





*Anglo-Iranian  
Community –  
Bristol*



*Basis Project East of England  
seminar – sustainable  
fundraising, March 2010*



*Somaliland  
Community –  
West London*



*The Basis Project  
regional conference –  
Leeds, January 2010*

# Foreword

Refugee community organisations (RCOs) play a critical role in our society. This little-known corner of the community sector provides vital services to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in the UK.

RCOs play a variety of roles: from helping new communities integrate, to keeping their cultures alive for their children, and providing welfare and support to asylum seekers whose needs are often invisible to wider society.

RCOs have a unique and very special reach into new communities as they are born out of them and understand their needs. Through their engagement with wider society, RCOs also provide us with an insight into these communities, their needs and aspirations that could and should inform mainstream services' decision-making. And yet, RCOs are often wholly under-resourced, and remain largely unheard of, even in the voluntary and community sector itself.

And this is where the Basis Project comes in. We invite you to explore some of the roles RCOs take by reading this booklet, and to get in touch with us if you are interested in what you read and would like to get involved.

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



**Dave Garratt**  
**Director of Operations**  
**Refugee Action**





## Introduction

The Basis Project is focused on creating a 'step change' in how successful refugee community organisations (RCOs) are by providing them with support around their organisational management, so that they are able to fundraise and/or generate income successfully, and then manage projects, and their organisation and its finances effectively.

In setting up the Basis Project, however, the Refugee Council, Refugee Action and the Big Lottery Fund recognised that for RCOs to succeed it would not just require change on their part, but the environment in which RCOs operated would need to change too.

That is why the Basis Project is working with funders to improve their understanding of the benefits that RCOs bring, and the additional challenges that they face in applying for funds. And it is working with second-tier organisations to help them work more effectively with RCOs themselves; therefore creating a more sustainable base of support for RCOs whilst improving second-tier organisations' reach and coverage.

## The Basis Project

Refugee Council and Refugee Action's Basis Project is an England-wide project, that runs from the beginning of 2008 to the end of 2011.

We are working with RCOs in a number of ways – most notably through a 'one-to-one support package' which involves the RCO and one of our development officers agreeing targets for their 'organisational development' work together, then putting this into practice.

This normally takes the form of training, one-to-one advice and information sessions, and signposting. This work is focused around helping RCOs develop their infrastructure, focusing on governance, fundraising, financial management and project development.

We will work with over 220 RCOs in this way during the Basis Project's lifespan. This intensive 'one-to-one' work is complemented by support that we provide to a wider number of RCOs by means of running open training sessions, and one-



**Members of the  
Basis Project  
team**

## – building and sustaining success

off organisational development support.

As part of our work to improve understanding between funders, RCOs and second tier organisations, we have held awareness raising seminars, regional events for all three sectors, and worked one-to-one with funders to help them reach out to RCOs.

We are also working closely with RCOs to help them better understand funder perspectives and requirements.

Funders and second tier organisations

***‘We work to improve understanding between funders, RCOs and second tier organisations’***

are key to RCOs delivering work for their communities. The Basis Project research also showed that there are sometimes gaps in understanding between them and RCOs. This of course works both ways and our work tries to improve that communication.

We aim to connect with over 70 funders and over 70 second tier organisations over the course of the Basis Project, working in a more in-depth way with around 25 of each group.

Many of the organisations we work with do a lot of their work using volunteers and with the goodwill of their community. With funding and the right kind of support, these organisations can thrive.

We hope that you will find the RCOs’ stories you read over the next few pages inspiring.

→ If you would like to explore what we could do together, please get in touch at [basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

# Dover Detainee Visitor Group (DDVG)

## **Vebi Kosumi** – director of DDVG

Our charity was set up in 2002. We advocate for better facilities for detainees and we act as a bridge between detainees and detention centre management.

## **Beatriz Fernandez** – Basis Project organisational development officer for the South East

I came to their ex-detainees conference at the beginning of 2008 and they said ‘Great – we do need some help; you could



come and help us with our business plan.’ It was a long process but by December we were ready with new priorities and new outcomes for the organisation – well, not new but more well-defined. Then Marianela came back from maternity leave and she was ready to get her hands on the application for the Big Lottery Fund.

## **Marianela Clayton** – DDVG strategic planning and development manager

We applied to the Big Lottery Fund and in that period while we were waiting it was extremely stressful. But the Basis Project was there all the time reassuring us, providing us with information about other funders and helping us with an emergency plan if we needed it.

**Vebi Kosumi** I phoned the Big Lottery Fund and the grants officer answered,

she checked and then when they told me about the outcome I put the phone down, didn’t speak to anyone and then I gave Marianela a kiss on both cheeks! So much work had been put into it, and we got £397,000, which for a charity like ours is a lifeline for the next three years.

**Marianela Clayton** The whole office fell very quiet ... and all of a sudden we received this

great news and everyone was jumping and happy and we couldn’t believe it; we were really thankful to the Basis Project for all the support.

**Beatriz Fernandez** I was really, really happy for them because I know the organisation will continue doing more great work.

# Leeds Afro-Latino Group

The Leeds Afro-Latino Group have been working with Basis Project organisational development officer, Mani Thapa, to try to access funding.

Run by Sam Miezi, the group has music and 3-D animation studios in a building renovated entirely by volunteers.

They set up as a community interest company (CIC) in 2006 but found that many people, including some funders, didn't know what a CIC is and therefore didn't want to give funding. So, they're now a registered charity.

They wanted to develop training programmes for local young people in music and animation and early in 2009 were successful in getting funding.

**Mani takes up the story:** The grant from Leeds Community Foundation's Grassroots Grants will help them set up a series of digital music making workshop for 17 to 35-year-old disadvantaged young adults which will provide the opportunity to learn basics of music production.

It aims to target disadvantaged people in providing training covering all aspects of digital music production from development in song writing, music beat making, singing, music editing, recording and

music video production.

The project will not only provide a safe place to promote interaction between different groups but will also build up people's skills and confidence.

Participants will learn an array of exciting creative skills to unlock their creative talent; making a huge impact on their personal development by enriching their lives and accumulating practical hands-on experience.

This project will also help boost their



confidence and develop social skills, such as active listening and communication, understanding of other people's perspective, respecting each other, working in teams, creativity and other useful working habits and so on.

# NILE African Development Organisation – Bradford

## **David Ndiwanyu – director of the Nile African Development Organisation**

The Nile African Development Organisation is a charity based in Bradford. It was set up two years ago to help refugees and asylum seekers and international students from Africa arriving in West Yorkshire.

We help them by signposting to services, offering advice and support and by helping them to access mainstream services.

Having come into the country as an asylum seeker and gaining refugee status, I knew that there were things other refugees needed to help them. I realised there were many agencies in Bradford to help people, but very few focused on refugees and asylum seekers. That's why I and other members of the community, who are all refugees, decided to set up the organisation.

## **Hussein Mahamed – Basis Project organisational development officer for Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East**

The work that I do with David varies from week to week. For example, we recently worked together on the African Achievement awards that Nile organised and was very successful. So it's not

straightforward, it's not a straight line; their development needs vary from week to week. I respond to their emerging issues, as well as working to the development plan and looking to the future.

**David Ndiwanyu** Hussein supports us in a number of activities. He looks through what we are doing, tells us where we are going wrong and how we can develop and gives us training on management issues. He also advises us on how we can access funds, giving us information about where we can apply.

The other thing he does for us is to bring in people from different agencies who are able to support us, which is very important. They can tell us what is happening across the region and nationwide.



*Hussein (left) and David in the Nile offices in Bradford*

# Leicester Congolese Community

## **George N'kashama – chair of the Leicester Congolese Community**

Our organisation started in 2006 and in the beginning we struggled a little bit. But when we met Mo from the Basis Project in 2008 she really helped us. Our aim is to build a strong Congolese community in Leicester.

## **Modupe Odifa – Basis Project organisational development officer for the East Midlands**

I've arranged training for the group to help build their capacity. The management committee is very functional – this is one of the few groups where I have met every member of the management committee.

**George N'kashama** We are French speakers but our children born here speak English. So you've got that conflict between kids and mums where they cannot communicate fully. This is some of the difficulties we've got. So we said to ourselves: we need to come together to raise awareness and integrate more into the system, helping people to learn more English and better skills.

**Modupe Odifa** Funding is always an issue for any organisation. This group has

received funding before and where they needed support they were very quick to ask for it particular in regard to reports to funders. I was able to help them with that and it was a big learning curve for them.

Another big issue, and a real barrier for them, is not having any premises – somewhere to hold meetings and meet



members of their community. We're working on linking them up with an established space as a first step and that will mean they can set up the advice and information service that they are planning.

**George N'kashama** At the beginning I was a little bit hesitant, but recently I have become more optimistic. We had elections and I was chosen as Chair. And I think the future in this country is about community.

# Peterborough African Community Organisation (PACO)

## **Dan Cissokho – manager of PACO**

I'm a refugee. I came to this country in 2002 as an asylum seeker from Africa and then was dispersed to Peterborough and was then given refugee status. During my moving time I could not speak a word of English as I'm French-speaking and I did not know where to go or what to do.

Because of that experience and because other people have been through



**Dan (right) interviews Shpetim for PACO's community radio station**

the same thing, we thought it would be better if we could have a contact support group so we set up PACO.

We have now developed further and run a community radio station. With help from Shpetim at the Basis Project we secured funding in 2008 to keep the station running and were recently

awarded a further £100,000 from the Big Lottery Fund.

## **Shpetim Alimeta – Basis Project organisational development officer for the East of England**

We started by planning the needs of the project and then finalised a fundraising strategy. It has been a splendid working relationship and such a pleasurable working environment.

They really believe in what they do and are connected with their own roots, culture and community. They are connected with society at large – they've got very good links – and this project has improved the links they had already with the local authority and other stakeholders.

Their community radio project is a model project and I'm keen to keep it as a case study for other organisations to learn from. It helps the community to integrate and allows members of the African community and other communities to express themselves – and by doing so they are gaining self-realisation and that is part of the process towards further integration.

# Sudan Women's Association (SWA) – London

## **Elisabeth Ajith – coordinator of SWA**

The Association was established in 1991. At that time there was a big war in Sudan and refugees were coming from all over. Coming from a different background and culture to settle in the UK with a different language was very hard. That is why the women decided to establish the organisation.

We registered SWA as a charity in 1996 to alleviate poverty, to support women's education through literacy and ESOL classes, and to support elderly people with basic English and numeracy so that whenever they're out they can identify the bus number. We have an open door policy – we always help whoever is in need.

## **Kiran Patel – capacity building coordinator, Camden Council**

Camden Council has been providing funding to the Sudan Women's Association since 1996, under a category of access to services. What Camden has recognised very, very clearly is that because of language and cultural difficulties for women in our community, they tend to congregate in their own communities – that's a great point of access to other statutory services. Sudan Women's Association fulfils that very important role.

**Elisabeth Ajith** We've been working with the Basis Project since 2007 on

governance and funding. Our very patient Basis development worker came and analysed what our needs were. Our weakness was that we didn't have a clear management committee structure. Thankfully, through Basis, we managed to have a full day training on good governance.

**Kiran Patel** Refugee organisations have



a huge amount of energy – energy and a will to succeed and to work together. This is very difficult to see in generic organisations that have lasted a long, long time. There's that will to succeed, to participate and do whatever they need to do to get their children a better life.

# Liver World Community Sports – Liverpool

## **Siddi Majubah – coordinator of Liver World Community Sports**

I came to this country as an asylum seeker in the year 2000 and with the help of Lee Omar at the Basis Project I've been able to set up a project called the Liver World Community Sports, using sports to integrate refugees and the local community.

## **Lee Omar – Basis Project organisational development officer for the North West**

The group has come a long way in the two years that I've been working with them. They're all very committed and have taken with both hands the opportunity the Basis Project has given them.



**Lee Omar (left)  
with Siddi  
Majubah**

**Siddi Majubah** Most of the recent refugees in the area have been settled in Kensington, which is a very deprived part of Liverpool. We saw a lot of problems there, a lot of conflict, so we decided to use sport to bring people together and create a platform for community cohesion. We created a football 'world cup' for teams from 20 different communities living in the city.

**Lee Omar** After the success of their football tournament the group had a vision of taking 12 young local white teenagers to Africa so that they could learn more about the country and show what they had in common with the people there. I worked on a fundraising strategy with them and though we had a lot of rejections from funders we made contacts with the housing associations where the young people lived who were willing to support the project.

**Siddi Majubah** took the young people to Gambia – before we went many were not even aware that Africa was a continent with different countries in it. When we got back from the trip to Gambia we went to a famous Liverpool pub that used to be a centre for the British National Party and presented an exhibition about what we had done. A woman there said, 'This has never happened before – it's good!'

# Discovery of The Talents – West Midlands

The Discovery of the Talents was founded in 2006 by Justin Nsiko Bankwa, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In 2008, with help from the Basis Project, they got funding from Trafford Hall for an allotment project in Birmingham.

## **David Hirst – Basis Project organisational development officer for the West Midlands**

I've known Justin and his group probably for about a year and I've supported their willingness to get an allotment and encouraged them – I sent a few emails to the council when they lost their application and generally encouraged them.

## **Justin Nsiko Bankwa**

First of all we plant callaloo, which we are 100 per cent sure will grow up here. And we will try other fruit and other vegetables like cabbage, beans and maize which we are 100 per cent sure will grow.

It is a very good experience for us. When, one day, if I am back in the Congo, I can see which is the best place to do an allotment project.

## **Looking to the future**

The Discovery of the Talents wants to encourage as many refugees as possible to work on and enjoy the allotment. They plan to expand the allotment to accommodate as many people as wish to join them.



*David (centre) with Justin (right) and volunteer Kika Aime Bubala*

# Refugee Women of Bristol

## **Negat Hussein** – chair of Refugee Women of Bristol

This year I was elected to be the chair of Refugee Women, I was quite delighted.

When we approached the Basis Project, it was because we had been unsuccessful with funding.

## **Nuwa Serunjogi** – Basis Project organisational development officer for the South West

I'm generally supporting Refugee Women of Bristol with their overall capacity – the way

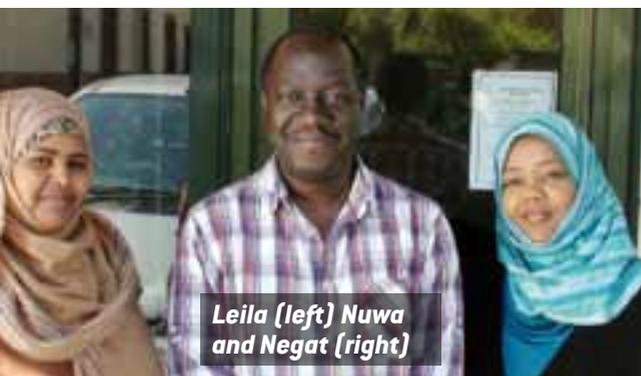
eating, exercise and therapy, as well as advice and advocacy and English classes.

One of the main bits of work I do is to recruit refugee women to train other women and to empower the community to help stop practising female genital mutilation (FGM).

**Negat Hussein** Nuwa has also offered us a lot of support with the management committee because we're quite new. We also provide management committee opportunities to refugee women and asylum seekers so they get the opportunity to build up self-confidence. A lot of people don't see themselves sitting in a meeting and making decisions on behalf of other people.

**Nuwa Serunjogi** I've also been supporting them with fundraising. They've been able with my support, working with the chair, to raise funds from the Hilden Charitable Fund and the HCD Memorial. They secured £4,500 from the Hilden Charitable Fund and £5,000 from HCD Memorial.

**Negat Hussein** We've been up and running for eight years and I think what we are now is really good. And hopefully with Nuwa's and Basis's help and support we're going to get even stronger.



*Leila (left) Nuwa and Negat (right)*

they run their organisation, the way they manage their affairs. To that end, they've been able to secure charity registration.

## **Leila Ismail** – advocacy and advice worker for Refugee Women of Bristol

We have lots of different women coming to the drop in – last time we counted 18 nationalities! We provide workshops on mental health, counselling, art, healthy



***Basis Project organisational development officer, Lee Omar, with Mathieu Kapasi, project manager of the Congolese Association of Merseyside. Lee has worked with the Association to support its continued growth in the Kensington area of Liverpool, including the development of a well attended computer training drop-in centre.***



The Basis Project  
Building and sustaining success

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***Refugee community organisations (RCOs) are organisations set up or led by refugees to provide services to refugees and asylum seekers. They are rooted within the communities they serve, to act as bridges to mainstream services and other groups. Refugees are involved in the management of these organisations through representing their community group or as a service user.***

To find out more about the Basis Project:

Email [basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk) or visit our website at [www.basisproject.org.uk](http://www.basisproject.org.uk)

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Front cover photo: Leila Smile and Negat Hussein from Refugee Women of Bristol



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