



Invite you to a 'Big Conversation' to share and exchange experiences, perspectives, challenges and ideas about what works in supporting the development of Refugee led Community Organisations (RCOs)

**Thursday September 9th
from 09.30 to 15.30**

At The Royal Station Hotel,
Neville Street, Newcastle
NE1 5DH

What we want to achieve

RCOs across the UK play a unique and vital role in supporting the settlement and integration of people who came to the UK in need of asylum. Their spirit of voluntarism, achievements and contribution in the North East have been widely recognised by all sectors, and have been supported by many charitable trusts and funding bodies.

Our joint commitment is to share learning, discuss practical realities and ideas for the challenges faced by all, so as to help maximise RCOs' uptake of local development support to enable them to realise their potential and maximise the impact of funding.

Who will be there

- ° Representatives from the Regional Refugee Forum's membership of RCOs
- ° Frontline workers and managers from Local voluntary and public sector development agencies
- ° Workers from 'specialist' development projects, delivering support to RCOs within the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and Humberside

What will happen on the day and afterwards?

No speeches, no presentations - just RCOs and development workers talking together, listening, sharing, learning and problem solving.

Associates from the Learning Team Consultancy Ltd will facilitate tailored workshops to ensure everyone has a chance to actively contribute. And all participants will receive a copy of the workshop notes, to share learning with colleagues.

If you would like to participate and contribute.....

There are only 50 places for this event, and we wish to ensure balanced participation from the region's RCOs, local voluntary and public sector development agencies, and from specialist RCO development projects working in the North East region and beyond. So if you would like to participate, please complete the attached Expression of Interest form and return to Herbert Dirahu **by Friday 6th August 2010**. A full programme will be sent out before the day.

Best regards

Herbert Dirahu

Project Manager
Support for Community Action Programme
Regional Refugee Forum North East
www.refugeevoices.org.uk

Sead Masic

Manager
Capacity Building Project
North of England Refugee Service
www.refugee.org.uk

David Clark

Organisational Development Manager
BASIS Programme
Refugee Council
www.thebasisproject.org.uk



'THE BIG CONVERSATION': 9th September 2010, Newcastle upon Tyne

Participants' views captured on post-it notes and graffiti walls during dialogue

Morning session: What works in developing the capacity of RCOs?

Refugee led Community Organisations (RCOs) *What does "support" mean for you?*

1	Fills a gap that the group perceives
2	Define support available
3	Re-assurance and confidence
4	Cultural understanding
5	Trust
6	Tailored response
7	Relevant to "level" of organisation
8	Someone who knows
9	Friendly face: is shopping around ok?
10	Someone to bridge UK and RCO cultures
11	Help in identifying community needs
12	Support can mean being challenging
13	Practical help
14	Advice and information
15	Facilitation to develop bids
16	Financial help
17	Policies, Constitution, Procedures
18	Guidance about the law
19	Development and self development
20	Understanding of language (barrier) and culture
21	Building confidence on both sides (RCOs and mainstream)
22	Coaching from inside an RCO or outside
23	RCO's are in different stages of delivery - support needs different
24	Support with understanding voluntary sector
25	Support within the RCOs

26	Co-operation between community groups
27	Who to talk to
28	How do we network?
29	Help with setting up an RCO
30	Constitution help to understand it (the content)
31	How the management committee works
32	Support in fundraising
33	Training support

RCO's Please share your experiences of accessing support for your RCO from
A) Specialist agencies
B) Mainstream agencies

1	Understanding of refugee issues
2	Confidence: process of being asylum seeker is complex. Difficult : not treat as service user (e.g. job centre) but friendly
3	Culture clash
4	Language barrier - difficult to express what they want
5	2 way 'education'
6	Country politics
7	Help taking "first step"
8	North of England Refugee Service: signpost / brokering
9	Confidence : support rights & entitlements and law
10	Rights/eligibility e.g.: mental health – further barrier to accessing services, e.g.: law
11	Local knowledge
12	Local knowledge - what structure are already in place
13	Takes a long time to deliver
14	Help understand importance of ownership
15	Lots of requests from "new" communities
16	Relationship manager approach helpful in accessing mainstream support
17	Accredited training: Awareness raising, financial, capacity to do things

18	Not such a big difference
19	Integration: parents not integrated yet living in UK long term, children interpreting
20	How can we integrate families locally?
21	New arrivals: teach English. Gaps between courses too long, difficult to follow classes, funding to study
22	NERS support helped with establishing of our RCO
23	Good: NERS QASRO training programme
24	RRF: Good Example SCAP
25	Newcastle CVS helpful and supportive
26	Mainstream agency considers you as a indigenous group
27	We class ourselves as having special needs
28	Prejudice toward our community group
29	Mainstream not flexible, they tell you what to do
30	Mainstream agency accessed through specialist agency
31	Mainstream agency helped us to organise football tournament
32	Problem with banks (opening bank account)
33	Sunderland CVS give fundraising information, but don't help much with filling in application forms

RCOs: *What challenges and successes have you faced along the way?*

1.	Relying on volunteers
2.	Lack of confidence
3.	Communication barriers
4.	Time management
5.	Understanding new system of the host community
6.	Lack of childcare provision
7.	Cultural barriers
8.	Passiveness
9.	Lack of commitment

10.	Internal conflicts
11.	Understanding policies, procedure, training
12.	Learning processes: Understanding how to contribute to/ at levels of strategy – sharing good practice
13.	Organising event e.g. venues, publicity, transport
14.	Prejudice from stereotyping
15.	Applying for funds
16.	Unsuccessful funding
17.	Barriers in accessing some funding e.g. charity status required
18.	Facing challenges: Capacity /issues =staff. Funding 'jumping through hoops' 'Mission drift' to obtain funding
19.	Chasing money, mission drift
20.	Understanding systems e.g. geographical boundaries for services
21.	RCO's need to be self sufficient & stand by themselves
22.	How can we sell our services?
23.	LSPs: Should we engage with them? Waste time, nothing done
24.	How can we best utilize the resources that we keep!

1	RCO success factor: shared working, partnership working between RCOs & host community is successful e.g.: football tournament
2	Success factor: number of hours volunteering that RCO can secure from its organisations/members
3	Success factor: at start up, smooth simplified information conveyed through specialist infrastructure
4	Success factor: Sustained early support for "community activists immediately from infrastructure, rather than prejudice seeing activists as self appointed leaders
5	Success factor: training highly valued & useful, including orientation in UK ways, to comprehend and implement development
6	Membership to other organisations "one voice"
7	Information sharing and resource sharing
8	Training support
9	Good networking support
10	RCO's Partnership work to survive

12	Successful funding
13	Capacity support
14	Partnership works
15	To write the constitution, with relevant documents

Infrastructure Support Agencies *From your experience or knowledge what makes working with an RCO different from working with other community organisations?*

1	Infrastructure organisations need to tap into local specialist experience
2	Need to bridge support from specialist to mainstream
3	Groups can access if they want but sometimes need bridging agencies
4	Level of understanding of community development teams (local authority) of RCO
5	Language and cultural barriers
6	Language and cultural passion
7	Often breaking new ground
8	New services
9	Understanding RCO's, volunteer led, RCO leaders have own pressures
10	2 way knowledge, build support and capacity, improve expertise, too much separate talking and activities, opportunities , training
11	Strategic implies to sharing – support from umbrella organisations to facilitate
12	Collaboration, working on getting funding, sharing lessons, less of the me, me, me , mind set, more sharing
13	Sustainability infrastructure “ walk before you run”
14	Length of engagement
15	Mapping exercise
16	BME v Refugee?
17	Most want an office but won't have thought through what they are going to do in it or how to staff it etc, but funding is about activities
18	RCOs need to be more aware that resources need to be shared across all sectors of the community
19	Working together, partnership working, collation working is favoured in the sector, but refugees want to have separate groups

20	Perspective from the refugee community is that, if not getting what want from workers, they want access to higher bosses. A cultural approach? Cultural expectations of hierarchy 'more power at the top'? While actually workers are most supportive resource
21	One local LDA currently 1/3 of all their funding advice work is with RCO's. Very high expectations about funding. Unrealistic doesn't match reality
22	Structure of power from countries of origin contribute to rigid leadership
23	Gatekeeping in immigrant community: can take time to meet real community leaders and grassroots people
24	Community seems to put pressure on community leaders, or they feel it, to produce resources for community i.e. like office etc. less credibility given to securing/doing activities
25	Loyalty and or fear of rejection in community can make people more timid to speak out themselves
26	Timekeeping problems could be a consequence of psychological state of exile, or derive from policy framework which creates long term unemployment, depressed, don't know what day it is, no need to
27	Time keeping a problem VDA workers need to keep timed appointments very busy point RCO's often turn up late. Infuriating. We are not a drop in centre service. Cultural clash? need to understand consequences

Infrastructure Support Agencies *List the challenges and successes for yourself and your organisation in terms of delivering this support*

1	Understanding working style of RCO: evening, weekend, language
2	Managing finance, leadership, motivation
3	Collaboration and partnerships
4	When funding goes bad e.g finance
5	Expectation very high. Need track record
6	Need more support with paperwork and managing finances
7	Accountabilty problems
8	Getting past funding
9	Community leaders attracted when funding comes
10	Engagement, trust and understanding (refugees)
11	Challenge: huge culture shift unsolved

12	Challenge: to get RCO's to recognise "shared interest" instead of acting in isolation or competition with each other
13	Challenge: when many RCO's developing within same national community and tension/conflict between them. In current context need to encourage them to work in partnership and jointly
14	Challenge: to think more realistically. Value that they can get what they want via another route e.g. partnership
15	No long term relationship but would like to hear feedback from groups worked with as don't see them again
16	Relationship, manager, positive
17	Working with commissioners to improve service contracts and equality, community engagement etc, paying for things we already do ourselves i.e. interpreting
18	Success: individuals getting skills in the process of becoming RCO
19	Success: supporting community to be organised to have their voice heard by range of agencies
20	Success: get out there be an active presence. And make links to other agencies, not just within LA teams. LA used to keep a closed house
21	Success: being able to refer/signpost RCOs to whole range of agencies outside council services. Sad we didn't do it before
22	Success : encouraging promoting diversity (gender) in leadership of RCOs as otherwise male dominated
23	Success: help at very beginning of start up, then see RCO move on to mainstream agency support

Afternoon: What does the Future / Bigger Picture look like?

ALL: Are there things in the bigger picture that need to be considered or act as barriers? For example, in light of the recession and reduction in public sector funding and The “Big Society” agenda etc, what challenges do you expect to face?

1.	Infrastructure organisations facing funding programmes that will end in March 2011, some will close. Core funding and specialist services at risk
2.	Core funding needs
3.	Challenge for development agencies: no more funding for specialist support
4.	Infrastructure services will be limited due to £ cuts, at risk as much as RCOs Decreased funding (for both infrastructure & RCOs)
5.	Cuts will affect everybody, but could affect RCOs more as they are already at a disadvantage. In increased localism/neighbourhoods focus, majority issues may receive more attention. How to ensure minority voices/issues heard?
6.	Increased need of RCOs (communities) therefore increased demand on infrastructure organisations
7.	Cuts could give rise to ‘scapegoating’, where new migrants/refugees seen as taking jobs and resources. Will there be a backlash, will discrimination increase?
8.	Implications of cuts- will impact most on advocacy, campaigning, citizenship type support for groups/ activists as money driven down to front line e.g. unemployment services
9.	Sector faces loss of funding for engagement and involvement and shift towards service delivery
10.	Political and geographic changes – local enterprise partnerships, new players
11.	Network changes, responsibility will be a local community level
12.	What happens when ‘free services’ end because CVS’ cease to exist?
13.	Who will do the work of infrastructure organisations? Coverage of bigger geographic areas?
14.	What happens in areas where development agencies close? Others fill the gaps?
15.	Cuts impact, cohesion workers of NCC, now pushed into generic CDW Cohesion agenda gone?

16.	Local authorities: Do they care anyway?
17.	Reliance on unpaid support
18.	Natural disasters in world £ support needed internationally, government under stress
19.	Big Society unclear, things already happening
20.	Big Society plans for 'Community Organisers': how will it relate to the RCOs and community organisations' model of democratic representation? Are they the same as 'community activists'? is it a route to same outcomes?
21.	Drop in numbers of asylum seekers?

How will your organisation overcome them and how will you ensure that the needs of RCO's are met?

1.	Agencies need to point out the picture of what the consequences of losing services will be, describe the long term cost
2.	Work with commissioners to improve service contracts in relation to equality and diversity
3.	Infrastructure agencies need training on needs of RCO's
4.	Awareness on RCO issues
5.	Consider RCOs as a special need group
6.	Need to tap into local specialist expertise
7.	Work together (specialist & mainstream)
8.	Sign post to each other
9.	Mapping exercise
10.	Need to get into the community
11.	Go to where groups are meeting
12.	Use social media communication
13.	Flexibility: understand issues that RCO's face and look at support for them. Confidence and time management
14.	Communication and understanding
15.	Prioritise around need

16.	Clarity about what are barriers from both sides
17.	Focused use of resources (e.g. info on websites)
18.	Terms of reference between Infrastructure organisations and RCO.
19.	Support to RCO's – should it just be for what they want, or need to include challenge. Be frank, honest, open to RCO's so they understand the context
20.	Infrastructure organisations need to understand and translate political and geographical changes and new players to RCO's
21.	Clarify all kinds of support agency can offer to RCO (not just when they ask)
22.	Partnership collaboration, shared resources
23.	Engaging with existing networks/ forums
24.	Support forums
25.	More open discussion and forums
26.	Consultation around future support/ services
27.	RCO's need to access support from a far wider range of agencies
28.	RCOs need to learn how to engage with mainstream agencies: up skills to access mainstream support
29.	RCOs need to communicate what support they need from development agency
30.	RCOs need to consider shared resources and creating partnerships
31.	Chasing funding takes a lot of time and effort from RCOs. Could it be “re-invested” in voluntary action?
32.	Partnerships: not about RCO helping the partner agencies to achieve their goals, but RCO needs to create partnership with agencies which will meet the RCO's goals
33.	RCOs don't want to be forced to follow set models of structure. May need one or two “ friends” to help or to refer members to relevant agencies
34.	RCOs rely on Infrastructure to take them to the next level, but in these agencies' absence RCOs would still exist through own motivation. RCO's' existence not determined by existence of infrastructure support
35.	Look at alternative resources. Move RCO's from grant funding to contracts
36.	Adaptability, such as social enterprise

Are there any actions that RCOs and infrastructure support agencies could consider taking to face the challenges of the future?

1	20% cuts likely in voluntary sector. This is not a small step change but a new scenario. Services need to prepare for it. Not a question of tweaking, needs a strategy
2	Opportunities in Big Society, we are already doing it
3	Infrastructure sector needs strong voice to campaign
4	We need to give groups and individuals a louder influential voice
5	Need co-ordinated voice of representation for the sector (as RRF exists for North East)
6	Get that collective voice into the mainstream forums where decisions are actually made
7	Sector needs to identify more allies from other sectors with common agenda, encourage more collective action
8	How to mitigate the cuts? Need unified working, planning & collective voice of infrastructure and RCOs to advocate / protect existing funds
9	Sharing , take the lead, act before the policy makers decide
10	It is our sector responsibility to (1) identify: Where does our organisation add value to RCO support? What is its 'unique selling point'?. Then (2) map out existing provision in our region. (3) seek to work together and rationalise the sector. Be in learn and effective shape
11	The sector needs to make most use of reduced resources. Need to decide 'what can go?'. Map out support for RCOs in region. Identify duplication. Identify what isn't effective. For rationalisation, merger, coalition
12	Need to share resources such as community spaces. Should identify examples of good practice and lobby for it
13	The work impact of RCO is hugely more than they are actually funded to do. The value of their work is over and above their cost (Relatively small scale RCO's £40k per year) Should we co-ordinate strategy to protect small funding them? (that attaches to equality agenda?)
14	Survival: Collaborative voice, RCO & Infrastructure
15	Consortia bids and partnerships
16	Should we ask if all RCO's are necessary? Do all communities need their own RCO? Need to have a response for the question. But can anyone decide this?

17	Remember to recognise need for RCO via evidence, confirm and reaffirm this need. It's not a community luxury but a necessity, as so many members face hardship specific to refugees and asylum seekers
18	Use Simon Underwood's information on North East region's (demographic) need for new migrants and diverse community, and cost benefit of RCOs to promoting integration (Simon gave welcome speech for the day: Lead officer for NE Strategic Migration Partnership and Senior Specialist Social Policy and Inclusion, and Lead Officer International Relations at Newcastle City Council)
19	Need to use language that will resonate to replace "infrastructure" "Community cohesion ". We can populate "big society" with our own meaning
20	Mainstreaming RCO's, Consortia, partnership

Participants' Evaluation of the Day

What 3 things have you learnt, and what could you apply in your organisation?

1	Willingness to work together Have a strong voice to affect strategy planning Better evidence the value that RCOs add in
2	Training on refugee issues for support & development of organisation staff
3	To create more training both infrastructure and RCO for effective understanding
4	More information to understand the need of RCO's
5	Better networking between RCOs and agencies Agencies understanding needs of RCOs Importance of agencies working together
6	I will feedback today's discussions to my organisation including the chief executive I will contact local authorities to negotiate our involvement in the Big Society before the Autumn spending review I will learn more about the work of the North East Strategic Migration Partnership and try to get involved
7	(1) More networking (2) take risks (3) communicate more with mainstream agencies
8	Networking
9	Get in touch with network
10	Better understanding of needs of RCOs Need to better understand the support that can be made available to RCOs Good networking opportunity
11	The willingness of both partners to work together The economic climate that affects the voluntary sector and common actions Enjoyed the day, the people around the table and venue
12	I will try to create a consortium of some sort, to work in partnership with other RCOs in terms of applying for funds and deliver activities together
13	Partnership - learn to function without funding More external agencies with different visions and things to offer
14	Good network contact Sharing needs Opportunity to reflect on our future work I enjoyed the day it has been interactive
15	Brilliant day to hear the message! Working together is important

16	We need to keep conversation going
17	Bringing RRF, NERS and RC together with RCO reps is great
18	Enough time to discuss issues in depth
19	Fantastic communication Networking Co-operation
20	Keeping the sessions lively and exciting Really liked the idea of graffiti wallpaper
21	Eye opener
22	Discussions developing out of bringing together an important range of RCO's and agencies
23	Everything went well, Venue, Delivery of the program, Good networking
24	Great day, enjoyable. Great networking. Here's to more the same
25	Everything was well planned and useful
26	Excellent structure and confident, will replicate best practice
27	Liked the openness and honesty of all involved

What would you change about the structure of today?

1	If time could be improved and a list mainstream agencies as example
2	Bit confusing at start about who answered which questions but we managed
3	Contact list of attendees, introduction, should have only had one question in afternoon (too much duplication)
4	Workshop, question seemed quite repetitive
5	Don't hold the meeting during Ramadan (fasting month) so we can join you for lunch
6	Could have improved in workshop allocation
7	Don't split RCO's and others it works better when each side can hear the others conversation
8	Mixed groups did not always work today, but apart from that the organisation for the day was excellent
9	Nothing: well paced and engaging
10	Well done

Attendance

Regional Refugee Forum North East Members (RCOs)

ACANE:	Gaby Kitoko, Joe Kamanga
Tees Valley Iranian Community:	Parichere Holdway
Tees Valley Mano River Union:	Ibrahim
United Community Action:	Sarah Ahmadi
HAWAR Kurdish education:	Diamond Mohamed
Woman's Worth:	Maria Chikara
NE Eritrean Community Association:	Bini Tesfai
ACOLINE:	Chester Thete
Sunderland African Association:	Samouka Dore

Specialist capacity building projects

Regional Refugee Forum NE (staff): CEO, Georgina Fletcher
SCAP Project Manager, Herbert Dirahu
SCAP Worker, Andrew Jackson
SCAP Worker, Nasrin Ahmadi

North of England Refugee Service: QASRO Manager, Sead Masic
QASRO Officer, Sirak Hagos

Refugee Council: Director of Policy & Development, Jonathan Ellis
BASIS Programme Organisaitonal Development Manager, David Clark
BASIS Programme Organisational Development Officer Yorkshire &
Humberside / North East, Hussein Mahamed

Northern Refugee Centre (Sheffield) Regional Community Development Manager, Jeni Vine

Local Development Agencies (Voluntary sector)

Middlesbrough MVDA: Helen Hayes
Newcastle NCVS: Sally Young, Chief Executive
eVolution Darlington CVS: Gill Dunber

:

Local Development Agencies (Public sector)

Newcastle City Council: Simon Wood, CDW, Community Engagement and Empowerment
North Tyneside Council: Sharon Murray, Project Co-Coordinator & Susan Weir, Support
Worker, Refugee integration Service
Gateshead Council: Lyne Boyle, Community Liaison Team Manager
Darlington Borough Council: Morvyn Sanderson, CDW

Regional / Sub-regional infrastructure consortia

NE Regional Infrastructure Consortia: Jane Cater, Policy and Development Manager (North East Empowerment Partnership) at VONNE (Voluntary Organisations' Network North East)
Tyne & Wear Infrastructure Consortia: Lynne Craggs, Manager

Other

Globe Gallery, North Shields: Maria Angus
Riverside Project, Newcastle. Anne Bonna, Manager
Middlesbrough Mind: Natalie Carter
NAVCA (Sheffield): Pam Grant, Improving Local Partnerships Development Officer

Other invitees

Nawroz Community	North Tyneside VODA
WHACO (Women's Health and Cultural Organisation)	South Tyneside CVS
North East Southern African Society	Sunderland CVS
Awet	Redcar & Cleveland VDA
Middlesbrough Council	Catalyst Stockton on Tees Ltd
Sunderland City Council	Tees Valley VCS Forum
Stockton Borough Council	Stockton Residents & Community Groups Association
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network
Hartlepool Council	Manchester Refugee Support Network
Gateshead GVOC	Greater Manchester BME Network
Hartlepool VDA	Bolton Equalities Centre