

Annual Report

20  4

Refugee Women's Association



The World

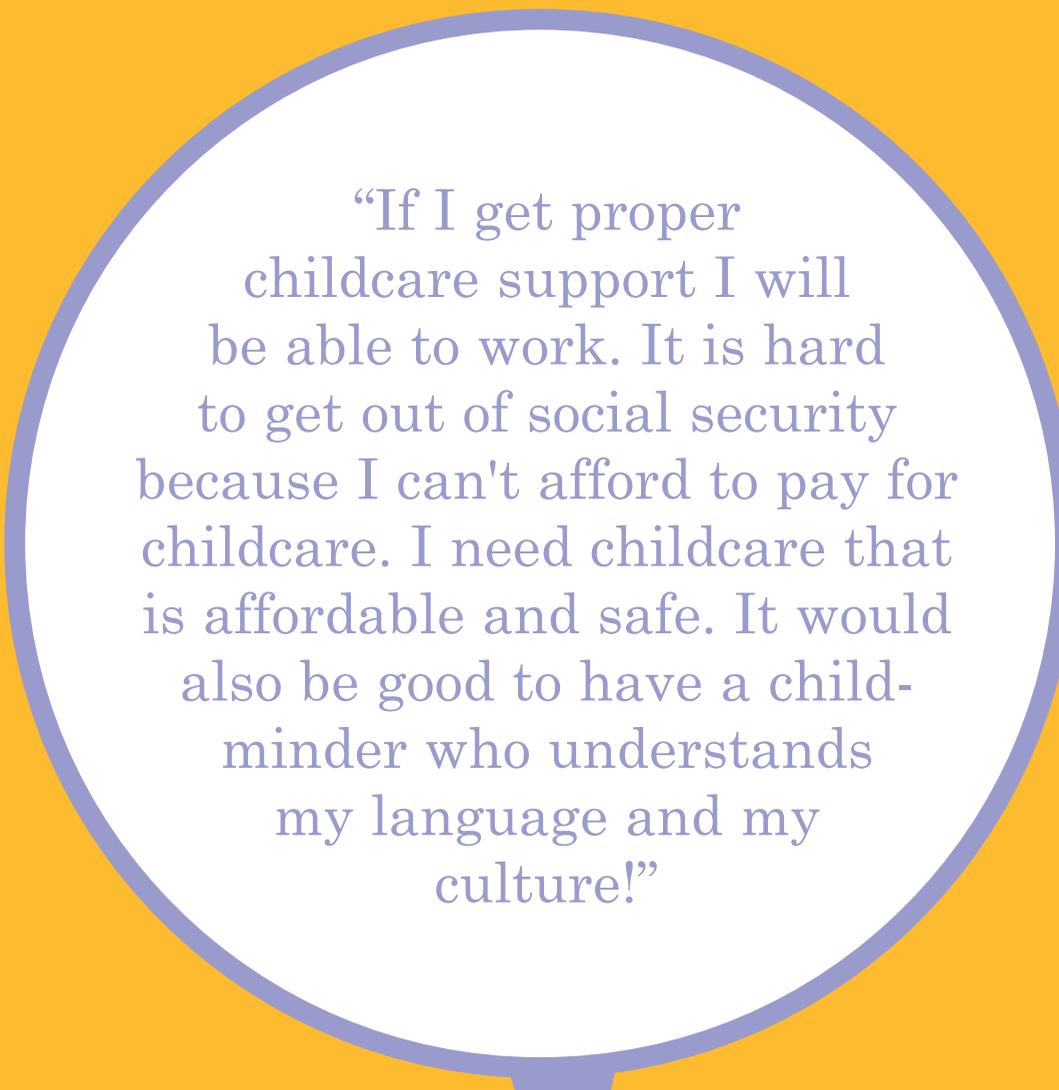


Afghan	2	Chinese	4	Iraqi	8	Libyan	
Albanian	4	Chilean	2	Israeli	2	Madagascan	
Algerian	3	Colombian	12	Ivory Coast	4	Mozambique	
Angolan	3	Congolese	4	Jamaican	1	Nigerian	
Azerbaijani	3	Croatian	3	Jordanian	2	Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	2	Ecuadorian	11	Kenyan	2	Peruvian	
Belarusian	1	Eritrean	20	Kosovan	6	Russian	
Bolivian	2	Estonian	1	Kurdish	1	Rwandan	
Bosnian	2	Ethiopian	9	Kurdish/Iraqi	3	Sierra Leonean	
Brazilian	3	Ghanaian	8	Kurdish/Turkish	16	Somali	
Bulgarian	3	Guinean	1	Lebanese	2	South African	
Burundian	7	Iranian	49	Lithuanian	1	Sri Lanka	
Cameroonian	1	Iranian/Azari	1	Liberian	1	Sudanese	



2	Tamil	1
1	Turkish	23
3	Ugandan	8
3	Ukrainian	3
4	Vietnamese	6
1	Yugoslavian	1
2	Zairean	25
12	Zimbabwean	4
12		
197		
1		
4		
9	TOTAL:	532

These figures show the number of refugee women that RWA saw in the last year and their countries of origin. The London boroughs they live in are shown on the last page.



“If I get proper
childcare support I will
be able to work. It is hard
to get out of social security
because I can't afford to pay for
childcare. I need childcare that
is affordable and safe. It would
also be good to have a child-
minder who understands
my language and my
culture!”

A MOTHER FROM IRAN

Chair's Report

I have the pleasure to introduce this Annual Report of RWA's activities during 2004 which also aims to highlight the childcare needs of refugee women.

In ensuring that RWA maintains its core services and staff and also increases its activities, we have joined a number of large partnerships in the last year, funded by Equal, the Learning and Skills Council, and Jobcentre Plus.

One of the major challenges faced by voluntary and particularly community organisations is funding, and keeping our heads above water in this sink or swim environment. The contract culture is a threat to voluntary sector values and often threatens the closure of voluntary and community organisations.

However, we have to try to be as positive as ever, by focusing on providing services to empower refugee women from all walks of life and nationalities, and becoming even more strategic than ever before.

Choosing to be a partner in partnership projects gave us many opportunities to concentrate on structures, policies and procedures, and reviewing old ones for RWA. For instance, the activities introduced in 2004 allowed us to work with consultants to towards RWA's restructuring which will be completed in 2005. These changes will prepare RWA to embrace future challenges.

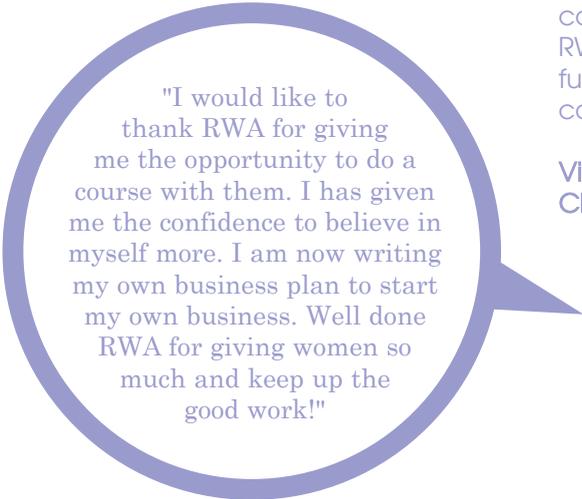
RWA's achievements have been made possible through the hard work done by Simin Azimi, the Director, and the very dedicated and professional team of staff. I would like to thank Simin and the staff, without whose determination we would not have been able to deliver such exemplary services.

In the last year we sadly said goodbye to Anne Tamale and Sanaz Roohi and Feride Baycan will be leaving us too. We thank them for their hard work and wish them all the best for the future.

Finally, I welcome this opportunity to thank the Management Committee members for their commitment and contribution to the management of RWA. I would also like to thank the funders for their generous financial contributions.

Vivian Rosenkranz
Chair

RWA STUDENT



"I would like to thank RWA for giving me the opportunity to do a course with them. I has given me the confidence to believe in myself more. I am now writing my own business plan to start my own business. Well done RWA for giving women so much and keep up the good work!"



Highlighting the Childcare Needs of Refugee Women

With this year's Annual Report we also aim to highlight the lack of childcare provision for refugee women.

In 2004, RWA initiated research to assess the childcare needs of refugee women and to identify the difficulties faced by them in accessing under-5 childcare provision in London. The aim of the research was to highlight the childcare needs of refugee women and to enable policy makers, funders, early years service providers and researchers as well as those campaigning for assessable childcare, to gain a broad picture of refugee experiences in London. Through this report RWA aims to ensure that the needs of refugee women are being taken into account when childcare service providers develop strategy and allocate resources, and include access to the services for refugees in monitoring.

The qualitative information collected focused on individual refugee mothers and organisations that work with or provide services to refugee parents. A total of 147 individuals and organisations, representing 25 nationalities, participated in the research.

Lack of quality childcare is one of the major barriers for parents, particularly women, attempting to access employment. However, for refugee women, as one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, the situation is far more critical as they are faced with additional barriers including restrictive immigration, laws, housing problems, isolation, and lack of language skills.

The research makes a number of key recommendations which we will take to the Greater London Authority and the London Development Agencies, to ensure they are included in the London Childcare Strategy.

The report will be launched in October 2005.



Director's Report

Last year was an exciting and challenging year for RWA, breaking ground in delivering innovative projects, in particular in partnership with many refugee and voluntary organisations. Our belief in refugee women's ability and stamina has given us the strength and determination to face and overcome the challenges, such as the aggressive "contract culture", which are new to us in the voluntary sector. Other challenges such as lack of employment opportunities for refugee women, the hostility of the media, lack of funding, and new pieces of asylum and immigration legislation, are becoming more sophisticated to deal with and so remain our priority to address.

Employment and Training

Last year we focused on the promotion of employment opportunities for refugee women, in particular in the health profession. We designed Job Search Training courses in partnership with specialist health agencies and individuals, who have been extremely generous to share their knowledge, experience and expertise with us and our beneficiaries. We are extremely grateful to them.

We also increased our Accelerated English Language courses and expanded on the Mentoring Programme, where employed refugee women become mentors to unemployed refugee women.

We are delighted that we had 100% passes in both the childcare courses that we managed in partnership with Hackney Community College. The training not only created employment opportunities for refugee women but also helped the ones that were mothers themselves apply what they had learnt to their own children.

Partnership Work and Networking

Last year more than ever we increased our partnership work with other voluntary sector and refugee community organisations to deliver better services for refugee and asylum seeking women.

One of the programmes we take part in is 'Equal', the largest Transnational Programme funded by the European Social Fund. We are a partner in two Equal round 2 programmes, and we also completed the Refugee Women Empowerment Project last year, a partnership funded under EQUAL and led by RWA. Similar to previous Equal programmes, we also work with European organisations as part of the transnational activities.

Last year we joined new partnerships with other organisations to deliver projects funded by Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council. All of these new projects aim to provide more support to individual refugee and asylum seeking women.

To promote our capacity building work for small voluntary and refugee women organisations, and to establish our own position as a strategic organisation, we entered two further large partnership projects, LORECA and SKEIN, which are funded by LSC.

We have also been actively involved in various networks and partnerships set up to increase our advocacy and the positive promotion of refugee women. These networks include Action for Refugee Women, the Refugee Women's Legal Group and the Hackney Refugee Women's Domestic Violence Network.

Advocay Work

We continued working closely with the Greater London Authority (GLA), where we are consulted on issues of interest and importance to women in London, particularly asylum seeking and refugee women.

We are actively participating in the Government Office for London's Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA), and their Equal Opportunity Working Group, to influence policies affecting refugees.

MC and Staff

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and volunteers at RWA for their commitment, tireless work, enthusiasm and dedication. Without their support we could not have met the increased workload last year. A huge thank you is also due to the tutors and trainers who made our courses such a success.

We sadly said goodbye to Anne Tamale who left us to pursue different paths, and Sanaz Roohi, a temporary staff member, who moved on to pursue a career in film and television. Feride Baycan is leaving us as well after 7 years of dedicated work. I would like to thank them all and wish them all the best.

I would like to thank the Management Committee Members, chaired by Viviana Rosenkranz. I would also like to thank the funders for their financial support, their trust in our work, and their recognition that the needs of refugees deserve to be a priority in funding allocation. Without the support of Equal, the European Social Fund, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, the Association of London Government, and the Community Fund RWA would simply not exist.

We are also deeply grateful to the people who have donated to the Gulen Kuluay Bequest, our trust fund set up by RWA and supported by Gulen Kutluay's family and friends. The Bequest has made educational grants to 6 individual asylum seeking and refugee women during the year.

Simin Azimi
Director



Advice and Guidance



It was a busy and lively period for advisers at RWA as the increase in the number of projects enabled us to provide more training courses and other services to refugee women. Whilst the focus of our activities remained the provision of information, advice and guidance on education, employment and training, we were also involved in fund-raising for clients and providing advice and support on issues of domestic violence, trafficking, HIV, housing and immigrations.

Due to the nature of the projects and the training courses that we had on offer, we received a more diverse group of clients who required a wider range of expertise.

To meet the needs of the trainees, we met with clients in three structured one-to-one interviews. These enabled us to keep in close contact with the clients to ensure they received the right advice and support before moving on from the courses. To further ensure the quality of RWA's advice work, all advisers were involved in the process of recruiting tutors for our training courses and actively participated in the tutors' monthly meetings and any relevant discussions.

RWA has a very positive approach to involving staff in developing partnerships and promoting refugee women's concerns. Therefore, as advisers we also attend various meetings in London and abroad to exchange views and learn from other people's experiences. In 2004 we travelled to Greece and Germany to meet our partners on the EQUAL project and share experience

and good practice. We also attended a European conference on the gendered impact of European immigration policy and legislation in Amsterdam. In London, we attended the European Social Forum and held a successful platform there to raise refugee women's issues.

We like to take this opportunity to thank our clients, the tutors, our partners in the community organisations, other refugee agencies and all our colleagues at RWA who have supported us throughout this period.

Ayse Bircan & Roya Ebrahimi
Education Advisers



Access to Employment

This year we continued working on the Mentoring Project that commenced in September 2002 (funded by ALG and ESF) as well as running courses for refugee women health professionals funded by Equal Leader.

Work on the Mentoring Project involved advice, guidance and counselling for clients who were looking for permanent jobs or work placements. This was done after the clients had completed a training programme for refugee women mentors and refugee women mentees. Although, the Mentoring Project focused on employment and job outcomes, it also had a very altruistic dimension built into it, with much guidance, support and befriending offered to the refugee women involved. This has allowed us to develop an innovative, positive and sustainable mentoring practice.

Nearly 200 refugee women living in all London boroughs were assisted throughout the programme. Of these, 47 refugee women have secured employment, and 30 have found work placements or voluntary work to enable them to gain work experience in the UK. Another 40 went on to further education and the others have received advice, guidance and counselling.

RWA is a member of the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (formerly the National Mentoring Network), and as such we participated in the conferences and meetings

organised by the Foundation throughout the last year. In 2004, the Mentoring Programme was accredited by the London Open College Network and 15 trained mentors received a certificate of accreditation. Thank you to the ALG and the ESF for funding such an innovative programme where for the first time employed refugee women mentored unemployed refugee women and helped them to gain access to the UK labour market.

As part of our work with refugee women health professionals, doctors, nurses, health care assistants and carers, all had the opportunity to learn about the NHS, its structure and culture, and ways of getting back into the health profession in a series of courses we organised in 2004. We also organised for refugee women health professionals to meet with relevant agencies and bodies for consultation and orientation. In total we ran 3 courses for health professionals and they all proved to be very popular with our clients, many of whom applied for registration with the NMC and generally moved closer towards achieving some of their goals as a direct result of these courses.

I am looking forward to continuing the work with refugee women health professionals in the coming year, as well as developing a new and original Mentoring Programme.

Jasmina Dimitrijevic
Employment Adviser



Training



Our training programme has come on in leaps and bounds over the last year. We have become specialized in providing courses for health professionals and have continued to develop our Accelerated English for professional refugee women.





During the last year we have run Accelerated English courses in Haringey, Wandsworth and Ladbroke Grove. Tutors received further training from SEAL (the Society for Effective, Affective Learning) and became more confident in experimenting in class with accelerated methods. The results have been excellent. We have experienced high levels of retention, good exam results and most of all the participants have really felt their confidence increase.

Our job search skills courses have been a huge success over this last year. We ran specialized courses for childcare assistants, nurses and midwives as well as for healthcare assistants and care workers, in addition to one general course. We invited representatives from the relevant professions to run workshops at the courses. Participants who attended these courses are already getting jobs in their chosen professions.

Last June we ran our second Business Start-Up course in Hackney. Women came from as far away as Greenwich and Harrow to attend. They found it extremely useful and left with a variety of business proposals, from a sewing cooperative to an alternative healthcare centre.

Our final mentoring training was run in partnership with Refugee Action Kingston in Kingston & Hackney. The Mentoring course offered a unique opportunity for refugee women to give and receive support from another refugee woman.

The first Certificate in Pre-School Practice (cache level 2) course finished last July, with a 100% pass rate. The second course started in September of last year at Hackney Community College, and has gone fantastically well with participants particularly enjoying their weekly work experience placements.

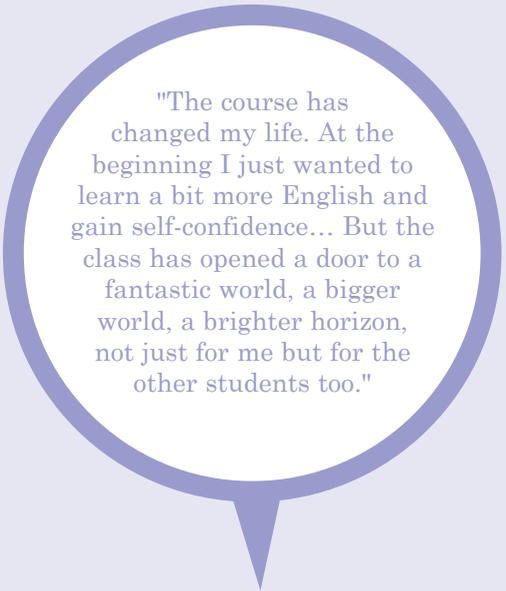
We have been very fortunate to have had a three-month development period

for our training in the last year and we used this time to work on improving our courses and writing good practice guides for the Accelerated English and Job Search courses. We look forward to being able to share our experiences with others.

Our courses make every effort to address the barriers to learning for refugee women: They are run during school hours, and in various locations across London that are accessible to the different communities we serve. We pay travel expenses and make contributions to childcare costs or provide a crèche, thereby helping to increase access to education for women.

We have a dedicated team of tutors working with us to maintain our high standards of training. The centres where we run our courses also work very hard to provide a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for our participants. Thank you to the tutors, the centres and, of course, the participants who have helped make the courses an excellent experience for everyone involved.

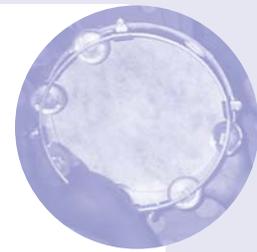
Lucy Holdaway
Training Organiser



"The course has changed my life. At the beginning I just wanted to learn a bit more English and gain self-confidence... But the class has opened a door to a fantastic world, a bigger world, a brighter horizon, not just for me but for the other students too."

RWA STUDENT

Information and Events



Refugee Women's News

RWA's newsletter, Refugee Women's News aims to empower individual refugee women and small refugee women's groups by providing free information and building their capacity. Last year we expanded the newsletter to 20 pages, which means it has now become a sizable publication which addresses issues in more depth and is able to provide more valuable information on funding, training courses, reports and publications, and anything relevant going on in the sector. Feature topics we covered in the last year included the expansion of Europe and the impact on asylum legislation; motherhood; asylum seekers in detention; and home and belonging. Last year, our volunteers Emma Saunders and Ilana Bakal made invaluable contributions to the newsletter and we thank them very much.

Events

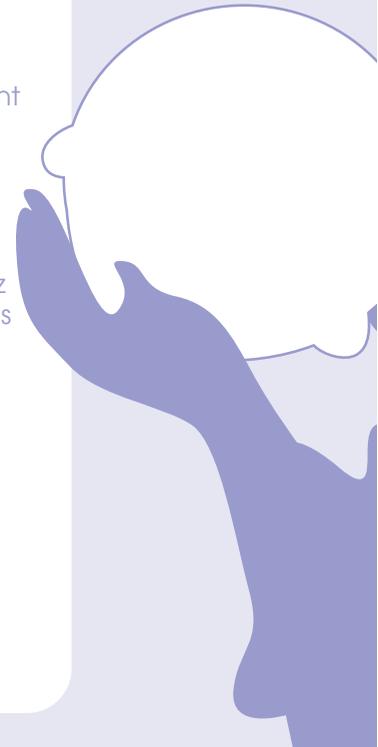
Events are an important means for us to communicate with various audiences, raise awareness of the issues facing refugee women, and celebrate the contributions they make to UL society. In June 2004, as part of Refugee Week, RWA and the British Red Cross Refugee Unit jointly organised an exhibition to celebrate creativity and diversity in the arts. *In Between - An Art Exhibition to celebrate Refugee Week 2004* brought together works by refugees, second generation immigrants, and those working around issues of forced asylum. The event allowed us to draw attention to forced migration as well as reaching out to a new audience in partnership with the Red Cross.

Another partnership event we organised in 2004 was a seminar entitled *Refugee Women - Rights and Wrongs* held at the European Social Forum in October. The organisations involved in this with RWA were the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid, the British Red Cross Refugee Unit (Women in Crisis Project), IMECE and the Iranian Community Centre. The seminar was a big success and attracted close to 200 delegates from all over Europe. The treatment of women in detention and the destitution faced by failed applicants were issues of particular concern. A conference report was published later in the year.

At the end of last year we also organised an award ceremony to celebrate the achievements of all the students who had attended RWA training courses between September 2003 and September 2004. The students themselves led the celebrations on the day, spontaneously taking to the stage to speak, sing and dance. Everyone felt the event was a wonderful celebration of the achievements and determination of refugee women.

As I was away on maternity leave in 2004 my colleagues Ayse Bircan, Sanaz Roohi and Mirim Philip took over various parts of my work, and I would like to thank them warmly.

Corinna Ditscheid
Information & Marketing Worker



RWA CLIENT

"I really enjoyed the award ceremony, meeting with friends, tutors, and other students and staff members from RWA. I enjoyed the singing and would like to thank everyone at RWA."



Capacity-Building and Partnership Development



The Capacity Building programme has remained a pivotal part of our services. The programme has been extremely successful according to the feedback we have received from the refugee women's community organisations involved.

Let's Build Up

This practical and unique training was launched in 2003 and continued in 2004. The aim of the training was to develop and build the capacity of refugee women's groups, improve the quality of services provided by them and to provide gender and culturally sensitive information. It was designed and developed in consultation with refugee women's groups others who have and expertise in the field. The programme included 12 modules with each module lasting two sessions covering all aspects of development of an organisation. 17 refugee women's organisations participated in the Let's Build Up training programme.

We carried out extensive evaluation of the training programme by asking each participant to complete an evaluation form after each session and by doing a follow-up evaluation at the end of the whole course. We also produced an Evaluation Report which was launched in September at a celebratory lunch attended by representatives from the community organisations who had attended the training. We would like to thank all the women who attended the training courses, the trainers and their organisations, and the Community Fund and ESF for funding this project.

Assisting Refugee Women's Organisations in London

Last year we supported over 20 refugee women's organisations in London and helped them to raise over £35,000 to provide better services for the women in their communities.

Moving Beyond London

We also expanded our networking by reaching out to refugee community organisations outside of London, concentrating on the South of England. We provided support to 7 women groups in dispersal areas. It is important that we focus our work in the dispersal areas in this way because refugee women there are extremely isolated.

Through our capacity-building and partnership development work we also establish links with mainstream service providers, to raise their awareness of the needs of refugee women. But the key objective of our work in this field remains to assist groups of refugee women to set up their own organisations so they can help themselves.

Administration and Finance

We have had a fruitful as well as busy reporting year with different project administrative and finance work. The finance section was busy as usual with all financial aspects of the organisation including dealing with beneficiaries.

We also had the opportunity of applying for new funding. The year 2005/2006 will be even busier for the organisation as we plunge into two new areas of funding from Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council. We are looking forward to working with these new funders as well as the opportunities of learning new methods of delivery.

I also had the opportunity last year to work with two volunteers: Nazli Safaee and Paula Castro were both extremely dedicated to their duties with us.

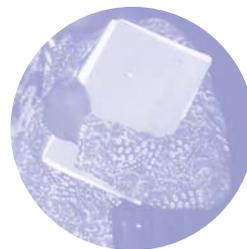
We provided them with thorough one-to-one training and they gained valuable work experience. We are delighted that both have found work and moved from RWA into full-time paid employment.

All our financial and administrative systems were updated to meet with the requirements of the funders and to make our work easier within the organisation. The dissemination of information to staff and other external organisations continued to be very efficient during this reporting year.

Yinka Ogunniyi
Finance Worker



Staff and MC Members



Members of the Executive Committee

Viviana Rosencranz (Individual) Chair
Helen Radford (Blackfriars Settlement)
Nezahat Cihan (IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group) Vice Chair
Siobhan Fox (The Nia Project)
Meral Halkaci (The Nia Project)
Akgul Baylav (Individual)
Soodi Aram (Iranian Community Centre)

Tutors

Anna Weston
Ann Reynard
Carol Robinson
Lise Jones
Zahra Jazayeri
Nafisa El Amin

Members of Staff

Simin Azimi - Director
Feride Baycan - Partnership Development Worker
Ayse Bircan - Outreach Education Adviser
Jasmina Dimitrijevic - Employment Adviser
Corinna Ditscheid - Information & Marketing Worker
Roya Ebrahimi - Outreach Education Adviser
Lucy Holdaway - Training Organiser
Yinka Ogunniyi - Finance Worker
Anne Tamale - Administration Worker (left September 2004)

Temporary Staff Members

Sanaz Roohi (left November 2004)
Miriam Philip

Volunteers

Ilana Bakal
Paula Castro
Moza Himid
Nazli Safaee
Emma Saunders

Feedback

READER OF REFUGEE WOMEN'S NEWS

"Thank you for the copies of your newsletter. What a wonderful publication. They are beautifully done and contain so much excellent information. "

"Thanks to RWA!
You are brilliant and have the ability to change negative circumstances. We beg you, never give up!"

RWA CLIENT

ACCELERATED ENGLISH STUDENT

"I learned a lot in the class, not only English language, but so much more. It allowed me to overcome the stress that had really made me feel down. We learnt meditation techniques, dance, listening to music... The tutor directed us towards the future, which I felt I did not have. At the beginning we feel we will never be able to do here what we achieved in our own country, but now, thanks to the class, we know that we can."

"I am so glad I have been admitted to the course and been able to join all of RWA's activities. I have also been assigned a mentor who helped me a lot. Thank you very much for everything!"

RWA STUDENT

"Thank you RWA for your help. I found courage, confidence and friendship through the class."

RWA CLIENT

London



Barking and Dagenham	7	Haringey	83	Newham	10
Barnet	20	Harrow	1	Redbridge	6
Brent	35	Hertfordshire	4	Richmond	4
Bromley	8	Hounslow	3	Southwark	11
Camden	41	Islington	41	Tower Hamlets	17
Croydon	6	Kensington & Chelsea	9	Waltham Forest	7
Ealing	2	Kent	2	Wandsworth	4
Enfield	22	Kingston-Upon-Thames	11	Watford	1
Greenwich	21	Lambeth	59	Westminster	10
Hackney	63	Lewisham	1	Outside London	6
Hammersmith/Fulham	10	Merton	6	Unknown (homeless)	1

TOTAL

532

Our mission is to empower refugee women throughout the challenging process of integration

We aim to:

- Empower refugee women
- Be committed to providing the best possible advice, guidance and counselling in terms of education, training, employment, health and social care
- Raise public and decision-makers' awareness of the needs of refugee women
- Place refugee women's issues firmly on the agenda of policy makers
- Provide a model of good practice, showing a way of overcoming difficulties between different groups and people of different backgrounds





Refugee Women's Association

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Community
Legal Service



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