason, J (2004) *Voluntary But Not Amateur: A Guide to the Law for Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups*, London Voluntary Service Council, London.
- Latif, S (2008) *Becoming More Effective: An Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation for Refugee Community Organisations*, Charities Evaluation Services, London. Available from www.ces-vol.org.uk

Learning and Skills Council (2007) *LSC Learner Eligibility Guidance 2007/08*, Learning and Skills Council, London. Available from www.readingroom.lsc.gov.uk

Perry, J and El-Hassan, A (for Hact) (2008) *More Responsive Public Services: A Guide to Commissioning Migrant and Refugee Organisations*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York. Available from www.jrf.org.uk

Praxis (2006) *On Course: Refugee Organisations and Community Development*. A Praxis Toolkit, Praxis, London.

Praxis (2005) *Praxis Community Development Model*, Praxis, London.

Refugee Action leaflets and details of videos produced as part of their Refugee Women: Know Your Rights campaign, can be found at: www.refugee-action.org.uk/information/downloads.aspx#refugeewomen

Refugee Council (2004) *Doing it for Ourselves: A Guide to Setting Up and Managing a Refugee Community Organisation*, Refugee Council, London. Available from www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Refugee Council (2006) *QASRO Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations*, Refugee Council, London.

Sanders, M (2001) *As Good as Your Word: A Guide to Community Interpreting and Translation in Public Services*, Maternity Alliance, London.

Thompson, D (2008) *How to Set Up a Refugee Community Organisation*, Federation for Community Development Learning, Sheffield. Available from www.fcdl.org.uk

Wilson, R with Sanders, M and Dumper, H (2007) *Sexual Health, Asylum Seekers and Refugees: A Handbook for People Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers in England*, Family Planning Association, London. Available from www.fpa.org.uk

Census statistics

See Unit 3 for a guide to the best ways of accessing these.

Home Office statistics

Home Office statistics, including quarterly and annual asylum reports and reports on the EU accession countries, are available from www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds

Useful organisations and projects

Basis Project

www.thebasisproject.org.uk
The Basis Project aims to build the organisational development capacity of refugee community organisations.

CEMVO (Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations)

www.cemvo.org.uk
Aims to extend opportunities to people from the most disadvantaged communities.

Charities Evaluation Services

www.ces-vol.org.uk
CES aims to increase the effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector by developing its use of evaluation and quality systems.

Evelyn Oldfield Unit

www.evelynoldfield.co.uk
Provides professional support and training to refugee community organisations.

Hact (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust)

www.hact.org.uk
Offers support to refugee organisations involved in housing issues and provision.

ICAR (The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK)

www.icar.org.uk

Leadership and Governance National Support Service

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and funded by Capacitybuilders, this programme works with infrastructure organisations to build the skills of employees, volunteers and trustees in leadership and governance.

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC)

www.oisc.gov.uk

General information about the OISC is available from their website. They also produce many leaflets and publications about immigration advice in many languages.

Performance Management National Support Service (also known as the National Performance Programme)

www.performancemanagement.org.uk

Led by Charities Evaluation Services and funded by Capacitybuilders, this programme works to increase and improve the performance management support available to voluntary and community organisations. The target audience for this programme is support providers such as local infrastructure organisations.

Praxis

www.praxis.org.uk

Based in East London, Praxis provides advice and support services to migrants and refugees from all over the world.

Refugee Action

www.refugee-action.org.uk

One of the two main refugee specialist organisations in England.

Refugee Council

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

The largest refugee specialist organisation in the UK.

Refugee Council Information Service

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

This is a subscription service.

Scottish Refugee Council

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

The Scottish refugee specialist organisation.

STAN (Second Tier Advisors Network)

www.lvsc.org.uk/stan

A peer-learning network for advisers working with voluntary and community organisations in London. Convened by London Voluntary Service Council.

Welsh Refugee Council

www.welshrefugeecouncil.org

Provides a range of services to refugees in Wales.

And look out for...

Some useful resources are due to be published in 2008:

Phillimore, J, Goodson, L, Hennessy, D and Ergun, E (to be published in 2008) *Making a Difference: Empowering Birmingham's Migrant Community Organisations*, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham. Will be available from www.curs.bham.ac.uk A report of a project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to develop the capacity of migrant community organisations to work on policy.

Praxis (to be published in 2008) *Report on Change from Experience* (provisional title), Praxis, London. A report of a project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to develop the capacity of migrant community organisations to work on policy.

Refugee Action (to be published in 2008) *Planning Arts Events in the Refugee Sector*, Refugee Action, London.

‘How would I typify the RCOs round here? People just don’t realise what they are getting on with. They work at weekends, and often fit in large programmes of voluntary work between jobs. You’d be amazed if I took you to see the activity at the local community centre on a Saturday – refugees busy all day doing one thing or another. Many RCOs are trying to provide advice and support, often to destitute people. They get very tired, but they feel that if they don’t do it, nobody else will.’



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