



Hackney Refugee Forum Annual Report 2008 - 09

2008 –2009: A year to **work harder** to deal with new and worsening problems



Our annual report features information on Hackney Refugee Forum’s activities during 2008 –09:

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In last year’s report, Hackney Refugee Forum’s reported that: “We need more resources to organise better activities, improve the quality of our services, organise our administration, find new financial support to exist and better serve our communities in the future”.

Unfortunately, we weren’t able to secure the financial support needed to acquire further resources or improve our administration. Therefore we have focussed our activities on the prominent needs of our communities.

Many thanks to our funders for supporting Hackney Refugee Forum in 2008 - 2009: Awards for All, Community Empowerment Network, Hackney Council for Voluntary Service, Improving Reach Capacity Builders, London Borough of Hackney, LINK UP, Team Hackney, The Learning Trust, The West Hackney Parochial Charity.



Hackney Refugee Forum: 18 Springfield House, 5 Tyssen Street London E8 2LY Tel: 020 7923 1962 Email: ali@hcvcs.org.uk Web: www.hackneyrefugeeforum.org.uk



Introduction

Ali-Riza Aksoy, Chair

Dear Friends,

During the last financial year, Hackney's refugee, asylum seeker and migrant (RASM) communities have increasingly felt the impact of the economical downturn.

Unemployment and reduced wages have seriously hit our family and social lives, which were already below national standards of living. Our voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations which were struggling to attract funding and skilled staff continue to lose their premises. Gaining more clients but less income...

To meet this challenge, Hackney Refugee Forum (HRF) has worked harder to raise awareness amongst mainstream agencies about the situation for RASM communities and the organisations which support them.

HRF maintains London wide representation through my presence on:

- London Mayor's Refugee Advisory Panel (MRAP)
- London Refugee Economic Action (LORECA).

Local representation continues at:

- Team Hackney – the local strategic partnership where decisions are made about services
- The Learning Trust (TLT) – responsible for education in Hackney
- City & Hackney Primary Care Trust (CHPCT)
- Hackney Community College
- Educators Forum – a VCS group for teachers from RASM communities.

Hundreds of people from RASM organisations and mainstream service providers have attended our six weekly regular meetings focussed on burning issues of RASM communities and our AGM in October. These events have proved useful for networking and

developing partnerships.

Our hard work has been appreciated by London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) who awarded us "Overall winner of Success Stories 2008". LVSC's competition to find the year's most inspiring stories from London's VCS and social enterprise sectors.

However, our capacity remains limited despite increasing needs of Hackney's RASM communities. We continue to employ only one worker, Ibrahim Avcil – first as an Employment Adviser then Network and Information Coordinator. Our income was down on the previous year and our limited financial resources barely cover our running costs.

Dear Friends, yes, we really are struggling because of recent negative developments. Therefore, I would like to thank all our member organisations for their joint support, activities and

producing tens of volunteers for HRF activities. I believe we will be in a much better position when these volunteers become leaders and skilled representatives of our communities.

I also would like to thank our local service providers for their support, especially Hackney Council for Voluntary Service (HCVS) and Hackney's Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and their committed staff who have been ready to help us whenever needed.

Let's continue to work together to change our communities for the better. Improving our living standards and developing good relations without prejudice with host community organisations and members.

Ali-Riza Aksoy
Chair
Hackney Refugee Forum

We have been an active member of Hackney Refugee Forum for many years. It helps us work with other VCS groups across refugee and asylum seeker communities to meet shared areas of need.

Lombe Mwamba
SOS Families

Our Trustees

Hackney Refugee Forum is governed by nine trustees from our member voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations serving Hackney's refugee and asylum seeker communities.

On this page, you can see who they are and which organisation they come from.



Thomas Bubi
Treasurer
African Support & Project Centre



Juan Rincon
Secretary
Latin American Advisory Committee



Apollo Kakaire
Member
BUSOGA UK



Lombe Mwamba
Member
SOS Families



Bekele Gessesse
Member
AGROFOREP



Mehmet Karakus
Member
International Music and Dance Centre



Erdogan Kucuk
Member
Renk Art



Gul Karadag
Member
Refugee Workers Cultural Association



Senay Dur
Member
Tohum Cultural Centre



Diana Chikitu
Member
Zenith Women's Association



Rayah Feldman
Member
HACKNEY MIGRANT CENTRE



Update Ibrahim Avcil, Network Coordinator

2008-09 has been another year of success for Hackney Refugee Forum. We have once again produced massive amount of work with very limited resources. I have worked as the Employment Advisor and the Network Coordinator of the Forum from April 2008 to March 2009, and thereafter, continued as the Network Coordinator.

We have organised seven regular Forum meetings, all of which continued to be highly popular with the participation of over 40 representatives of refugee VCS organisations and mainstream service providers. The number can go up to 60 according to the topic.

HRF has increased its database throughout 2008-09; we are now in regular contact with over 60 Refugee organisations. We have also increased our contacts with mainstream service providers that work with refugee organisations and individuals.

Our networking amongst refugee organisations and mainstream service providers has created valuable partnerships between different refugee organisations as consortia and also between refugee organisations and service providers.

Fundraising support

We assisted many small refugee organisations to complete funding applications.

Employment

We successfully engaged 18 people into sustainable employment through a project funded by Team Hackney Large Community Grants. Over 100 refugee individuals have benefited from this programme through one to one advice sessions and workshops to develop their employability. Unfortunately, HRF has not been successful in its bid for the current year.

Other successful networking activities include:

1. Drug and Alcohol Research

We carried out research within refugee communities on behalf of the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). Over 220 refugees were interviewed to find out the barriers stopping them from accessing treatment services.

2. Volunteers

I am the only paid employee of the Forum. However, we carry out an outstanding amount of work thanks to our very hard working and dedicated volunteers. Over 22 volunteers supported us throughout the year.

3. NVQ Level 3 on management

The good news is that alongside all the activities above and the ones I have not included in this report due to lack of space, I am completing an NVQ Level 3 course on management.



Our work on health

As the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Link Worker at the Community Health Services NHS Hackney, I have worked in partnership with Hackney Refugee Forum (HRF) since 2005 and seen it go from strength to strength in widening activities for refugee communities locally.

HRF is important for us in its ability to empower refugee communities to make informed choices about Health Services – by working to improve the understanding of services and identifying and breaking down barriers to accessing these services – vital both for service providers and refugee communities in Hackney.

Mrs. Nese Erkan
Refugee Link Worker
Community Health Services
NHS Hackney

To provide opportunities for health authorities to hear us and learn more about the specific needs of Hackney's RASM communities, we have developed our relationships with City & Hackney Primary Care Trust (CHPCT) and VCS networks and groups. These include:

- City & Hackney Health & Social Care Forum (HSCF)
- City & Hackney MIND
- Social Action for Health (SAfH)
- BEMWG
- Hackney's local LINK.

We also worked closely with:

Hackney Migrant Centre (HMC) - Our joint work with CHPCT's Refugee Link Worker has concentrated our support for HMC which provides weekly support for refugees and migrants in need.

DERMAN - We have attended many meetings at this Turkish and Kurdish health organisation, particularly with their Mental Health team, and referred many people to their advice and guidance support.

Hackney council Refugee Steering Group - We emphasised overcrowded housing, conditions at temporary accommodation and refugee health issues which resulted in a detailed report.

Refugee Therapy Centre and NAFSIYAT (Refugee Women Therapy) - Our public support for this encouraged many RASM community members to start using these services.

The Chair has prepared reports and delivered speeches on mental health problems and working conditions and their effects on the health of the RASM communities at meetings organised by NIACE -The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and BEMWG. He has also raised these issues at meetings of other health groups.

Since January 2009, the Chair has worked closely with Community Health Services NHS Hackney, to inform and reduce the effects of the swine flu pandemic.



HRF Refugee Week
Alternative health therapy

Our work with **Hackney Council's Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)** has grown during this financial year.

HRF applied to the DAAT for a grant to carry out research within local refugee and migrant communities to identify the level of alcohol consumed within these communities, and their understanding of this.

We have also tried to establish the service providers that these communities use when they require support and assistance. HRF also actively took part in the DAAT's BME steering committee meetings.



HRF & DAAT: Research project

Health was the priority for our **REFUGEE WEEK** activities. At our refugee week event, Domestic Violence and Mental Health were the themes. More than **300** people attended, many of whom took part in the panel and cultural activities.

From this, we set up a **Refugee Health Steering Group** to discuss the health issues of our communities and better inform the health authorities.

Hackney Council's Child Protection team were helped by HRF to reach out to parents mainly from Congolese and Turkish speaking communities and organise child protection awareness courses for them.



HRF Refugee Week: Panel discussion

Together with **Refugee Workers Cultural Association (RWCA)**, we organised a picnic on Puberty and Mental Health of Refugee Youth. Seventy young people took part in a three hour discussion with a mental health expert.

In addition, we organised training on "How to become a Health interpreter", many of our regular network meetings focussed on health, especially refugee mental health therapies.

HRF members sit on the Management Committees of VCS health and social care organisations and networks, such as BEMWG and HMC. We have also helped Social Services and other health services with their consultancy and research needs.



HRF & RWCA: Talking through youth issues

Our work on representation

I would like to thank the Hackney Refugee Forum for its ongoing support to the GLA's work on refugee integration. The GLA appreciates the contribution of the Hackney Refugee Forum Chair to the work of the Mayor's Refugee Advisory Panel (MRAP). MRAP is a platform that enables the views of the diverse refugee communities to be heard at a high strategic level. The panel has played a crucial role in developing the Mayor's Draft Strategy on Refugee Integration in London and in the strategy's far-reaching consultation process in 2007.

In 2009 MRAP was reviewed to include the Mayor's work on migrant integration. Its current role is to advise the Mayor and the London Strategic Migration Partnership on the issues facing asylum seekers, refugees and migrant communities as they successfully integrate into their local communities and hence contribute to the economic, social and civil life in London. In this context the work of the Hackney Refugee Forum is well known and helps to create an accessible and cohesive society.

Amna Mahmoud
Project & Policy Officer
Diversity & Social Policy Team
Greater London Authority (GLA)

To meet the challenges for our communities, Hackney Refugee Forum (HRF) has worked harder to raise awareness amongst mainstream organisations about the situation for RASM communities and their organisations.

100s of representatives from RASM organisations and mainstream service providers have attended our six weekly regular meetings focussed on burning issues of RASM communities as well as our AGM in October. These events have proved useful opportunities for networking and developing partnerships for joint activities.

HRF maintains London representation through the presence of our Chair on:

- London Mayor's Refugee Advisory Panel
- London Development Agency (LDA)
- London Refugee Economic Action (LORECA)
- Praxis
- NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
- London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC).



HRF: London Success Story winners

Hackney Refugee Forum is exemplary in its ability to outreach to some of Hackney's most marginalised communities, and to bring people together in informal and formal settings to raise and discuss issues of concern to the Refugees, Migrants and Asylum seekers.

For HCVS, working with Hackney Refugee Forum has a huge impact on our ability to support the work of RASM organisations – and we would like to encourage any agency in Hackney who offers services to these communities to contact HRF as a first step.

Jake Ferguson
Chief Officer
Hackney Council for Voluntary Service (HCVS)

Our communities continue to be represented locally at:

- Team Hackney – the local strategic partnership where decisions are made about local services
- The Learning Trust – responsible for education in Hackney
- NHS Hackney
- Hackney Community College (HCC)
- Educators Forum – a VCS group for teachers from RASM communities.
- Hackney Migrant Centre – providing information and advice on welfare, immigration and health
- Child care centre at Minik Kardes Nursery.



HRF: Networking and partnership working



HRF: Cultural activities and entertainment



HRF: Olympics 2012 discussion

Our work on employment

Hackney Refugee Forum continues to make a positive contribution to the partnership. Over the past year they have worked closely with Team Hackney partners in the development of the Migration Impact Fund which will make a real difference to the lives of migrants living in the borough.

As an active element of the Community Engagement Network the Forum is able to advocate on behalf of refugees in Hackney, ensuring that their voice is heard when shaping local services.

Ian Lewis
Director of Partnerships
London Borough of Hackney

The global economic recession has affected RASM communities significantly, because our communities were already in a vulnerable position. There are more redundancies, longer hours for less pay and more competition for jobs.

Ibrahim Avcil, our Employment Advice Worker continues to provide advice and guidance through one to one sessions and training for RASM community members to improve their job search skills needs.

Contributing to Hackney's volunteer strategy

15 VCS organisations were represented at a focus group we organised for Hackney Council's 2012 Olympics Department as part of their consultation to learn more about volunteers' issues in Hackney.

Employment programme

During 2008 - 09, Hackney Refugee Forum carried out an employment programme that was funded by Team Hackney. We organised various training programmes to enhance the employment skills of refugees and migrants in Hackney.

Our training programmes included Job search skills, CV writing, interview skills and completing application forms.

57 individuals received one to one information

18 people accessed sustainable employment, mainly in housing and community related jobs.

4 training workshops in the Turkish, Kurdish and Ethiopian VCS.

Staff and Volunteer trainings

HRF values the importance of workforce development. Both staff and volunteers are encouraged to attend training to build their capacity and better serve their communities.

7 HRF volunteers attended accredited training: NVQ Level 2 Leadership and NVQ Level 3 information advice and guidance training.

1 HRF employee Ibrahim Avcil - Network Coordinator attended various non-accredited programmes and is completing NVQ Level 3 Management training.

HRF would like to thank HCVS, Uxbridge University and Refugee Women Association who provided the NVQ Level 2 and 3 courses.

Our work on capacity building and fundraising support

Without the support from Hackney Refugee Forum to encourage us to apply for funding and the follow up help in with filling in the applications, many more refugee groups in Hackney would have to close their doors and stop their activities.

Yusuf Acil
Hundred Flowers Cultural Centre

Throughout 2008 - 09, we supported the following 16 VCS organisations to develop their capacity through training and application support.

African Support and Project Centre, AGROFOREP, Bozcader, BUSOGA Association, Educators Forum, Great Nile Trust, Hundred Flower Cultural Centre, International Dance and Music Centre, International Youth Centre, Liberty Supplementary School, London SAZ School, Refugee Workers Cultural Association, Rising Youth, SOS Families, Theatre East N Bull and Tohum Cultural Centre.

With HRF's support, most of these organisations received grants; some of them secured more than £20,000.

Thanks to the LINK UP network, Hackney's Change Up network which aims to improve the capacity of the VCS, and HCVS, £10,000 was available for capacity building training for trustees, volunteers and staff working for refugee community organisations.

Outreach support to refugee organisations

26 RASM organisations received outreach support despite our limited resources. During this, we identified the areas needing development of these organisations and referred them to appropriate training services in the borough.

We gave a presentation about Learning Champions at a **national** NIACE conference.



HRF: One-to-one capacity building



HRF: Volunteer training workshops

Our work on education

Hackney Community College is the largest provider of ESOL in the Borough and as such is delighted to be working in partnership with Hackney Refugee Forum. The Forum provides a great opportunity for us to link with over 50 other relevant organisations, improving our dialogue with refugee and migrant groups.

Both organisations agree that there aren't enough ESOL places in the Borough and disagree with the introduction of fees for ESOL students. We have been pleased to be able to campaign together on these matters and work successfully together on the bid for support for the Migrant Impact Fund, which will help to increase provision locally.

We are pleased to hear ideas at the HRF meetings and to respond to them, as our resources allow. For example, in response to concerns of the Forum we have introduced ten ESOL programmes in a variety of settings across the borough to support those ESOL learners with family responsibilities or who find it difficult to come to the College for longer sessions.

We look forward to continuing to work with HRF in the future to further improve provision for local people.

Ian Ashman
Director
Hackney Community College

The importance of education for our communities is undeniable. Since the economic recession, cuts to adult education and ESOL provision have accelerated.

HRF joined the Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL) campaign with Hackney Community College, University College Union and other leading educational establishments. Together we have lobbied Parliament, organised public meetings and petitions to stop these cuts which are affecting all communities.

Active approach to local ESOL issues

We have also taken a proactive approach locally, contributing to ESOL consultations at The Learning Trust.

One of our network meetings focussed on ESOL provision in Hackney, to which Hackney Community College and The Learning Trust sent their reps. Together with these two agencies and ELATT and other important

ESOL providers in Hackney, we successfully established an ESOL Forum. The Forum meets regularly and is producing a database of ESOL provision as part of its mission to improve local provision of ESOL.

For Hackney Training & Employment (HTEN)'s research for Hackney Council, we brought more than 20 teachers and reps from organisations providing ESOL together to discuss burning issues of teaching English.

Extra support in education

We continue to support our sister organisation Educators Forum and are happy to see them working in their new premises.

At Hackney Community College's Refugee week event, we held a stall which attracted hundreds of people from all communities to see what training was available

We took part in London Development Agency (LDA) consultation events to raise the education issues of RASM groups in London.

The Adult Learning Service, at the Learning Trust, has been in partnership with HRF for several years. It has been an enjoyable and valued relationship in which we have worked together successfully to be more responsive to the learning and training needs of refugee communities in Hackney.

Trish Smith
Head of Adult and Community Learning
The Learning Trust

Networking amongst refugee organisations and mainstream service providers

Our six weekly regular meetings continued throughout 2008 / 09, bringing together RASM organisations and mainstream service providers to exchange information and investigate partnership activities.

Hackney Refugee Forum now has a database of refugee organisations in the borough and a database of mainstream organisations which provide services to refugee community organisations.

We brought refugee groups from different communities to apply for grants in partnership to better serve their communities.

Our achievements

- 1 ESOL Forum established
- 6 regular HRF meetings held
- 50 representatives of both sectors attended each of our meetings
- 60 RASM organisations on our database - grown from 45 last year.



HRF networking: Hackney Council 2012 team



HRF networking: Refugee organisations



HRF networking: Hackney Voluntary Action

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the Year Ended 31st March 2009

Incoming Resources	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2008 £	2009 £
Grants:				-
Neighbourhood Facilitators Prog. - ESF 1.3				-
CEN - Team Hackney		25,206	25,206	3,410
CEN - Cross Cutting		3,000	3,000	-
LBH - Healthy Living Day		1,000	1,000	-
Improving Reach Programme - Capacity Builders		6,571	6,571	45,318
Awards for All - Job Search Training				9,735
The Learning Trust - Adult Learners Week				160
LINK UP		300	300	-
HCVS Fast Track	1,000		1,000	550
West Hackney Parochial				10,200*
Other Income:				250
Donation	660		660	
London Development Agency (LDA)	200		200	
London Voluntary Service Council	200		200	
Roehampton University				-
Bank interest	20		20	25
Total Incoming Resources	2,080	36,076	38,157	69,648
Resources Expended				
Salaries & NIC		23,846	23,846	33,609
Meeting, Training, Courses		6,170	6,170	5,646
Tutor and Volunteers		3,715	3,715	3,885
Travel (Inc. Fast Track), child care		784	784	3,698
Stationeries, Printing, Postage, Publicity		5,228	5,228	3,653
Website - Development & Maintenance				1,500
Refreshment, Venue and Food		5,826	5,826	6,725
Equipment				1,564
Membership				80
Bank Charges				4
Governance costs:				-
Professional Fees	1,078		1,078	1,055
AGM				110
Total Resources Expended	1,078	45,569	46,646	61,529
Net Incoming Resources (Outgoing)	1,003	(9,493)	(8,490)	8,119
Balance B/fwd (01/04/08)	-	24,147	24,147	16,028
Balance B/fwd (31/03/09)	1,003	14,654	15,657	24,147

* West Parochial were delayed in paying our grant before these accounts were auditted. £10,000 will be added to 2009 / 2010 accounts

BALANCE SHEET For the Year Ended 31st March 2009

	Note	2009 £	2008 £
Fixed Assets		-	-
Current Assets			
Cash and Bank	2	16,405	24,970
Current Liabilities			
Amounts falling due within one year	3	(748)	(823)
Net Current Assets		<u>15,657</u>	<u>24,147</u>
Total Net Assets		<u>15,657</u>	<u>24,147</u>
FUNDS			
Restricted		14,654	23,672
Unrestricted		<u>1,003</u>	<u>475</u>
		<u>15,657</u>	<u>24,147</u>

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards and follow the recommendations in the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting by Charities - SORP. Emmanuel Mensah FMAAT, Association of Accounting Technicians, NHSL & Co, Unit 164, Lee Valley Technopark, Ashley Road, London N18 9LN. Tel: 020 8880 4010.

Dear Colleagues,

The financial year 2008 - 09 was a very difficult year for refugee, asylum seeker and migrant support groups. Most of us have suffered due to less funding, losing our premises and the increase in need for our services from our clients due to the recession.

We clearly see that the following year will be worse. Therefore, we need to support each other, work more closely together, and with service providers, to lobby for better resources to continue the support for our disadvantaged communities.

Lastly, I salute and congratulate all of you for your wonderful work with dedication and commitment serving our communities who are struggling to change their lives for the better.

Ali-Riza Aksoy
Chair, Hackney Refugee Forum



HRF communities: Turkish dancing



HRF communities: Ethiopian singing



HRF communities: Bringing people together to improve lives

I would like to thank all our member organisations for their joint support, activities and producing tens of volunteers for HRF activities. I believe we will be in a much better position when these volunteers become leaders and skilled representatives of our communities.

Ali-Riza Aksoy, Chair - Hackney Refugee Forum



Hackney Refugee Forum (HRF) is the voice for over 60 local voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups serving refugees and asylum seekers in Hackney. As a network of organisations, we aim to influence local service providers and advocate on behalf of the needs of our communities. We believe that by providing opportunities for exchanging, sharing and learning from the experience of refugees we can raise awareness of issues, enable them to access their rights, develop their well-being and take part as fully as possible in all aspects of community life.

Contact details: Ali-Riza Aksoy, 18 Springfield House, 5 Tyssen Street London E8 2LY Tel: 020 7923 1962 Email: ali@hcvs.org.uk
Website: www.hackneyrefugeeforum.org.uk