

# The Basis Project Conference Report

## Sustainability and Survival

### The National Conference for Refugee Community Organisations

11 June 2010

Camden Centre, London



The Basis Project  
Building and sustaining success

Refugee Council | Refugee Action

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## About the Basis Project

The Basis Project is a partnership project led by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The Project provides one-to-one organisational development support to RCOs across England, and works closely with funders and other mainstream bodies to increase their understanding of RCOs.

## Aims and objectives of the conference

The first ever Basis Project national conference, Sustainability and Survival, gave refugee community organisations (RCOs) an opportunity to share their experiences with funders, second-tier organisations and statutory agencies. The conference offered a platform to celebrate the achievements of the refugee sector, to explore and reflect on its role and to consider its future sustainability.

## Key speakers

<b>Donna Covey</b>	Chief Executive for the Refugee Council
<b>Sanjay Dighé</b>	Chair for the Big Lottery Fund's England Committee
<b>Dr Richard Piper</b>	Head of Strategy and Impact for the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
<b>David Ndiwanyu</b>	Chief Executive Officer and founder of the NILE African Development Organisation, Bradford.

## Workshops

Six workshops were held during the morning and repeated during the afternoon. These were:

### **Developing an effective refugee community organisation**

(led by Sarah Menzies and Jules Mambu)

### **Plugging the gaps**

(led by Vaughan Jones and Juliet Reid)

### **Key aspects of effective RCO involvement**

(led by Herbert Dirahu and Aymero)

### **RCOs and environmental issues**

(led by Hannah Smith)

### **Social enterprise and a guide to commissioning**

(led by Steve Weiler and Jack Shieh)

### **RCOs understanding of the funder's perspective**

(led by Birgitta Clift)

The Basis Project would like to thank all speakers, panel members, workshop leaders, workshop note takers, the venue manager and staff who helped to ensure the smooth running of the conference.

## The Plenary Session

The conference was chaired by **Emily Kippax**, the Basis Project Manager. 143 individuals from RCOs, infrastructure support organisations and funders attended.

### Donna Covey

Emily introduced **Donna Covey**, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, who was delighted to open the conference.

Donna's previous roles include being Chief Executive of Asthma UK and Director of the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales. She spent many years at the GMB Union, where she was the National Officer responsible for equality rights, and a member of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) General Council.

She praised the Basis Project:

*"It's brilliant, because the refugee community organisations it supports are brilliant.*

*You play a critical role in our society providing vital services to people who have lost everything and are trying to rebuild their lives in a strange and hostile land.*

*You help new communities integrate, keep their cultures alive for their children, and provide welfare and support to asylum seekers who are ignored and shunned by wider society.*

*RCOs also have a unique and very special reach into new communities as they are born out of them and understand their needs."*

She deplored the fact that, despite the importance of RCOs, they are under-resourced and undervalued, even within the voluntary and community sector.

She reminded participants that the Basis Project was set up to help RCOs meet the increasing challenges of accessing funding. She explained that the Basis

Project works to translate this energy into successful funding bids, which will help RCOs to develop and sustain their projects:

*"The Basis Project works with RCOs directly and focuses on tailoring support to their individual needs and objectives, and that through one-to-one support, RCOs are in a stronger position to deliver good quality support for their clients."*

She added that in the last two and a half years, the Basis Project support team has worked with 179 RCOs from a diverse range of communities. Many have been successful in raising funds for projects, and in total, they are successfully running 89 projects for refugee and asylum seeker communities.

She gave some examples, starting with the Peterborough African Community Organisation (PACO), which worked with the Basis Project to develop a fundraising strategy.

This led to an initial grant of £12,000 and then a further £100,000 from the Big Lottery Fund.

She explained that PACO run a community radio station; they are connected to their roots and culture but focus on connecting refugees and migrants to the communities in which they live. The project has improved the community's links with the local authority and other stakeholders, and has also connected communities around the globe due to the radio station's internet broadcasts.

Another great success story Donna related was Liverworld Community Sports based in Liverpool. Their coordinator, Siddi Majubah, created a football 'world cup' for teams from 20 different communities living in the city. Their aim was to help refugees integrate in a part of the city where the British National Party had a strong presence. The Basis Project helped them develop the organisation



by focusing on their objectives, fundraising, governance and specific support around setting up a social enterprise.

Donna told the conference that the Basis Project has a range of resources to help RCOs improve their organisations – including four organisational development toolkits available on the Basis Project website at [www.thebasisproject.org.uk](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk). The toolkits provide RCOs with support around their organisational management so that they are able to fundraise and generate income successfully, and to manage their organisation, its projects and finances effectively.

The toolkits have been well received. Donna quoted Wiryra Hassan from the Hammersmith Community and Voluntary Support Association (CaVSA), which works with RCOs and black and ethnic minority organisations as saying that the toolkits are *“well researched, updated and very useful for our clients”*.

Donna also highlighted the importance of the Basis Project website, saying that: *“Since the Basis website launched two years ago, there have been almost 13,000 visits by just over 9,500 different people – showing the need out there for this work.”*

Donna then explained that the Basis Project also works with funders to improve their understanding of the benefits that RCOs bring, and the additional challenges that they face in applying for funds. Similarly, the Basis Project works with second-tier organisations working with RCOs to create a more sustainable base of support for RCOs while improving second-tier organisations’ reach and coverage.

She gave the example of a funder who regularly receives applications from RCOs and who has invited refugees to sit on their grants panels in order to help them better understand refugees’ and asylum seekers’ perspective.

Donna reiterated the Basis Project’s commitment to working with RCOs to facilitate joint working – both within and outside the sector – to help them bring in the money they need, especially in these difficult economic times.

She closed by thanking Sanjay Dighe for his support and thanked everybody present for the amazing work they do for refugees and asylum seekers – be they RCOs, NGOs or funders.

## Sanjay Dighe

Emily Kippax then introduced **Sanjay Dighe**, Chair of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) England Committee. Sanjay is currently Principal of Vega Risk Consulting which provides training and consultancy in financial derivatives and risk management.

Sanjay is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a member of the Strategic Planning Society and founder member of the London Chapter of the Global Association of Risk Professionals. He is also Governor of two schools and a further education college, and holds an MBA and a BSc honours degree.

He started his speech by reminding delegates that he was at the launch of the Basis Project in March 2008, and that he was very pleased to have been invited to reflect on the progress of the Basis Project and to talk about Big Lottery Fund’s approach to funding in the current financial climate. He told the conference that at BIG they recognised that limited resources and a high demand for services meant that RCOs were often struggling to meet the needs of their communities.

It was in response to this, he said, that BIG awarded over five million pounds from their BASIS programme to the Refugee Council to deliver their own ‘Basis Project’, working in partnership with Refugee Action.

He outlined a number of expectations that came with the award. They wanted to make RCOs stronger and more sustainable to make them better able to find and manage funding. This would then make it possible for RCOs to balance the day-to-day pressures of service delivery with the important longer-term strategic planning, and to be able to do this without having to rely too much on just a few key individuals trying to do everything. He added that BIG wanted clients of these groups to be fully supported, not only to meet immediate needs but also to get the longer term help that is necessary to be able to become integrated into the wider community.

He emphasised that another important outcome of the grant given to the Refugee Council and Refugee Action is that funding bodies themselves are better informed and able to assess the needs of RCOs, and their clients, more effectively.

He was happy to say that BIG’s expectations are now being met as the Basis

Project is making progress towards its outcomes. It had already made a positive difference to RCOs and the lives of their clients. He referred to the “excellent” Basis Project website, which provides inspiration and practical tools for RCOs across the country. As such it is spreading learning way beyond those who have benefited directly from the Basis Project.

He acknowledged that the Basis Project Organisational Development Officers have played a vital enabling role in supporting RCOs to become more sustainable. This was being achieved by focusing on the key practical key areas of financial management, fundraising, governance and project development.

This had led to groups gaining the confidence and skills to secure new funding from BIG and other funders. He gave a few examples including a Big Lottery Fund grant to support the work of the Dover Detainee Visitor Group, funding from Grassroots Grants which meant that the Chadian Community in London could obtain their first premises, and funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation which enabled the Peterborough African Community Organisation to set up a community radio station.

He was pleased to tell the conference that he found it encouraging that established RCOs were increasingly looking outwards to support and mentor new and emerging organisations. They were also reaching out to the wider community in their area like the really inspiring football training organised by the West London Somaliland Community.

Talking about partnerships, he said that he was pleased to hear that Refugee and Migrant Network Sutton had been named as a strategic partner by the London Borough of Sutton. The Basis Project has been working with them to review their strategy, governance and financial base. In his view, this strategic partnership is evidence not only of their ability to reach communities that the London Borough of Sutton cannot, but also of their credibility and competence.

We had asked Sanjay to say a few words about the challenges funders face in the current financial climate. He said that charitable trusts and foundations



have certainly been affected by a drop in investment income at the very point when recession-hit communities have a greater demand for funding.

However, the situation for BIG is rather different as they do not depend on investment income but on the sale of lottery tickets, which is predicted to remain strong. This year, for example, they were actually able to commit £45 million additional funding to recession-related projects because lottery income was higher than expected.

Sanjay promised that there would be no immediate changes to their programmes. However, they would need to look at future funding plans, but remained committed to minimise the impact on the beneficiaries of their funding, and the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

He reminded participants that the competition for BIG’s funding remained strong: demand always outstrips the money available, meaning difficult decisions all-round. BIG’s main concern is getting funding to people who need it most and, in particular, to help people experiencing isolation or undergoing difficult transitions in their lives – which many refugees and asylum seekers do. He pledged that they would continue to be key beneficiaries of their funding.

He said that their concern with beneficiaries meant that they wanted to work with groups who are best equipped to help them. Organisations receiving their funding must be able demonstrate that they have the capacity to meet that need and to make a positive difference to people’s lives.

He suggested that the conference should be an opportunity not only to share experience and learning but also to foster networks. He emphasised the importance of partnership working for the voluntary and community sector – this was vital in the often quite fragmented refugee sector. Some of the best projects he had seen were those working with partners to share expertise and maximise resources – becoming more effective in meeting the needs of local people in the process.

He concluded by saying that the conference was an opportunity to celebrate the positive contribution RCOs make to civil society – a tribute to their determination to make things better for individuals, families and the wider community.

## Dr Richard Piper

Emily Kippax then introduced **Dr Richard Piper**, Head of Strategy and Impact at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). He has expertise in strategic planning, involvement and participation, organisational culture, leadership and change, evaluation and monitoring, benchmarking, and quality issues.

Between 2005 and 2008, Richard was Joint Manager of the Performance Hub. Previously, he ran his own research consultancy (the Knowledge Company) and has worked for the Tavistock Institute, Charities Evaluation Services, and the Charities Advisory Trust. Richard received academic training in human geography, social anthropology, political economy and organisational theory. He is also trained in group dynamics, leadership and authority, research, evaluation methods, facilitation, speaking, writing, and managing. His PhD explored the organisational cultures and professionalisation of charity shops. He is currently also a parent governor.

Richard briefed the conference about the NCVO. Set up in 1919, the NCVO is England's umbrella agency for charities, social enterprises, voluntary organisations, and community groups (civil society). It is a membership body with a current membership of 7,877. Of these, 3,745 are community groups and 472 are black minority ethnic groups. NCVO's values are innovation, passion, independence, collaboration and inclusion.

The NCVO provides the national voice on issues affecting the whole of civil society such as the Charities Act. They are a campaigning channel on issues that affect us all and also conduct excellent research for and about civil society. They are the national support agency to the sector and publish relevant information and good practice advice for the sector on their website at:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

Richard said that 56 per cent of charities had been affected by the economic downturn while demand for their services had grown. He added that local surveys, predominantly based on small local organisations, are painting a grimmer picture of the economic environment.

He promised RCOs that NCVO was committed to supporting small and marginalised groups as they constitute half of their membership. He said that they could offer a mixture of direct and indirect support, and that he did see potential for innovative collaborations with the Refugee Council and Refugee Action adding that they were ready to support RCO umbrella organisations. He advised RCOs to become NCVO members as they would get support including major discounts and exclusive benefits and be more empowered. *"The more there are of us the more Government listens when we all speak together."*



## David Ndiwanyu

Emily then introduced David Ndiwanyu, the Chief Executive Officer and founder of the NILE African Development Organisation in Bradford. He works to help grassroots communities to support themselves through a number of projects, programmes and services. David has also been very active in setting up a number of successful commercial and social enterprise businesses, and is currently the Director of a private online business and social enterprise based in Bradford.

He directs and presents Africa Matters, a radio programme on BCB 106.6fm Radio, and works in partnership with the John & Elnora Ferguson Centre for African Studies at the University of Bradford and other partners dealing with Sub Saharan Africa. David is also the founder of the African MDG Achievers International Award (AMDGAI), an awards programme which honours individuals and organisations trying to address the United Nations Millennium Development goals 2015 in Africa.

After arriving in the UK in 2000, David went on to study Immigration Law with the Institute of Legal Executives at the Business School of Bradford College. He worked in various capacities which involved volunteering for a number of organisations including the Refugee Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

He started by highlighting the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, and the obstacles that they face such as integration, negative perception, detention, destitution, settlement, legal residency and administrative assistance issues.

He continued by saying that local integration had legal, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. The granting of a secure legal status and durable residency rights, and, in due course, the possibility of acquiring citizenship of the country of asylum, are prerequisites for local integration. He added that parallel societies, marginalisation and the creation of “second class citizens” are more likely to be avoided if refugees are valued as equal players in society, can “compete” on the same terms as nationals of their host country, and can enjoy the same rights as nationals. Refugees cannot be considered to be “locally integrated” simply because they have attained a degree of self-reliance.

David then talked about the challenges facing RCOs in relation to advocacy, governance, leadership, organisational strategy, programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, legal affairs and human resources, fundraising and communication. To add to these issues, he said, RCOs faced the challenge of meeting the professional expectations of a service-led culture in the UK. As a result, highly-educated and experienced RCO leaders were often overlooked, and the informal culture of RCO work could conflict with funders’ or development workers’ expectations and requirements.

He was keen on development workers gaining a deeper understanding of the diversity and range of RCOs, and the resilience they have shown when faced with a tough funding environment.

He expressed concern about RCOs offering more services than they can manage, and the possible tension between an RCO’s ambitious goals and its actual capacity to deliver services to achieve these. He added that RCOs may be isolated because of a lack of resources or not attending important networking events. He was keen for the mainstream Council for Voluntary Services and RCOs working in partnership to achieve common goals.

As a way forward, David advised RCOs to start networking, cooperating and creating partnerships with bigger voluntary and statutory organisations as partnerships are often linked to capacity-building.

According to David, RCOs clearly cannot, and should not, meet all the protection and assistance needs of asylum seekers and refugees on their own. Nor should they take on the lead role (although there may be situations where they need to). Trying to meet basic needs, targeting specific needs, reducing poverty by promoting self-reliance, and finding solutions must be addressed through partnership, capacity-building and advocacy.

He concluded by saying: *“Refugees not only bring diversity and multiculturalism but the potential to transform and make a difference to our community and nation.”*

## Workshop 1

### Developing an effective refugee community organisation

*Facilitators:* **Sarah Menzies**, Evelyn Oldfield Unit (EOU)  
**Jules Mambu**, Tameside African Refugee Association (TARA)

This workshop looked at the various ways in which RCOs can develop their organisations. Facilitators Sarah Menzies of the EOU and Jules Mambu of TARA compared an effective RCO to a tree with the roots of the tree being the strong connection to the community, the focus on beneficiaries, evidence of research, being up to date with changes in and staying in touch with the community.

The trunk was likened to a strong governance board, one that was financially sound, operating with a plan, clear about purpose and mission, policies and procedures, and effective monitoring and evaluating.

The branches reflected the good connections with other agencies, being engaged in local decision-making and accessing support and training. The leaves represented project champions, useful activities, services and projects. To cap this, an effective RCO must be transparent and accountable.

Using examples from his work at TARA, Jules highlighted the importance of having good governance in place as this helps to build its members' confidence and attracts funders who are not sceptical about the organisation's capacity to manage the funds allocated to various projects. He said that TARA had secured substantial funding during the recession due to putting mechanisms in place which gained funders' trust.

## Workshop 2

### Plugging the gaps

*Facilitators:* **Vaughan Jones**, PRAXIS  
**Juliet Reid**, Centre for All Families for Positive Health (CAFPH)

Vaughan Jones reflected briefly on the history of the refugee and asylum seeker community in the UK, and the polarisation of the Cold War which led to the movement of people to other parts of the world, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

It led to an important growth of RCOs in the UK, many of which have been successful at organising themselves and providing services.

He reminded the workshop participants that the current situation was a far cry from that period. The workshop examined where and how RCOs currently operate. Participants agreed that RCOs are the first point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers to access other services; even local authorities rely on RCOs for signposting clients to their services. RCOs are a social meeting point for refugees and asylum seekers, thereby reducing isolation for many of them; they help empower and build their confidence to take control of their lives. RCOs provide culturally appropriate services and break down language barriers. RCOs create employment or provide training in first aid, food hygiene and other skills preparing refugees and asylum seekers for employment. RCOs support refugees by challenging stigma and injustice.

In short, RCOs provide a broad range of services that help improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.

Workshop delegates talked about issues that were likely to derail the activities of RCOs: the recession is not yet over; unemployment is still rising; the UK has a coalition government which has brought in many legislative changes and spending cuts; the dispersal policy presents many challenges both for service users and service providers in terms of knowing what support systems are

available in the areas asylum seekers are sent to; and the fragility of a sector known to have low or no reserves but being expected to operate on new contracts where they will be paid by results or in arrears – this will also mean that only large voluntary organisations will be operating in the sector.

The workshop made the following recommendations:

- RCOs to review their assets and seriously consider creative ways of generating income to ‘plug’ the gaps which asylum seekers and refugees face on a daily basis.
- RCOs to provide training for mainstream service providers, particularly their frontline staff, to increase their awareness of issues facing refugee and asylum seekers.
- Better information-sharing among RCOs.
- RCOs to learn new skills or operate differently such as hot-desking if they have no premises.
- RCOs to get involved in campaign work. It is significant that the coalition government wants input into how the cuts should be made. This is a good opportunity for RCOs to work with the Refugee Council and Refugee Action to give feedback to the Government. It is important to coordinate advocacy campaigns. The overarching narrative should be human rights, clearly articulated by all campaigning groups.
- RCOs to partner with organisations working towards the same goals.
- RCOs should have access to organisations such as Advocates for International Development which provides pro-bono legal advice for people in detention.



## Workshop 3

### Key aspects of effective RCO involvement

*Facilitator: Herbert Dirahu Aymero*

This workshop gave RCOs the opportunity to discuss the importance of engaging with larger agencies. It highlighted that there was a need to engage with larger organisations to increase awareness and understanding of RCOs and the needs of their clients. But participants also raised a few of the challenges facing RCOs in trying to engage with larger agencies. They pointed out the lack of flexibility from statutory agencies, for example with regard to the time and day, and some of their negative perceptions of RCOs, for example the idea that “RCOs only form because they are after money.”

RCOs were encouraged to challenge and overcome prejudices, and to establish relationships with other agencies. This can be achieved by organising small conferences or workshops to work with statutory agencies to develop understanding and integration. Workshop participants felt that such events could show statutory agencies that RCOs know and understand their issues best and are passionate about them.

They thought that in order to achieve this, statutory agencies, funders and second-tier organisations need to be flexible to meet RCOs’ and their clients’ needs by being available at weekends or in the evenings. They also agreed that there are ways of working together and learning without providing funding.

## Workshop 4

### RCOs and environmental issues

*Facilitator:* **Hannah Smith**, Climate Outreach Information Network (COIN)

This workshop aimed to help RCOs find ways in which they can partner with other agencies to reach their communities so that they do not get left behind in “saving the planet”.

Facilitator, Hannah Smith, introduced the workshop by explaining the carbon cycle. She said that the carbon cycle is a complex series of processes through which all of the carbon atoms that exist rotate. She added that the same carbon atoms in our body today have been used in countless other molecules since time began. The wood burnt just a few decades ago could have produced carbon dioxide which through photosynthesis became part of a plant. When you eat that plant, the same carbon from the wood which was burnt can become part of you. The carbon cycle is the great natural recycler of carbon atoms. Unfortunately, the extent of its importance is rarely stressed enough. Without the proper functioning of the carbon cycle, every aspect of life could be changed dramatically.

She stressed that it was vital to understand how the carbon cycle worked in order to see the danger of it not working. She asked participants to look at a sample carbon cycle and to explore how carbon atoms move through the natural world. Plants, animals and soil interact to make up the basic cycles of nature. In the carbon cycle, plants absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and use it, combined with water they get from the soil, to make the substances they need for growth.

The process of photosynthesis incorporates the carbon atoms from carbon dioxide into sugars. Animals, such as rabbits, eat the plants and use the carbon to build their own tissues. Other animals, such as foxes, eat the rabbits and then use the carbon for their own needs. These animals return carbon dioxide into the air when they breathe and when they die since the carbon is returned to the soil during decomposition. The carbon atoms in the soil may then be

used in a new plant or small micro organism. Ultimately, the same carbon atom can move through many organisms and even end up in the place where it began. Therein lies the fascination of the carbon cycle; the same atoms can be recycled for millennia!

Hannah then looked at how we can share the burden of reducing carbon emissions to reduce global warming.

She informed participants about the international agreement which sets out that responsibility for reducing emissions should be shared equally, but debates about the principles to determine equal shares frequently focus on the distribution of emissions rights. This shift in focus from responsibilities to rights is not necessarily conducive to reducing emissions. There is reason for caution, particularly, regarding suggestions that emission rights should be assimilated to human rights.

Concerns about the situation of people in countries worst affected by global warming have led to calls to recognise being allowed a basic amount of emissions per capita to meet basic subsistence needs as a human right. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to make polluting a human right. People who are potentially most affected by global warming do have the basic human right to subsistence (warmth, food and shelter. There is an argument that the right to emissions and to basic subsistence should be set out in one legal framework. The proposal is to develop this broader framework by referring to the idea of “ecological space.” An equal distribution of rights to ecological space would, in principle, ensure an equal distribution of welfare goods without sanctioning any excess use of natural resources or environmental services. As global warming intensifies, more and more people are going to be affected by it.

Hannah explained that according to recent research, we have already started witnessing climate change refugees. But what next? UK asylum law does not give protection to people fleeing the effects of global warming even though we already have already climate change refugees. Her concern was that if we do not reconsider our behaviour, things will get worse.

For RCOs, this was new territory that they were not familiar with, and this concern was highlighted when a RCO delegate asked about the impact of climate change on refugees and asylum seekers. This was further discussed. The question is if and how displaced persons fleeing natural disasters could be recognised as refugees under international law. Hannah confirmed that under current international human rights law, people displaced due to natural disasters are not recognised as refugees by any international law.

The RCO delegates seemed very keen to explore environmental issues and, as one of the delegates put it, “we first need to ensure our offices and the way we work are environmentally friendly.”



## Workshop 5

### Social enterprise and a guide to commissioning

*Facilitators:* **Steve Wyler**, Development Trusts Association (DTA)

**Jack Shieh**, Vietnamese Mental Health Services (VHMS)

This workshop was an opportunity for RCOs to learn how they can diversify their income and become independent and sustainable.

The workshop was facilitated by Steve Wyler, the Director of the Development Trust Association and Jack Shieh, the manager of Vietnamese Mental Health Services. Steve started by introducing the concept of community enterprise. He asked:

- “Are you a business?” (“Yes, of course you are!”)

*And then*

- “Where does your business make its money?”

- “Who are your customers?”

He outlined many sources of income for a business. Money can come in the form of donations, grants, contracts or from sales; customers can be members of the public, close supporters, grant-making trusts, government, voluntary and other organisations.

He then explained what makes a great social business. “Stay true to mission and values, improvise – but never compromise!”

Jack then focused on “making profit”; a social enterprise – even though it is an activity having primarily social objectives – must generate profits which will be spent on the social aims of the organisation. He gave the example of a busy community café. Once it is fully operational, it has a social value. But when it is empty it has no social value.

Jack then explained to participants how they could generate income for their organisations by bidding for contracts available in their areas. He was happy to support other small organisations by giving them advice on how they could improve their chances of winning contracts using the experience of the VMHS. The advice and information provided in this workshop were well received with many delegates asking the facilitators questions afterwards.

## Workshop 6

### RCOs understanding the funder's perspective

*Facilitator:* **Brigitta Clift** - Lloyds TSB Foundation

This workshop set out to inform RCOs about the challenges funders face when dealing with funding applications from RCOs and the funding successes they have had with RCOs.

Brigitta explained the Lloyds TSB Foundation's funding programmes and how to access them. There was some discussion about the fact that Lloyds TSB Foundation have decided only to fund registered charities and that this effectively ruled out many groups from applying. The workshop also discussed the crucial role that RCOs can play in supporting people who have been left destitute by the asylum system. Finally, the group talked about the challenge of communicating the often informal and responsive work of community organisations in the language funders often use. The workshop recognised that there was a tension between a rigid plan that is followed through and a responsive project that adapts and changes as it develops.

## The plenary session

This session was chaired by **Jonathan Ellis**, Director of Policy and Development at the Refugee Council. Each workshop fed back to the conference, highlighting the main points raised in the workshop. One of the most powerful moments of the conference came when a workshop participant was asked to feed back on behalf of the facilitators of the workshop she had attended. Struggling to control her emotions, she said that being able to talk to a big audience was the most empowering experience she had enjoyed.

Jonathan Ellis closed the conference:

*“We are facing uncertain political and economic circumstances together with public hostility to migration; in such circumstances it is so vital that we stand together. There is more that unites us than divides us. There is strength in unity and unity in strength. At this difficult time we need to stand together. The work of the Basis Project is a powerful example to the leaders of both Refugee Action and the Refugee Council that we are more effective when we work together. But it is not just us – we all need to work together and develop partnerships at a local, regional and national level.*

*There are difficult times ahead – and there is a fight ahead – a fight to defend the rights of asylum seekers and refugees – and working together with everyone in this hall and beyond, we are ready for this fight!”*

Jonathan Ellis and Dave Garratt, Director of Operations at Refugee Action, and Emily Kippax thanked the participants for coming and wished them a safe journey home.

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Refugee Action is a registered charity, Charity number 283660. Company number 1593454.