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The Basis Project
Building and sustaining success

Refugee Council | Refugee Action

Iraqi Centre for Integration and Cohesion: Planning and delivering a project

Background information about Iraqi Centre for Integration & Cohesion

The Iraqi Centre for Integration & Cohesion (ICIC) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, established in 2004 with three trustees and two coopted members, 20 volunteers and one part time worker.

ICIC aims to support the Iraqi community, giving advice and guidance and facilitating integration into British society.

ICIC runs the following projects:

- Two year project to build Muslim women's capacity under the Prevent Violence and Extremism programme.
- Ealing Council funded project to capacity build faith community leaders through developing their presentation and administration skills.
- Awards For All funded project to deliver women only Aerobic and Yoga programs.
- Three years funding to deliver youth projects, bridging the gap between generations through the Mothers and Daughters Arts project and two leadership programs.

The ICIC has built good relations with organisations including Brent Heath Care, Brent Council, Brahma Kumari, West London Refugee Women's Forum, Brent Refugee & Migrant Forum and The Centre for Peaceful Solutions.

Our project: Addressing generation gap issues between mothers and daughters

To address the generation gap difficulties mothers and daughters were experiencing between each other, ICIC identified from a focus group discussion community interest in a Mothers and Daughters creative arts project which might help different generations work together. In this paper we explain how we went about developing and delivering this project, and involving women and young people in this process.

How did we approach our project?

In order to identify the need for the project we:

- Implemented two focus groups one for youth and one for adults, where we identified the gap and the need for the project.
- Gathered questionnaires from youth and adults to choose an activity of interest for both age groups.

The project objectives, which were developed using the results of the consultation and engagement work were to:

1. engage our Muslim youth in delivering positive messages
2. use art as a stress release tool for different generations
3. use the talent of artists in our community to educate our younger generations
4. invest in youth talent and time during their School Holiday
5. build bridges between two generation through the Art work

The organisation Play Brent introduced ICIC to John Lyons charity funding, which was specially catering for Muslim Youth. We submitted a proposal to run a four week Art Work summer scheme, which was successful.

We planned the project based on the outcome of the questionnaires and focus groups, which showed that people were interested in 1) Art work (glass painting), 2) Photography & Photoshop, 3) Sewing, 4) Visits to parks and museums. Although the time for the project was very short, we managed to meet before the start of the project to plan delivery, allocate duties for the volunteers and ensure that all staff and volunteers had a CRB check.

We set up a steering group of mothers and daughters before the project. We discussed the plan of the project and who would facilitate the training. We decided to use a mixture of professional young people and middle aged people to help them identify with both groups. We also identified who could volunteer to look after the young children and do activities. The steering group met before each workshop to discuss what was coming up and any issues arising, new materials we needed to buy, who would do what for each session. We agreed what subject we would discuss on the trips we went on and who would play which role. We also met at the end of the project to evaluate what we achieved, how we handled the budget, analysing the evaluation forms and planning future projects on the basis of this. We also circulated the final project to the steering group to check that they agreed with it before sending to the funders.

Involving youth in the steering group was really important. We realised that they have a lot to contribute, and it helped them to feel ownership of the project.

All participants were present and invited their families and friends to the final event. Participants showed off their work and it was covered by satellite TV channels. All participants were awarded certificates for attendance. There was

also an exhibition attended by the Culture Minister of Iraq. Having these high profile events helped build participant's confidence.

The impact of the project on our participants was very positive. For example:

- Participants reported clear improvement of mother-daughter relations
- Participants requested further activities
- Other parents and youths who heard about the project asked us to run the same project again because they heard about it from the previous participants
- Five people started volunteering with our organisation when the project had finished.

After the project, as an organisation we used the same method of project development to plan for other projects. We kept all participants as members in our database.

What problems and barriers did we face in doing this, and how did we overcome or try to overcome these?

1. The funding was limited and we had a very challenging time to find cheap materials to match our budget, we had to look for very cheap places to buy them.
2. As it was the summer holiday, very young children (under 5s) had to join their Mums. We had to find another room for a separate workshop suitable for very small children and it was another challenge to cater for this age group. To overcome this problem we raised some extra money by asking for small entry fees from all participants so that we could have suitably qualified volunteers to run activities for small children.
3. The rooms we hired were small for the number of people recruited. Our target was 20 people and we ended up with 30 people plus the trainer and volunteers. We had to hire separate room for the sewing and the table cloth making. We thought at the start that it might be difficult to engage young people in the project but in the end the opposite was true; they were really keen to be involved!
4. Some of the technical issues raised in the Photoshop workshop were a bit difficult for some mothers to digest, but support from the trainers, volunteers, and the young daughters who were familiar with Photoshop work helped to make positive outcomes for this workshop.
5. We needed more volunteers when travelling to the parks and Museum and extra volunteer expenses took us over budget. A few mothers' expenses whose expenses as participants were already within the budget volunteered to play this role.
6. Our big challenge was to continue this project every summer holiday. Unfortunately we have not been able to rerun this project due to lack of funding. It is frustrating for us that funders usually want to fund

'new' projects rather than fund the continuation of projects which have been successful.

The following support was helpful in the development of this project:

- One to one support from volunteers was very important.
- Approaching the talented graduate youth to deliver some of the workshops was a good experience for both trainers and trainees.
- We were able to use other organisation premises for the exhibition and the Award Day in Dar Al Islam Foundation.
- Using the Iraqi Cultural Exhibition gave the participants the opportunity to meet the Iraqi Cultural Minister and many famous artists in the two days exhibition.
- We were able to reach an international audience through Alfurat and Al-Faiha Satellite channels, which was very good publicity for the project.

The key learning points and tips for other RCOs

Address need The best way to make your project successful is to make sure it is really needed by the community by asking the community what they want through questionnaires, and needs assessment. This helps you to understand the priority needs of the community and to demonstrate need for the project to funders.

Include all perspectives We learnt that it is possible to work with mixed age groups for projects where we can identify common interests and mixed age group projects can be very successful.

Recruit skilled volunteers We learnt that rather than buying in outside trainers and workshop facilitators, we can recruit skilled volunteers from within our community and also train our young people to take up some roles within the organisation. We recommend engaging youth as volunteers or staff in youth projects.

Participant involvement to shape project We learnt how important it is to involve participants in the ongoing planning of the project through the steering group for women and youth and also consulting participants every week to hear their suggestions and give them choices about which museum and which park to visit.

Vary activities We learnt that introducing outdoor as well as indoor activities has a positive impact on young people. For example, we held a photography workshop indoors, but also took people outside to take photos and this change of environment helped to keep young people interested. Young people can get bored meeting in the same room all the time. Our trips to parks and museums, in between indoor activities, helped us to make the project exciting and have full attendance from participants who did not want to miss out on any session.

Contingency funds We learnt that it is useful to have some contingency money set aside to cover unexpected expenses, rather than being limited by a very tight budget. For example, because of funding limitations we ended the project with trip to Portsmouth, but if we had access to more funding we could have arranged a weekend camp.

Plan long-term We suggest it is better to apply for a long-term project rather a short term project if you have the chance. This is because it is easy to raise expectations by running short term projects. In this case participants have been very keen to continue with similar activities, but we haven't found appropriate funding. Strategic planning ahead for any project is very important.

Collaboration We would be really interested in developing further similar projects in a consortium, as we think this could be really useful in helping us to learn from each other, and hopefully joint working would help us to access funding.

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