

# The BASIS Project Conference Report



The Basis Project  
Building and sustaining success

Refugee Council | Refugee Action

## The London Region Conference: Supporting Refugee Community Organisations' Role in Integration in London

Conway Hall, London  
27 September 2010



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Big Lottery Fund



## About the Basis Project

The Basis Project is an England-wide service giving one-to-one support to hundreds of refugee community organisations (RCOs) to help them manage, develop and sustain their work. To find out more about our work please visit [www.thebasisproject.org.uk](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk)

## Aims and objectives of the conference

The London Region Conference 'Supporting refugee community organisations' role in integration in London' took place on Monday, 27 September 2010. The aim of the event was to encourage dialogue among representatives of refugee community organisations (RCOs), funders and policymakers to generate practical responses for long-term sustainability of the RCO sector in the current policy and funding climate.

### **Key Speakers:**

Richard Barnes, Deputy Mayor of London  
Jonathon Ellis, Director of Policy and Development at the Refugee Council  
Sanjay Dighe, Chair of England Committee of the Big Lottery Fund  
Micheline Safi Ngongo, Chair of Light Project International  
Luljeta Nuzi, Shpresa Programme

The opening session of the conference was introduced by David Clark, Basis Organisational Development Manager. In his welcome speech, he emphasised the very important role of Refugee Community Organisations in London and the work that Basis do to support this. The opening session featured two speakers: Sanjay Dighe, Chair of England Committee of the Big Lottery Fund, which is funding the Basis Project, and Luljeta Nuzi, representative of the Shpresa Programme, a London based RCO. These talks were followed by a Question and Answer session. After the opening session, delegates were invited to participate in the following workshops:

- Social Enterprise
- Funders Café
- Commissioning - Funding from Local Authorities
- RCOs and Integration
- RCOs and Infrastructure organisations

Workshops were followed by a closing session in the main hall, chaired by Jonathon Ellis, Director of Policy and Development, Refugee Council. The session began with a speech from Richard Barnes, Deputy Mayor of London, followed by a talk from Micheline Safi Ngongo, Chair of Light Project International.

The event was attended by RCOs from across the London boroughs, as well as funders, 2<sup>nd</sup> tier organisations and research organisations with a focus on refugees and migrants,...

The following conference report presents the key points from the day. This is not a formal record of everything that was said, but is designed to outline the key points of the speeches, presentations and workshops. Our hope is that this report will provide useful information about the aims of the conference to all attendees and also to persons not able to attend on the day.

The Basis project would like to express thanks to all speakers, panel members and delegates, and to all who helped to ensure the smooth running of the conference

## Plenary Session

Delegates of the London Regional Conference were welcomed by David Clark, Basis Project Organisational Development Manager.

### Sanjay Dighe, England Chair, Big Lottery Fund

The first speaker of the opening session was Sanjay Dighe, England Chair of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). Sanjay began by expressing his special interest in the Basis Project and the support the Refugee Council has provided to Refugee Community Organisations throughout England. He hopes The Big Lottery Fund have in some way contributed to the RCOs' continuing strength and success.

The Basis Project is one of nearly 250 awards, under the BASIS programme. The BASIS programme was established to support the work of expert, professional, and sustainable services for community and voluntary organisations across England. This is the ethos of the BASIS programme. However BIG recognised that there were some groups with specific needs that could not be met with just this very general approach, and RCOs fall into this category. At the time RCOs were faced with limited resources and increasing demand for services, with many struggling to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

So the Refugee Council's ideas of how to support RCOs was very welcome when BIG approached them. The two parties worked closely together to support the development of the Basis Project, which was awarded just over £5 million from BIG. BIG knew that Refugee Council and Refugee Action had the skills, the expertise and the right networks to develop stronger and more sustainable RCOs, who are better able to manage funding, and balance the general day to day pressures of service delivery with vital long term strategic planning. For BIG, RCOs becoming better integrated into their local communities was, also extremely important.

A key aim of funding the project was to empower RCOs to have strategic conversations with funders, to make sure that funders and other services have a better understanding of the needs of RCOs. Sanjay expressed that, in his experience, often RCOs that may be better established than other Voluntary Organisations, may still find it harder to get support services to deal with them appropriately. However, the Refugee Migrant Network in Sutton has been named a strategic partner by Sutton Council. This is an example of the increased confidence and credibility of the refugee communities

Sanjay is happy to say that BIG's expectations are being fulfilled, and that the Basis Project is really making a difference to RCOs, and the lives of their clients. Sanjay also gave special mention to the Basis Project website which he feels provides inspiration and resourceful tools for RCOs across the country, particularly as a way for RCOs to see how their experiences are shared by similar organisations. He encourages RCOs to use the website as much as possible.

Also, the knowledge that established RCOs are increasingly looking outwards to support new and emerging organisations is encouraging to know, as one of the best ways to support is peer support. Being supported by people who can relate to what you are going through, and have similar experiences which you can draw on, is certainly a benefit.

On a less positive note, Sanjay said the reality of the cuts would undoubtedly have an impact on the work of RCOs. He feels the next few years will be tough as very often, it is those who have the least, who are affected the most. The BIG Lottery Fund is also facing a reduction in their income from 60% to 40%. However whatever happens, BIG Lottery will continue to fund current grant holders and existing programmes such as Reaching Communities and Awards for All. Plus, all the

programmes BIG have planned so far, will go ahead. Sanjay stressed that the main concern at this time is the beneficiaries of BIG funding and they will never lose sight of their mission to ensure that they support those communities most in need.

Our main concern is getting funding to people who need it most; we focus on people who live in isolation, or who are going through difficult transitions in their lives, like many refugees and asylum seekers. We know that they are among the most disadvantaged people in our country today and they will continue to be beneficiaries of our funding. Therefore we want to work with groups who are best equipped to provide help them. Organisations receiving our funding must be able to demonstrate the capacity to meet that need, and make a difference to people's lives.

The Basis Project had played a significant role by putting RCOs in a better position to receive funding and manage projects effectively, and BIG is seeing more and more evidence of this.

Sanjay ended by outlining some of BIG's future funding programmes. Reaching Communities and Awards for All will be continuing, and encouraged delegates to look at the BIG website for details of these programmes. There is also a programme called BIG Local. It focuses on 15 areas across England that have missed out on Lottery funding in the past, and are also high on the index of multiple deprivation. The programme is all about local decision making and control. So it's vital that all local communities are aware of this opportunity to influence what happens with the funding that we're going to provide. Sanjay urged all delegates to look at the areas in London on the BIG website and find out whether there are areas that they operate in, or that they want to operate in, and be ready and waiting for when the Trusts that administer this programme is set up,

## **Luljeta Nuzi, Shpresa Programme**

Luljeta Nuzi followed with a presentation about the Refugee Community Organisation Shpresa. Shpresa has been running for 10 years, supporting refugee communities from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. Luljeta began by outlining Shpresa's objectives: forming working partnerships, establishing a positive identity in the community, maintaining a linguistic heritage, and contributing to wider society and community cohesion in the UK. A significant aim of the organisation is to mobilise the Albanian speaking community to help themselves and to ensure that they do not become isolated. Shpresa promotes an 'outward looking' perspective, by maintaining working partnerships with others.

Next, Luljeta presented a case study of the experiences of a member of the Shpresa Programme. Arriving in the UK in 1999, for a number of years the member experienced isolation, which led to mental health problems. This was exacerbated by difficulties in accessing appropriate services. The Shpresa Programme was not only able to provide support and advice, but also to give her a sense of belonging, in a community where other people had gone through similar experiences, and had overcome the loneliness and isolation, language and cultural barriers, and had built a life here in the UK.

Luljeta went on to talk about the work development of Shpresa, covering the following key areas:

- Shpresa's focus on women and young people:

Working in partnership with mainstream organisation, Women's Therapy Centre, Shpresa is able to support women with mental health problems whilst also working towards de-stigmatising what is considered a taboo issue.

Shpresa also runs a supplementary school that functions in partnership with mainstream schools. By forming this partnership, Shpresa now have a free venue to hold supplementary classes for children, and in turn provide training on refugee issues and Albanian cultural awareness.

Shpresa's youth project also works in partnership with other organisations. The project enables young people to come together whilst helping them to integrate in other communities.

- Advice, Advocacy and Campaigning:

Currently Shpresa is running a campaign to provide the Albanian language as a GCSE. Past successful campaigns include one which allowed people who did not have sufficient documentation, to open a bank account. Shpresa hold a number of events to share their success with others.

Shpresa also identify agencies that provide Advice and Advocacy in the local area and bring them in to offer advice to the community, providing interpreters.

Next, Luljeta outlined the following pointers towards being a successful RCO:

- Know what you want to achieve, and how to achieve it.
- Identify who can help you and what is in it for them. Quite often larger organisations are unaware that RCOs can support them and add value to their work. RCOs need to approach them and tell them how they can help.
- Maintain honesty and respect in working partnerships.
- Identify who are the key people involved in the organisation and what they can contribute.
- Identify what you can offer as an RCO.
- Identify to funders why they should fund you, Be unique, and be clear about what you are going to do with the money.
- Be prepared to share learning and work with others

Finally, Luljeta offered the following advice to RCOs in the changing economic climate:

"Know your battles and plan for the fight, prepare to be wounded but not dead".

In the recession and in the face of cuts, there is a need to re-establish how RCOs will operate and continue to deliver their services. RCOs can maximise their impact by continuing to build relationships and identifying where there is money available. Ultimately, RCOs should be prepared to be the voice of their users, as they may not be aware of the political changes and the impact this will have on them.

### **Micheline Safi Ngongo, Chair and Founder of Light Project International**

The third speaker in the main hall was Micheline Safi Ngongo, Chair and Founder of Light Project International. Micheline was introduced by Jonathan Ellis, Refugee Council Director of Policy and Development.

Light Project International is based in North London, and was established in 2004.

The project started with the aim of helping children in education. Micheline explained how arriving in the UK is challenging for children and young people as the UK education system is completely new to them and, due to a variety of reasons such as language barriers, they may not be receiving sufficient help at home with school work.

In 2005, the project was faced with the challenge of supporting increasing numbers of children. In response, they managed to secure a church hall that allowed space for 40 children. As the project continued to progress more space was needed and by 2009 they had their own premises in Caledonian Road. This space was sufficient for the project to operate as a charity, with office space and many rooms to carry out different work, such as a computer suite.

Today the organisation is running 12 different educational projects. They have a team of 74 regular volunteers who help the 357 service users from BME groups from different communities.

The main objective of the Light Project is to improve the education of all people of all ages. Another important aim is to bring the community together, to promote integration between people of different ages, backgrounds, ethnicity and religion. Micheline expressed the importance of valuing and respecting each other and coming together, working in partnership not just with refugee communities, but other organisations. In particular, she recognises both the importance and difficulty in reaching schools, In response, the Light Project are also working with parents,

### **Richard Barnes Deputy Mayor of London**

Richard Barnes, Deputy Mayor of London, ended the day with a speech about working with refugee and BME communities in London. From his work as Chair of the London Strategic Migration Partnership, and as a frequent visitor to community projects around London, the Deputy Mayor stated he was aware of the roles that RCOs play, particularly the integration of refugee communities. The Mayor's Refugee Integration Strategy recognises the energy and commitment to self-help within refugee communities. The Greater London Authority (GLA) is currently working on a community development project to implement a number of actions in support of refugees and asylum seekers. They have just commissioned a report on how migrant and refugee community organisations contribute to this integration. The report will reflect on the work of an RCO and the tangible results that their work brings. The aim of the report is to encourage public services and other key partners to work with RCOs and invest in their activities, and to describe how RCOs can help them reach their own objectives.

The GLA is also commissioning a report on how advice and information are needed for integration. Advice and information are crucial for meeting the basic needs of a newly arrived refugee, who is looking for somewhere to live and a job, to settle in as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Mayor said that the Mayor is very keen to promote volunteering. He is aware that many RCOs rely almost exclusively on volunteers, and that volunteering can be an important pathway to employment, as well as a way of participating in the wider community. But volunteering needs to be supported in order to realise and expand its benefits. In response to this, the Mayor and the GLA will look at how we can increase volunteering opportunities for refugees.

The Deputy Mayor emphasised that we are living in difficult times. The cuts imposed by the coalition government will be challenging for everyone. Central government, local government, the GLA - all public services will have to do more, with less. Voluntary and community organisations will also be challenged to do more.

The Basis Project has an important role to play in building the capacity of RCOs in London, and the GLA can also contribute. The LSSC have agreed their priorities for next year. These are funding, and other resources for RCOs, including access to the commissioning process.

The Big Society agenda:

The GLA is marketing and developing a specific initiative that will bring the Big Society in being. As this emerges, the GLA will see how the initiative will support refugee integration, and the work of migrant refugee community organisations. This is an opportunity for the Mayor to influence Big Society initiatives to recognise the role of RCOs in society, and the contribution they make in London. Communities should play a greater role in solving local problems and improving the quality of life. The Big Society is about giving power to the grassroots; the redistribution of power to communities, to the organisations that are most able to deliver services effectively. RCOs, like all other grassroots organisations, must be part of the Big Society. The Big Society is also about people working together for positive change and RCOs must work together with other local organisations to address local problems. Another opportunity will be a new commissioning process by which public services are funded. The GLA is always looking at ways to influence and commission, to reach refugee and migrant communities, by involving RCOs in meaningful and sustainable ways.

The Deputy Mayor concluded by saying that London will not be a sustainable city if we are divided amongst ourselves. We need to hold out our hands to help people from all migrant communities to integrate, he said, and we should encourage the tremendous kaleidoscope of people from different backgrounds in London, by appreciating “the culture, the music, the poetry, the faiths, the holy books that people carry with them, (and) remember that we are, at heart, all Londoners, and that we must give everyone, migrants and refugees, the opportunities to be Londoners.” Mr Barnes stressed that also migrants and refugees should in turn be willing to hold out their hands and be prepared to integrate and take part in society, here in London.

## Workshops

Morning Workshops:

- **Social Enterprise**  
Objective: To learn about the social enterprise as an alternative means of survival in the current policy and funding environment, and RCOs experiences in this area.
- **Funders Café**  
Objective: A facilitated opportunity for RCOs and funders to meet and share experiences and challenges.
- **Commissioning – Funding from Local Authorities**  
An overview of the process of commissioning from Local Authorities, share experiences of commissioning and discuss its impact for smaller organisations in particular RCOs and the refugee sector more generally.

Workshop 1

**Social Enterprise: innovative and creative business models to address social and environmental issues**

**Chaired by Sharmarke Diriye, Organisational Development Officer, Basis London Region  
Presentation and workshop facilitated by Mei Yee Hui, Business Research Manager,  
Social Enterprise London**

The workshop commenced with an introduction to Social Enterprise London, and the learning outcomes of the session.

Learning Outcomes:

The BASIS project is a partnership project of the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576]. Registered office: 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB, United Kingdom.

1. To understand what is social enterprise and how is it different from traditional business, charities and voluntary organisations.
2. To understand the key characteristics of a social enterprise
3. To identify the key resources, considerations and support available for setting-up and developing a social enterprise.

This was followed by a presentation of the purpose and value of social enterprise as a concept; its characteristics and benefits.

The presentation continued with examples of successful RCO social enterprises, one of which was Refugee Radio. Refugee Radio organises refugee music events and puts the media back into the hands of the community. They broadcast a weekly radio program on local FM and internet podcast where they interview refugees and asylum seekers living in Brighton and Hove. Their Refugee Desert Island Discs project is all about people sharing their culture through the music they brought with them when they came to the UK.

Challenges of social enterprise was discussed next, followed by a range of exercises that invited delegates to consider how they might establish a social enterprise, how to identify the needs of stakeholders, legal structures and key resources.

## **Workshop 2**

### **Funders' Café**

**Chaired by Nana Ama Amamoo, Organisational Development Officer, Basis London Region**

The Funders' Café was based on the World Café methodology. The latter is a simple idea for hosting people in a hospitable environment to take part in conversations about issues of importance to them. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between tables, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are important in their life, work, or community.

The Funders' Café which had representatives from funding agencies visiting each of the four tables in turn, sought to increase real dialogue between funders and RCOs. The representatives of the funding agencies included Jude Stevens from Lloyds TSB Foundation, Austin Taylor-Laybourne from Trust for London, Stephen Goshawk from City Bridge and Russell Darbon from Big Lottery.

Conversations at each table were based on the following menu:

### **FUNDERS' CAFÉ MENU**

#### **Starters**

- Introductions of participants and Funders' representatives.

#### **Salads**

- House Specials (Information about what funding programmes are available).

#### **Main Course**

- What funders look for in grant applications
- Funders' concerns about RCOs
- RCOs' concerns about Funders' expectations

#### **Dessert**

- Future trends

To increase their chances of getting grants, funders' representatives advised that applicants should undertake very thorough due diligence and provide strong evidence about the issues they seek to address and the possible outcomes of their work. This is particularly important at a time when donor agencies have to make difficult decisions about which organisations to fund.

Representatives from charitable organisations also pointed out that sometimes providing evidence could be hard, especially when they are addressing new and emerging issues. They were again advised to provide clear evidence of the need and a demonstration of how and why their approach to resolve it would work. Charities do not necessarily need to undertake expensive research. Often asking the right questions and being able to prove that their solutions could make a difference, is an effective way to make a claim for funding.

### Workshop 3

#### **Commissioning – funding from local authorities**

**Chaired by Elaheh Rambarzini, Organisational Development Officer, Basis London Region**

**Facilitated by Sarah Crowther, Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership (REAP)**

During participant introductions, the following themes were raised:

- The importance of small, local RCOs
- The need and wish to share/learn from experience
- Questions about building partnerships
- What is the relationship between small organisations like REAP and larger bodies such as government, private and voluntary?
- The needs of commissioning as a way to diversify resources, survive and continue to serve.
- Concerns about commissioning structures and the appropriateness of infrastructure support available
- Commissioning as setting agendas, not just resources for services
- How to do it? – Challenges in coping with commissioning processes and reporting

This was followed by a discussion of why participants had chosen to attend the workshop.

#### 1. We could be seeing the end of the value that RCOs bring to London

- The value of RCOs and the need to cope with commissioning or be lost
- Impact of commissioning on small groups' community level structures
- Marginalising RCOs - concerns about commissioning excluding RCOs/small groups and specialist organisations

#### 2. We need to be able to cope with and take up commissioning where there are opportunities

- Need for facilitation/influence the infrastructure that is here to facilitate us
- Need to explore partnerships
- Learn what commissioning is, how to do it, and advice on how to cope/access
- Ability to use commissioning to diversify resources
- Improve our own take up of opportunities.

#### 3. We need to learn from and share experience

- Need to share and learn from others with similar experiences of commissioning
- Need to learn about the situation and processes going on in other boroughs, because each borough is different
- Talk about local successes

#### 4. Accountability and misuse of the system by commissioners

- 'Commissioning' often being used only as procurement – no mention of wider agendas, involvement in needs analysis etc.

#### Presenters

##### **Sharon Long, Children England**

##### **Key points:**

There are huge changes everywhere around us; we have no idea of the implications of most of them, e.g. 'Big Society'.

- We must identify our priorities
- Commissioning tends to become increasingly large amounts, though Local Authorities are free to mix grants and commissioning
- RCOs need / don't often have the knowledge and skills they need to access, evidence and build the case for getting commissioned to run services
- There are many, well recorded concerns about commissioning processes, e.g. accountability, quality and equality of processes
- RCO voices must come together to get heard
- Opportunities will always exist in the middle; e.g. around education and primary school budgets, GP's contracting may create openings, personalisation agendas
- Impact could be hard on RCOs – they will need to get together for a voice, to learn,
- Partnerships/collaboration is necessary but risky.

##### **Poornima Karunacadacharan, REAP**

##### **Key points:**

- Grants have given way to commissioning. Previously organisations could tell them what they wanted to do; now they tell us
- Commissioning still needs input at strategic stages – needs assessment, priorities etc
- Commissioning can be seen in 4 stages: strategic; design; tender/bid; deliver and report. Third stages tend to be the main focus for people seeking funds / training to access funds, but RCOs must not be left out of first stage – setting agendas and needs, not second stage, designing e.g. how big, how many, how valuable commissions will be
- BMER organisations often do not have access to commissioning – no direct access because amounts are too large, very limited 'partnership' access because costs and risks of partnership
- Capacity building support is mostly focussed on unrealistic training around generic partnerships; tender writing aimed at larger organisations etc., generic quality marks and fails to deal with local realities and the general lack of opportunity in the sense of small commissions under £30,000
- The crucial first step / link role that BMER organisations play will be lost. This has serious equalities consequences, as marginalised individuals are increasingly cut off from services. Commissioners must ensure BMER and other small, equalities organisations are not lost if they are to meet their equalities duties.

##### **Eltayeb Hassan, Southwark Refugee Forum**

##### **Key Points:**

41 members: a voice; diversity; disadvantaged populations; interaction and promoting cross-cultural relationships. Eltayeb described the work that the forum had been commissioned to carry out to raise awareness of the 2011 census amongst the refugee and migrant communities of Southwark.

Afternoon Workshops:

- **RCOs and Integration**

Objective: The Greater London Authority's Immigration and Asylum Unit will provide an update of the current refugee and asylum integration strategy and its impact upon refugee community organisations and the refugee sector in London. Iranian Association will share their experiences with integration over the last two decades and the achievements they have made so far.

- **RCOs and Infrastructure Organisations**

Objective: This workshop will capture the nature of our current and future infrastructure support for refugee community organisations in London and discuss responses by providers and refugee community organisations to the evolving situation.

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Workshop 1

### **RCOs and Integration**

#### **Chaired by Elaheh Rambarzini**

Facilitator: Lisa Doyle, Refugee Council

Speakers: Dick Williams and Amna Mahmoud, the Greater London Authority Integration and Asylum Unit; Kaveh Kalantari, Iranian Association

The aim of this workshop was to discuss the current refugee and asylum integration strategy and its impact upon refugee community organisations and the refugee sector in London.

During their presentation the GLA posed several questions:

1. What can the refugee sector do to engage in the 'Big Society'?
2. What can the Mayor and the GLA do to support the sector to engage with the 'Big Society'?
3. What does the GLA deliver and how do they help mainstream services deliver?

General discussions raised the following key points:

- Social Enterprise and the need for training and workshops on social enterprise
- The needs and requirements surrounding start-up help and how the GLA can discuss this with funders
- Working with schools and supporting the idea that supplementary schools add value with children doing better and parents better engaged
- The issues around devolving of powers to Local Authorities for example, the Localism Bill
- What can the Mayor do to help? Can other areas of the Mayor's work mention RCOs? The GLA are responding to the London Council's consultation and are highlighting work of RCOs
- Big Society – what can the voluntary sector do to get involved in the Big Society in the face of funding cuts? Talk of ring-fencing of the London Council's money to voluntary sector.

## Workshop 2

### **RCOs and Infrastructure Organisations**

**Facilitated by Sarah Menzies, Development Worker, Evelyn Oldfield Trust**

Speakers: Suj Ahmed, Voluntary Action Islington, Gladys Jusu-Sherif, Chair, Islington Refugee Forum.

The aim of this workshop was to capture the nature of current and future infrastructure support for RCOs in London and to discuss responses by providers and RCOs to the evolving situation. The two speakers gave an overview of their current work and their thoughts on the future. In order to facilitate responses to this with the audience (a mixture of RCOs and infrastructural organisations), the facilitator posed a series of questions. These and the responses of groups are listed below.

#### **1. For RCOs - are infrastructural organisations meeting your needs? For infrastructural organisations – do you think you are meeting RCOs needs?**

NB most of the responses referred to Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS). This was due to the high number of CVSs in the workshop.

- The response was generally positive, with appreciation of face-to-face contact. The feedback suggested that quality was borough-specific, i.e. some boroughs had CVSs which were better than others. This was due to a number of reasons including the capacity of staff and the availability of resources. There were a number of requests for future activities (e.g. on policy training and project management).
- It was felt that there was a need for CVS support to be more focused on beneficiaries and training should be more specialised; in addition, any training should be based on recommendations from, and consultations with, the communities. One of the concerns mooted was that CVSs were not refugee-specific and therefore the support was not always appropriate.
- A further concern raised was over the duplication of training by agencies and the need for new terminology and a shift away from concepts such as 'capacity building' and 'infrastructural support'.
- A final point was that CVSs should consider more innovative approaches and methods for their training in order to prevent training fatigue by participants.

#### **2. How can infrastructural organisations respond to your needs over the next 2-3 years?**

- The biggest preoccupation of participants was funding uncertainty and the political situation. In addition, there were complaints about the lack of understanding from funders and local authorities.
- It was felt that RCOs ought to galvanise and collaborate in order to achieve shared goals, such as accessing more diverse funding, building bridges with the local authorities and accessing public services. Infrastructural organisations must play a central role in facilitating the creation of these collaborations among RCOs. It was also felt that CVS could potentially collaborate and form CVS consortia that specialised around specific development areas.
- Infrastructural organisations need to encourage RCOs to better demonstrate their impact; In addition, infrastructural organisations ought to collect evidence of the impact of cuts on RCOs.
- Infrastructural organisations' efforts must be oriented in supporting RCOs to fit in the Big Society, recognising them as playing an important role and helping RCOs in dealing with new structures.
- Communities are looking for continuation in the services received, and expect from infrastructural organisations a leading role in campaigning to achieve shared goals.
- Participants also referred to the preference of one to one interactions and innovative approaches.

- Areas of need for RCOs that emerged included in social enterprise development, campaigning, understanding collaboration and volunteer support.

#### **4. Worse-case scenario – if there is a significant reduction in infrastructural support available, what will the future be like?**

- It was felt that bigger organisations like the Refugee Council needed to take a role in campaigning before this situation was reached.
- One participant stressed that we all needed to fill in the imminent government consultation on infrastructural support.
- It was felt inevitable that groups would be forced to merge and share resources. Some felt this would be very negative and would result in groups closing but others felt that RCOs were resilient and would survive, drawing more on peer to peer support, accessing free resources, collaborating across boroughs.
- It was felt that social enterprise as a development model would gain popularity.

#### **Finally - some food for thought...**

An external observer to the event who watched this session stated, "I see passion, realism on constraint and consequences of cuts which will serve well but pessimism and low morale. DON'T GIVE UP. This period will pass."

Also, "The 'Refugee World' needs to identify and work with other related groups / contacts, e.g. other new arrivals in Britain as the issues faced are broadly similar."

#### **More information about Basis**

For further details of the conference and to find out more please contact [basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk).