



Family Restoration Forum- Community Resilience

Family Restoration Forum has been established for 3 years; our client group is Africans & African Caribbean families. We support families and individuals who have settled or just move to Leicestershire as asylum seekers, refugees or family reunions. Activities include advice, information, sharing, welfare rights, employment, education and training, social inclusion, community cohesion, mental health wellbeing, debt and budget management.

Briefly describe the experience you wish to focus on in this paper.

The experience I wish to focus on is "*Community resilience*".

- *Teenagers:* Give management committee ideas about what they need and also contribute to planning and delivery of youth events.
- *Women:* They give support to women and children within the group and gender specific topics e.g. female health issues, family planning, maternity care, counselling etc. Their contribution relating to cultural issues is also very important.
- *Men:* The men learn to listen to women and children, it is not easy but they do, and learn parenting skills in the UK. They also encourage women to participate and share responsibility of the group.

Describe what your RCO did, and what came out of this

We involve the young teenagers from various families to be active within the group and women in supporting the community group:

- *Teenagers:* We give them space to express themselves and to feel accepted, important, valued and wanted within the management committee. The freedom they have motivates them to undertake roles and participate fully to fulfil the objectives and purpose of the organisation. They are represented in the management committee and contribute massively by being involved in planning and delivery of events, they also work as volunteers within the group and on specific projects. They are involved in the running of various sport activities such as football tournament, choir and general knowledge quiz etc.
- *Women:* Women members are encouraged to express themselves and be members of the management committee. We try to overcome the concept of dominant male figure in the group by offering opportunities to share ideas and also applying the equal opportunities policy in our management committee. We accept women, support their views and contribution so they are empowered to contribute to the development of the organisation. The most important tools we use to motivate and encourage both genders are to make them feel important and valued in the Management Committee and in the organisation.
- *An example of involvement:* On one occasion (a Saturday session) the young people chose their own songs and decided to play. They chose the conductor and

delivered a show. As volunteers, they set up the equipment and organised the room the way they wanted.

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

There are some problems and barriers we faced:

- Cultural issues of men, women and children from African perspective.
 - *Some African men* still hold a complex of superiority towards women and children, so the organisation has to implement the equal opportunities policy to train the management committee.
 - *Women* often still suffer from the abuse of power from African men.
 - *Teenagers still* suffer from generation conflict with the adult because of their lifestyle, and the way they want to do things in their own ways.
- Confidence of teenagers in dealing with people who are their parents as some topics can be difficult or they are shy to discuss about it.
- Women: language barrier and confidence setting down in the UK. Issues with childcare.

What we do to overcome these specific issues:

- We create a platform of sharing and discuss the problems with the aim to come to understand the different cultural environment where the first generation came from (Africa: with the perception of life) and the second generation the children who were born or live in modern and world of freedom.
- *Women*: With childcare, we have contact with nurseries, and colleges to learn English as a second language.
- *Men*: We encourage men to be rational about the new life, by being involved in their family life and supporting the women and children.

What are your tips for other RCOs considering doing something similar?

My tips are:

- **Get enough funding**: Getting enough funding is one of the major factors for getting the organisation on the track. To reach to deliver our services to families in Leicestershire in our community, the organisation needs funding. The majority of African and African-Caribbean live on low income. When we talk about asylum seekers and refugees, there is a great need for support: direction, advice, counselling, all sort of support needed to help them to integrate in new life. Funding will help to promote the objectives of the organisation which are: to be involved in issues to the development of families, children, young people and parents etc.
- **Have a timeline**. To fulfil the objectives set by the organisation, we need planning for the events, training, shows, and various activities.
- **Involve parents**. Parents will be involved by helping with transportation of children and young people, catering, running children program when an event is held for the adult etc. Because it is family restoration parents have a major role to play. To participate actively and allowed their children and young people to be on board.

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