

Refugee Therapy Centre
1A Leeds Place,
Tollington Park,
London, N4 3RF
Tel: 020 7561 1587
Fax: 020 7281 8729



Refugee
Therapy
Centre



Annual Report 2010-11

Report from the Chair

John Denford



This has been my third year as Chair and I am pleased to report that it has been yet another very productive and successful year for the Refugee Therapy Centre. It took us some time to refurbish our new building and bring it into a form suitable to use; raising funds, to accomplish this. This was a challenging process, but we are grateful to have the support of so many and I should like to thank all who have contributed to our capital programme. We have settled into the new premises and have been able to consolidate many of our activities with the hope that our society reach to fair and just to asylum seekers and refugees, but we are a long way off from that. Then again, we are proud that the Centre continues to work towards the objective of relieving the needs of refugees and asylum seekers through psychotherapy, and associated treatments such as mentoring, and support outreach community development work.

When I walk into the Refugee Therapy Centre, I have a strong sense of an organisation seeking to help its clients achieve liberation. Whether in the clinical work, the mentoring or the training, there is this important common strand – a desire to share knowledge and to help people achieve what they can for themselves. This is how to help people achieve genuine empowerment – the sort that comes from within.

This is why the intercultural aspect of the Centre work is so important. Our work is based on a strong human rights framework. The Centre's work reflects our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This helps us all to learn from each other and from our clients and teaches us about the frailty of humanity as well as its strength.

The Board of Trustees and Management Committee spent some time this year to reflect on our strategic priorities so that we can continue to develop gradually and sustainably. We are grateful to Olya Khalili for chairing out Strategic Away Day. We are now working hard to follow the tasks we set ourselves at this meeting. We hope that this time we have found a building with the space to meet our needs for many years to come. We hope that we can plant roots in our new home, building a safe, respectful environment for years to come.

I am proud to report that in the Board of Trustees and Management Committee, we have an excellent mix of talents, working together to provide the support, good governance and strategic leadership that is needed for the Centre. I should like to express my immense gratitude to all the members of the Management Committee, Aida Alayarian, Josephine Klein, Micol Ascoli and Ian Hanham and Lennox Thomas. I am particularly grateful to Ian for stepping into the role of Honorary Treasurer.

We look forward with confidence to another year of success and prosperity for the Centre. Most importantly, we look forward to being able to continue to offer our clients the space and freedom to explore the meaning of some of their experiences in safety and with respect. With the dedication and expertise of all those who work and volunteer at the Centre we will continue to move forwards with the same combination of strength, of purpose and humility in action.

Report from the Chief Executive and Clinical Director - Aida Alayarian



I am pleased to report another productive and successful year in helping people who are suffering from psychological difficulties due to the trauma they have endured. Despite the unprecedented challenges, demand for our services continues to grow. We have a pool of over 90 volunteers and paid psychotherapists, psychiatrists, counsellors and psychologists, enabling us to provide our service in 21 languages; as well as 6 bilingual Support Community Development Workers; 3 full-time and 2 part-time administrators and 17 volunteers working in different capacities at the Centre.

The Centre continues to work towards the objective of relieving the psychological needs of refugees and asylum seekers through intercultural psychotherapy and associated treatments. Our main aims remain:

- To help refugees to feel empowered to deal with their psychological difficulties in an effective and appropriate manner.
- To provide a safe space in which people can rediscover their abilities and rebuild their confidence to be active members of the community.
- To provide psychotherapy and associated treatments for refugees and asylum seekers, with priority to children, young people and their families and to those with less than ten years in the UK at the time of first contact.
- To provide initial training for refugees working for the Centre in psychotherapy, counselling, support work, administration and other skills.

The number of people coming to the Centre continues to increase as our reputation and trust in our services, grow. Despite the fact that our budget has not increased, this year we provided 9774 sessions serving 820 people. The Centre's capacity to do so much with so little is testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff team, both paid and volunteers. Now in its twelfth year, the Refugee Therapy Centre continues to meet the challenge of providing a specialist and accessible intercultural therapeutic service for refugees, asylum seekers and those who are destitute.

This certainly would not be possible without the continuing support of our friends, donors, commissioners and funders whose trust and contribution are greatly appreciated. They are our valued partners in offering a sanctuary to so many, a place of safety where people can come to terms with their experiences and find hope, strength and resilience once again.

Why is the provision of services at RTC needed?

Every year war and conflict, along with ethnic, religious and cultural persecution, force many to flee their homelands, and some people find themselves in Britain. According to the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Statistical Yearbook for 2009, published in 2010 "*The number of refugees and*

people in a refugee-like situation, excluding asylum seekers and changes by country/territory of origin by end of 2009 was 36,460,806 with a further 15,627,900 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) assisted by UNHCR in 2009"; so the numbers are greatly increased compared to approximately 42 million refugees and displaced persons in the 2007 statistics.

For the vast majority of people we are serving, fleeing their homes is not a choice but a matter of survival. Yet, there is a lack of understanding of, and little compassion for the ordinary men, women, and children who are compelled to leave their homes behind. Although no comprehensive statistics exist on the extent to which refugees and other displaced people have experienced torture, the majority of refugees seeking sanctuary in the UK and coming to RTC for help have been subjected to torture or other forms of human rights violations and ill-treatment. Yet despite the fact that people have fled their homes to escape persecution and repression, some feel stigmatized in society here. The situation for some of our clients raises concerns in the light of global counter-terrorism strategies. I am talking about people who believe in and have campaigned for principles of human rights and equality, and who are, in their country of origin, persecuted, imprisoned and tortured as the result; I am talking about people who could not stand silent and witness human rights abuses. We still have a long way to go towards a world in which torture is no longer used. Eliminating torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment requires the active support and contribution of governments, and people who respect human rights. A part of this process is redress and rehabilitation for those who are tortured – hence, the existence of places such as the Refugee Therapy Centre.

We, as a team at the RTC, do our best to respect people we are serving and to be approachable and transparent in our work. Our clients are our main priority and we have learned and continue to learn so much from different communities. Our understanding of the issues that refugee and asylum seekers experience at any given time, allows us to make a realistic assessment of their needs and to develop our projects with the well-being of people we serve at the forefront of our minds. In addition to our ongoing evaluations and monitoring, we routinely seek feedback from the people we serve. We rely on this feedback and their suggestions in responding to needs.

In our intercultural approach, we consider refugees as ordinary people, except for the fact that, through no fault of their own, they find themselves in extraordinary circumstances: people who have to rely on their own inner sources of strength and resilience, which may have been lost due to the trauma they have endured. In our approach, we work toward helping people to recognise that it takes courage to be a refugee. Courage not to give up hope; courage to start a new life against the discouraging and sometimes frightening circumstances that some of our clients are living with, and it takes courage and determination for people we work with to move on and become contributing and enriching members of society once more. We are full of pride in witnessing this process every day. With so many conflicts around the world, the need for appropriate support for those who have fled violence, torture and persecution is as important as ever.

Strategic thinking and planning

At the Board of Trustees' Strategic Away Day in 2005, one of the most important tasks we identified was to find larger premises for the Centre. With hope, determination and hard work, we found a building with the space to meet our needs for many years to come, refurbished it, and moved in during April 2009. In this new home for the Centre, we are building a safe and respectful environment for people we strive to serve. This development has been challenging and created many anxious moments in refurbishing it and bringing it into a form suitable for the purpose. The raising of funds was one of the most challenging activity; and we are grateful to have had the support of so many in accomplishing this and I would like to thank all those who have contributed. There is still some remaining work to finish; this is delayed due to the lack of funding in the current economic situation.

Another important task identified in the Board of Trustees' Strategic Away Day in 2005, was the development of the qualifying training. During the last few years, we worked hard and faced many challenges to achieve this. The RTC, in collaboration with the University of East London, developed an innovative training programme combining a psychodynamic and psychoanalytic approach with intercultural perspectives. This is a professional, intercultural training, with a flexible specialism in working with refugees and asylum seekers, and other black and ethnic minority groups. We also registered as a training organisation member of the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP) – Council for Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis (CPJA). Successful completion of the full MA programme leads to eligibility for registration with the UKCP – CPJA. This programme will provide students with the opportunity to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to practice as an independent Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, including skills necessary for work within different services, e.g. the NHS and voluntary organisations.

Following successful completion of the two major developments planned in 2005, the RTC Board of Trustees and Management Committee held another Away Day in October 2010 to review our strategic priorities so that we can continue to develop gradually and sustainably, working to follow the tasks we set ourselves. Specific targets are set for the next five years.

For what we achieved to date, I have many people to thank. Firstly, I would like to express my immense gratitude to all the members of the Board and the Management Committee: John Denford, Josephine Klein, Micol Ascoli, Ian Hanham and Lennox Thomas who have given me support and enabled me to provide ongoing support and motivation to our committed team. Their presence has ensured the continuing provision of an efficient, transparent and accountable service to those we seek to assist, allowing us to meet the goals that we, with great hope, have set for the Refugee Therapy Centre. I am particularly grateful to Ian who joined us last year in the role of Honorary Treasurer and who, with his knowledge in finance and planning, has been a tremendous help. The ongoing support from John Denford, our Chair of Trustees, has been instrumental and I thank him for his dedication to the work of the Centre, which is integral to the Centre's development and achievements. My deep gratitude is to Lennox Thomas for being so generously and readily available whenever we need his expertise, beyond his ongoing contribution to the clinical and the education work of the Centre.

I would like to thank our Patrons, specifically Jeremy Corbyn for his continual support of our work and the dedication he has shown consistently from our inception; by being there when we need his help as an organisation, indeed his regular surgery at the Centre to help clients who come to see him with much love and respect. His help provides hope for many and it is therapeutic in nature and a great contribution to people's integration and settlement.

I would like to express my gratitude to our Funders and Commissionaires who have enabled us to provide our much-needed services. Their support and trust has been crucial to the development of the Centre and its projects. My grateful appreciation goes to our Steering Committees, specifically the Refugee Community Representatives Steering Committee whose input continues to ensure that the Centre helps the clients whom we serve in the best possible way. I also would like to thank our Training and Programme Committees as well as our students who are helping us to shape our Intercultural Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy Course. I thank all visiting lecturers for their time and dedication to enable us to continue with the course to such a high standard.

I wish to thank the administrative team, Natalie Yeong, Miriam Philip, Enisa Nura and Sara Khan. My very special thanks go to staff and volunteers for their ongoing commitment to the Centre's aims. I specifically would like to express my deep gratitude to our mentors, Hannah Costello, Oscar Webb, Jonathan Dutton, Julia Darko, Hareni Srenathan, Michelle Fong, Laura Gill, Liz Vernon, Meera Patel, Ben Holter, Dunja Dunda, Miriam Philip, Ahlam Mirzai for their dedication and commitment and the service they all provide so full-heartedly. The therapeutic language-support they are helping us to offer to some of our clients has

proven to be one of the most appropriate and productive interventions, with outstanding quality. And, my immense gratitude to Natalie who coordinated the project this year so smoothly and appropriately with the help of other administrative staff.

My great thanks go to our Community Development Workers (CDWs): Sega Habtom, Linda Raymond, Eden Melles, Ahlam Mirzai, Zubeyde Arabaci, Sule Cinemre and Fidan Boz, who have provided a "listening ear" to people who feel isolated. Between them, they provide support in 12 languages: Amharic, Albanian, Arabic, English, Farsi, Dari, French, Italian, Somali, Tigre, Tigrinya and Turkish.

During the last year, we have experienced painful losses. We lost a loyal, trusted friend and colleague, Paul Vernon, one of our external psychotherapist. A much-valued psychotherapist who will be remembered for his kindness, respect for others with great empathy, his wisdom and compassion. Paul was a gifted, inspirational and talented man who was supportive of the RTC work. The many books and professional Journals that he donated to the Centre during the years will keep his memory alive at the RTC for years to come. He is survived by his wife Liz Vernon and their two sons. We feel privileged to have Liz Vernon working now at the Centre on so many levels. She is an invaluable asset.



We sadly also lost one of our most loving and loved colleagues, Dorothy Daniell. Our dear Dorothy's contribution to the work of the Refugee Therapy Centre during the life we have had together played a great part: the raising consciousness of others whose lives she touched; her living response in each moment she encountered created a transition to peacefulness for those involved - her patients, her supervisees and all of us at the Refugee Therapy Centre. She felt and believed that she achieved 'God-Consciousness and Enlightenment', illuminating her awareness of life and death. During the short period prior to her death, she was clearly aware and in control of the transitional aspect of her experience. She prepared herself to merge directly with the 'Clear Light and True Nature', as she put it, having lived in peace and leaving in peace. Her loving, caring and touching memory, combined with her kindness, her beautiful and warm smile and her living energy continues to live with us. I personally loved and respected her deeply. I was surprised when I learned how deeply religious Dorothy was and she was surprised that I am not. We talked about this often. For one of my birthdays Dorothy gave me Dr Rowan Williams' book and said that, in her view, our ways of thinking were similar and she wished that one day she could see me and the Archbishop of Canterbury sat around the table to discuss our 'beliefs'. We all miss her, but, her legacy at the RTC will be continued by those whom she taught and touched with her warm nature and kindness - so, our Dorothy's loving memory keeps her life with us and never dies.

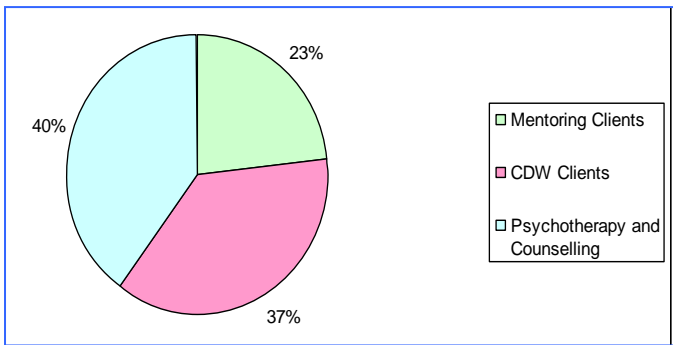
Achievements and Performance

Summary of identifying activities undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 are:

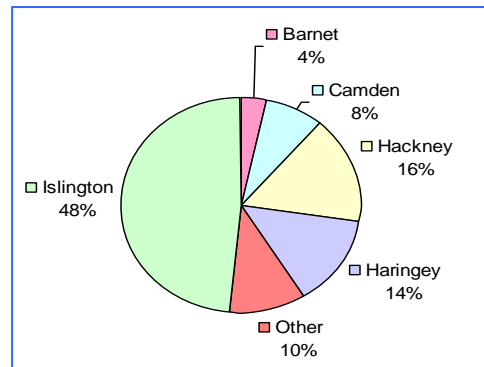
We have offered 9774 sessions to 820 Clients from 39 countries during 2010-2011. Of these, 35% are male and 65% female.

Numbers of clients offered Psychotherapy and Counselling: 328, number offered Mentoring: 191; Numbers offered support and CDW Clients: 301

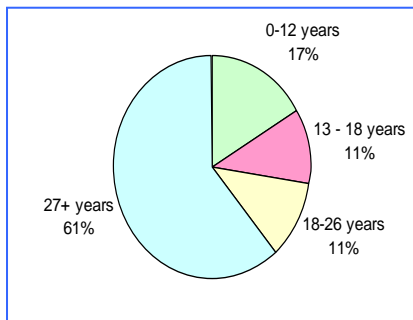
Statistics



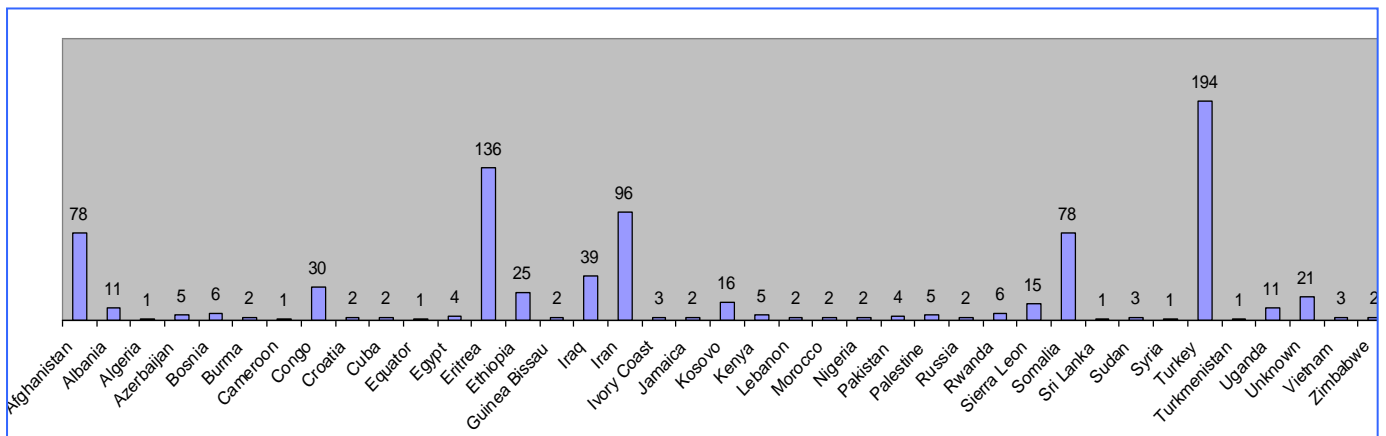
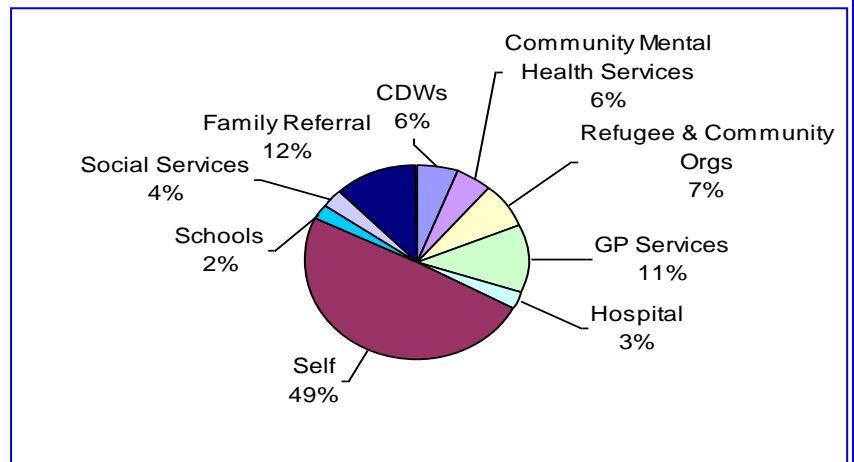
Source of referrals



Age



Borough



During this period, we had the capacity to offer services in twenty-one languages, including Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Lingala, Luganda, Serbo-Croat, Somali, Swahili, Tigre, Tigrinya and Turkish. Group work with both women and men in different languages thus forming an important part of the work of the Centre has continued, helping our clients work through issues of cultural alienation, social isolation, anxiety and depression.

The Centre provides services of quality that reflect the needs of the community we serve. The regular feedback received by our clients and the progress reports from therapists, have been invaluable in measuring and evaluating the work of the Centre, and informing us of the positive benefit our work has in the community. Seeking feedback is integral to all of the work at the Centre, and in addition to this, the outreach work in the community ensures that we can identify the needs of the community we set ourselves to serve and work towards meeting these needs.

We look forward with confidence and hope to another year of success and prosperity for the Centre. We would like to be able to continue to offer our clients the therapeutic space and freedom to explore the meaning of some of their experiences in safety and with respect.

Support Outreach Community Development Work

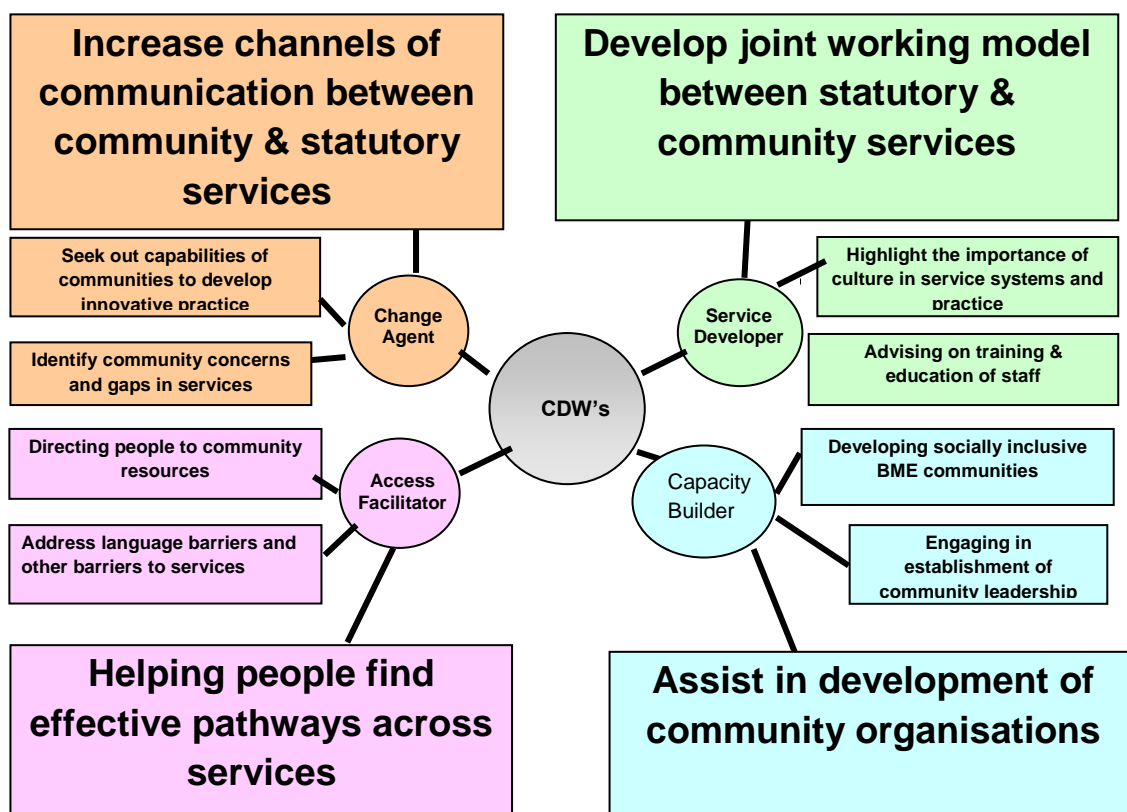
One of the innovative services we have developed over the years that evidently benefits clients to feel empowered to educate others about their own cultures – a key method of breaking down prejudices, has been our Community Development Work Project (CDW), with the main aims being to:

- Engage with communities to plan and develop services and help refugee families and individuals understand mental health.
- Reduce stigma and work towards greater understanding of mental illness to improve awareness within Refugee Communities.
- Gather and provide better information about people who use mental health services. This includes working to improve monitoring of ethnicity, better dissemination of information and of good practice, and improved knowledge about effective services.
- Be responsive to, and work closely with other services.
- Address inequality by improving access to information and aiding rehabilitation.

Clinical evidence and clients' feedback helped us to recognise there is a gap between clinical and practical care – and drew our attention to the matter of more practical support that people need prior, during or post therapy. As part of the project, the CDW team has continued to provide the twice-weekly drop- in sessions, where people in need of support can come to talk to a member of the team. These sessions are important as sometimes the people we serve come to see a member of staff without knowing what type of help they want but simply know they need help; others come to have a warm and safe space and to have someone listen to them. In addition, the project also aims to raise awareness around the needs of refugee children through outreach to school as well as community organisations to bring awareness of the needs of this client group.



THE FOUR KEY ROLES OF CDWS



The Centre improves community cohesion through the work of the CDWs in its everyday tasks, bringing together individuals from a variety of backgrounds.

One of the services of the CDW project is to signpost and describes the public services available to our clients. As a result, many clients have gone on to utilise services from other statutory and voluntary organisations such as the Refugee Council, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Community Law Centres, schools and colleges. The cumulative effect of supporting individuals in their interactions with public services and labour markets both increases confidence and fosters appropriate usage of public service.

A case work of CDW work

A client had been evicted from her residence because of a burning smell that came from her flat as it was thought that she was causing a health and safety hazard by burning something. This very confused and angry woman came to the Centre to see a CDW for help. A fuller explanation in this process revealed that this was simply the smell from the way she made her coffee. Although her living situation has not been resolved, through discussion with her CDW worker, this client felt more able to explain her customs with patience and to educate others about her culture instead of feeling discriminated against.

Mentoring Project

Another effective service we have provided at the RTC for the last eight years is the Mentoring Project. As this project has become one of the most successful interventions, I would like to tell you a little about it. The Mentoring project was initially a two-year project set up at the Refugee Therapy Centre in 2003, after

a six weeks pilot study for evaluation in 2002. The project was first funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, serving children and adults in Greater London. It was set up to help refugees in the process of integration and adaptation to their new environment with a strong focus and priority on children and young people. It supported asylum seeking and refugee children (both separated and in families) to improve their life chances by helping them to develop aspiration and to enjoy and achieve in education. One of the objectives of the project is to reduce the isolation experienced by so many refugee children and young people. We provide one to one support to the children and young people through assigning them a mentor to provide individual, tailored support. For adults the project works to a wider remit of enabling people to develop confidence and skills to improve their life chances in the UK and reduce the isolation so many refugees face by provision of English language support in a therapeutic environment.



The project owes its success to effective management. The student mentors have participated with unfailing goodwill, enthusiasm and reliability, largely due to the quality of support and guidance they have received to assist them in their work with clients, specifically through regular supervision. This affects the experience of the client, as they are made to feel welcome, comfortable, cared for and safe during their mentoring sessions where they have the full attention of their mentor. The success of the project is based on:

- careful selection of mentors
- rigorous coordination and administration structures to handle referrals, correspondence with children parents and other clients, liaison with mentors and mentees, timetabling sessions and room booking
- procedures to log assessments, attendance, record sessions, and write up progress report and closing notes, closely monitored by the Project Coordinator and the Clinical Director

Mentoring has had a positive impact on both the children (mentees) and the students (mentors) involved.

The opportunity to form a relationship with a mentor in a safe, non-institutional environment at the Centre has strengthened the children's chances of succeeding at school and lifted their aspirations. The difficult process of integration is eased through one-to-one and group mentoring; children are happier and parents less anxious. The difference observed in children by staff at the Centre, including mentors, and by teachers and parents is:

- increased confidence and self-esteem
- improved concentration in school work
- improved English language skills
- improved educational achievement in all subjects
- making new friends and participation in extra-curricular activities
- a reduction in feelings of anxiety and loneliness
- an increase in positive hopes and aspirations for the future

These improvements can be seen in the written progress records and closing reports submitted by mentors and the feedback from mentees. The number of clients receiving mentoring has increased from 12 in 2003 to 191 in 2010, and the number of volunteer mentors on the project has increased from 3 to 19.

Some feedback from mentees:

Esther is aged 12 and attends a local school:

"It helps me to understand and focus on my subject in the school. It improves my learning and helps me with my homework."

Sofia, aged 15, told us:



"Receiving mentoring is very helpful because it helps me to improve my English. It helps me to improve my homework and I feel better at school. I get on well with my mentor and I can talk to her and ask any question I want without any difficulty. I cannot believe how quickly I am improving with my English, but also able to discuss how I feel with my mentor. I am so happy with my mentor and thanking her for encouraging me. She is like a big sister to me, the best sister in the whole world"

Mentors (mainly Medical Student from the UCL), have regular contact with refugee children and young people from many different countries and cultures. This has made a huge impact on them in terms of knowledge and understanding of people in the community who are disadvantaged. **Some comments from mentors in their reports:**

Sara Sherif:

"I have found it an immensely challenging and rewarding experience. My clients come from a diverse range of backgrounds, are of different ages and have varying levels of language but their determination to learn English is something they all have in common. Despite their past and present adversities their perseverance in learning and adapting to a new culture is inspirational and I feel privileged to play a role in that process..... I have gained a wealth of experience and a greater insight into the refugee system in the UK."

Flora Ogilvie:

"It is a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchange – for me to hear about the places my clients have come from and to be able to talk with them about aspects of British culture."

Below are some example of the work with brief case presentation and clients feedback.

Alin, an adult individual therapy

Alin came to the UK as an asylum-seeker and acquired refugee status. He is highly intelligent, trained in his profession and had a good job in his country of origin. He requested therapy after beginning to suffer flashbacks and sleep disturbance. He had been arrested first in 1985, and released from prison after three months and was arrested again 18 months later, and on this occasion he was severely tortured throughout five years of detention. After release he, with the help of friends and family, decided to escape further persecution and torture and leave his country by paying an agent.

On his arrival in the United Kingdom, Alin was arrested at Heathrow Airport, bearing false documents. He told officials that he was a political refugee and wished to claim asylum. He was incarcerated in Britain for entering the UK with false documents and detained for four months without knowing what his conviction

was. Alin was clearly suffering with classical features of post traumatic stress, including 'histrionics', exaggerated reactions, nightmares and intrusive recollections of trauma; efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings or conversations associated with the trauma, and diminished interest in participating in significant activities; and feelings of detachment or estrangement from others, difficulty falling and staying asleep and outbursts of anger. In addition, he had depressive symptoms characterised by poor sleep, low mood, ideas of helplessness and hopelessness.

These symptoms resulted from Alin's traumatic experiences of detention in his own country, when he feared for his life, was physically and psychologically abused and tortured. These experiences were subsequently exacerbated by the uncertainty of his escape, separation from his community and concerns for the safety of his family, feeling guilty over his own survival. His symptoms seemed to develop further after his expectation of freedom in the UK was disappointed and by being arrested and put into detention here in London. As therapy progressed Alin was able to talk about his experience. He described the torture as being severely beaten with sticks, forced to drink urine, kicked and punched. Electric shocks were applied to various parts of his body, including his genitals. He was burned with cigarettes on various parts of his body. He recalled that he frequently lost consciousness under torture; and described how the pain was often so unbearable that he preferred to die.

Alin was held in solitary confinement for some of his 5 years of imprisonment, and in cells with many other political prisoners, who were also tortured. As therapy progressed, and Alin felt more at ease to talk about the traumatic experience he had endured during his detention, he disclosed with great difficulty that his guards had tied his arms and legs to the bed, and proceeded to rape him and also abused him further with pieces of wood, bottle and metal. This was not only excruciatingly painful, but humiliating and these terrifying moments marked his memory. He said they were beating him while inserting objects into his body. Despite the severe torture already inflicted on him, this particular incident had exerted the profoundest impact on him and indeed, he felt that it had changed his life, his self-esteem and confidence.

Amana, individual work with a child

Amana, 14, was referred to the Refugee Therapy Centre as a result of his criminal offences. When he was asked what he was thinking to make him so angry and whether he had any regret of the outcome, he said "Oh, of course I regretted it. I didn't come to this country to fight. My parents sent me to have peace and gain my education". With encouragement, he could reflect and identify some of the issues affecting him. He said "I was the only asylum seeker student in my class and there are very few where I live. I couldn't tell my foster parents as it would upset them and they are so good and worked so hard to get me into school in the first place. They would be terribly upset for me and they may inform the school and other pupils are calling me names and calling me a 'grass' and telling me to go back to my country".

With the support of a social worker and his foster parents we started working therapeutically. As therapy progressed and Amana felt safe enough, he started talking about his feelings of rejection because his parents sent him to this country and kept his younger sister with them. He felt that his mother showed preferential treatment towards his sister. He has been in therapy for a year now, has served his community rehabilitation, and recently started school with a very good support system. He usually comes to therapy very early and sits in the waiting area, reading a book before his sessions. He also likes to talk with other member of staff, but he has not been intrusive and never invades other patients' privacy in the waiting area. He said he feels belongs when he is at the Centre. He feels understood and respected. He is doing very well in school, his teachers enjoy his well mannered behaviour and with the help of a one-to-one mentor his academic achievement has massively improved. He recently started thinking about his career and his future as a good model citizen.

Group work

As part of our services we provide a number of therapeutic Men's and Women's groups in several different languages, including English, for those who wish to explore issues of psychological adjustment and change. While each refugee's experience is unique, there are some which may be common to particular groups of women or men. For example, those coming from the same environment who speak the same language but there are also commonalities for people who experienced identical persecution in different cultures and communities. In a mixed language/ethnicity group this can be a positive unifying factor. These experiences may have involved political or state violence, persecution, imprisonment, torture, domestic, family abuse or rape. In some cultures, women face blame for being raped and are scared to speak out for fear of being ostracized and rejected; many women bear the secrecy as a heavy burden. Men are also raped and, having had the courage to disclose this in therapy, struggle with the difficulties of seeing this as personal and emasculating or as a political act.

Women and men who come to the UK as refugees or asylum seekers may also find the process of integrating into the new society difficult and painful. As a result of the trauma and losses they have experienced, as well as current difficulties with immigration and resettlement, refugees and asylum seekers may experience depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, flashbacks and psychosomatic presentations. They may experience feelings of isolation due to the social, cultural and religious stigma attached to mental health problems and specifically sexual violence. Our supportive groups provide an environment in which participants can feel the relief and support of genuine human contact. Group members can gain strength from the sharing of experiences. The help and encouragement gained from the group assists in breaking the ring of isolation, within which many of our clients feel trapped. Participants are asked at the beginning to try to commit to a minimum of three months in the group and then, if they wish to stay, to make a further commitment until the following break. At this point, each person is invited to make a decision as to whether they wish to continue in the group for another year. As example, Amina, one of the participants of a women's group told us:

"It came to the point in my life where I had to ask myself: Is there life? Does it have to be lived? If so, how and where should I find the strength to live a quiet life? A light and great hope for me was the Refugee Therapy Centre, where I go every fortnight for a women's group. Therapy has been like a safe haven and being able to have a therapist who speaks my own language makes me feel like home. The fact that there are people in my life who are working with all their strength and calmness for me so that I can have a happy life, gives me hope for living. So I have decided to work with all my strength, with the help I receive from the group, so that I may never be a depressive again. Now I only think of my children's security, because only here will they find safety. The children are going to school and are absorbing the English culture, which for me, as a mother and with my condition is so positive. It is reassuring to know that they are safe and happy. Above are all the reasons why I can continue a normal life again."

A case example of the family intervention and parenting

Abby

Abby, a 12 years girl from Africa, was referred to the Centre by her support teacher at her school with the support of social services. It was hoped that a therapeutic assessment could be carried out with the possibility of providing parenting skills support to Fatima, Abby's mother. Assessments were offered to Fatima, the third of which she attended, after missing the first two appointments without calling to change

or cancel. Despite this, she became engaged. The greatest initial barrier was that Fatima (Abby's mother) was reluctant to admit even to herself that she was abusing her child.

As therapy progressed, she was able to allow herself to take responsibility that she was assaulting and mistreating Abby. She admitted that she was aware that her behaviour was not right, but feared if she asked for help, she would lose Abby, and face public shame in her community. She was scared of prosecution and imprisonment and feared that no professional would understand her, as she was not able to express herself, although she could speak some English. She was not able to ask a member of her community with English skills to help her as all in the community would then know her business. In her mind, Fatima tried to persuade herself that she was not really doing any harm to Abby, and that other parents do the same. When she was not able to persuade herself, she would seek comfort with drugs and alcohol. She would leave Abby home alone and come back with a stranger, putting herself and Abby in danger. She would regret this the next day but said if Abby disclosed any abuse and asked for help, she would hit her again. For her, it was like a vicious circle and was getting worse.

After lengthy assessments, both Abby and Fatima were offered ongoing individual therapy as well as monthly family therapy; they were both also referred for mentoring support, and Fatima was referred to our parenting workshop to be in the group with other mothers. Through attending the Parenting Workshop at the RTC, Fatima came to understand that the social service involvement was to protect her child, not 'to rip her family apart' as she put it. She understood that they wanted what she really wanted – a safe home for Abby. Abby temporarily remains in care, but is hoping to go back to her family home when her mother feels better. Fatima is working well in therapy to deal with the tremendous abuse that she has endured, and wishes to be a good enough mother and in peace to become able to enjoy her child.

In the parenting workshop and in her individual therapy she is now able to explore her childhood traumatic experiences, talk of abusive parents and extended family, and also explore the effects of trauma she has been through in her country, having been persecuted and raped by military gangs and not being able to talk to anybody. She said that she felt guilty and found it shameful to talk about her experience while it has always been in her mind, affecting her life in every aspect and not being able to parent her daughter is one of them.

Words from some staff and volunteers

Marie-José Loncelle-Burris, Deputy Clinical Director

It feels as though another year has gone by very quickly at the Refugee Therapy Centre; maybe it is age and/or I have been happily busy with different projects. I still see a number of regular individuals for psychotherapy. My interest and fascination for people of diverse background and nationalities remain intact, even after five years.



During this last year, the loss of Dorothy Daniell has been very painful to everybody, including myself, as Dorothy had been my first supervisor at the Centre and her gentleness carried me through during difficult times. I do hold her gentle smile with me at all times, especially as I have taken her role in supervising therapists and some trainees in placement at the Centre. It is a very difficult act to follow but I try my best as she would have wanted me to. Sharing thoughts, concerns and ideas in supervision is a very rewarding part of my work as well as witnessing therapists grow and develop. I have again learnt a great deal from the Community Development Workers in my role as supervisor. It is very gratifying to see them progress and learn.

We finally had wonderful news about our PGDip and MA in Intercultural Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy in conjunction with the University of East London which is finally validated and rearing to go for the new academic year in 2011. It is very exciting indeed! In the meantime, I have taken great pleasure again in tutoring some students on the Introductory Course. Their enthusiasm is always heart warming and I am also honoured to be giving some of the lectures on the course as well. Each new group of students forces one to become a better teacher.

I have to thank Sule, the Turkish speaker CDW, without whom I would not be able to understand any of my Turkish patients. Despite having to work under difficult conditions, Sule has shown remarkable grace and professionalism. And Sega, the Arabic/Tigrinya CDW, has also been a great support. I also wish to thank everybody in the office who provides the best support, always. And my biggest appreciation goes again to Aida whose strength - physical, emotional and spiritual - remains exemplary.



Nerma Biscevic, senior therapist

I am a Bosnian speaking Psychodynamic Counsellor and this is my ninth year at the Refugee Therapy Centre. Over the past year I have been seeing individual clients for assessments and/or ongoing work. Some of the clients have achieved what they were hoping for and have moved on from the counselling process. With some others the journey is still going on.

Sadly, during this year, we have lost a dear colleague, Dorothy Daniell, who had supervised my work for some years and who we all surely miss. Fortunately, Dorothy's great humanity and her professional input will continue to be an inspiration for us.

Since 2003 I have been running an experiential student group, which is an integral part of our Foundation Course on Counselling Refugees. The experiential group is a place where students have the opportunity to experience, explore and learn about themselves and others, and where they can support each others during a training that can be theoretically demanding and sometimes emotionally challenging.

I am currently running one, and setting up further, therapy groups for women. Some of these groups will be language based and conducted with one of our CDWs' team to help as interpreter. I also look forward to setting up an English speaking women's group as well as a group for English speaking men. Our initial experiences are encouraging and it is rewarding to see that group members are experiencing group work as beneficial. Reflecting on her initial sessions in the group one member said: *"I have received various kinds of help in this country. I have been helped by my GP, Social Worker, housing people and particularly my Support Worker. I am grateful for all of that but I haven't learned anything. This is something special – here I feel that I am learning."*

As for myself, I am very excited to have become full-time engaged with the Centre. With our latest developments in training and new developments in clinical work, the year ahead is likely to be even more exciting. I would like to thank all my colleagues at the Refugee Therapy Centre for their co-operation and support over these years.

Eden Melles, Bi-Lingual Support Community Development Worker



This year, among other clients, I have shared sessions with a client, which lasted for 9 months. The continuity of this work has stepped up my development - personally and professionally. Each session had a new challenge, which enhanced self-assessment in the hope of trying to reach the person out while still trying to be bound by the policy and procedures.

Well, it has been quite an experience to see things changing; it's good to be part of the changing process. I believe that I am blessed to have had the chance to meet, work with, learn from and even make friends with the wonderful people that I have met at the Centre. I hope and wish that this wonderfulness of people will keep on going.

Fidan Boz, Bi-Lingual Support Community Development Worker

I have been working at the Refugee Therapy Centre since February 2011 as a Community Development Team and Turkish interpreter. Previously I was a volunteer at the Centre. I am delighted to work at the Centre. The Centre gives me a great opportunity to increase my knowledge by providing clinical meetings and supervision which I regularly attend. Every Thursday and Friday brings a nice smile for me to be part of the CDW team. With my colleagues, sharing a totally different kind of experiences and view point, we go on outreach work with such an ethnically and culturally diverse London community. I would like to thank the Clinical Director Aida and my colleagues, especially Linda, Enisa and Segal who have supported me and led me in my way of working.



Sega Habtom, Bi-Lingual Support Community Development Worker



The past years since I have become involved at the Centre, I have learned a lot through my work. I started to work at the RTC in 2003 as an Outreach Support Worker, then a Community Development Worker, Interpreter and recently I have joined the team of Counsellors at the Centre and work as the Amharic, Arabic, Tigrinya and Tigre speaking Counsellor. I am glad to be working as an interpreter with Nerma with Tigrinya and Amharic speaking Women's Group. Through my interpreting work I have also learned a lot about the group process, how the group members use the space in the group and also a great deal from the way Nerma conducts the group. It helps me to think about the client's experiences and also see the benefits and progress of such a process in a group.

My role as a CDW is to establish trust and to make my clients feel comfortable, I offer them space where they can feel safe to explore painful and difficult emotional issues they have. I am so happy to be working at the Centre with people from different cultural and professional backgrounds and we all learn from one another. But my greatest lessons I do learn from my clients who are so brave to bring their unique experiences and difficult journeys and it is my privilege to be working with them. Even though I went through the process of being a refugee myself, I am still learning about different issues refugees and asylum seekers face nowadays.

In addition, the Centre gave me a great opportunity to increase my knowledge by providing clinical meetings and supervision which I regularly attend. I would like to thank all staff at the Refugee Therapy Centre for making this work possible.

Enisa Nura, PA/Administrator



I re-joined the Centre in May last year and was very pleased to be working with my colleagues and friends. I am always so impressed with the Centre's achievements and the wonderful work that everyone at the Centre does. This year has flown by so fast and I have had a year of much learning and improvement of my understanding of the Centre's work. I have enjoyed being involved in various aspects of the Centre and have had great pleasure of working with people who are so dedicated and passionate about their work.

Mohammad Jameer, Centre Accountant



I have now been involved with the centre for six years as their finance administrator and it seems like only yesterday since I joined, with every day presenting a fresh challenge. The diversity of cultures and views which prevail make the experience an enlightening one, both strengthening and creating bonds between those who meet at the centre.

The success of the centre is due to the staff, volunteers and management committee who provide a continued atmosphere of warmth, support and dedication, opening the doors to a brighter future for those that have suffered. Lastly I would like to thank Aida for the opportunity to work in a stimulating and harmonious environment.



Sara Khan, Administration Assistant

I am the newest addition to the administrative team at the Centre and still with much learning to do. I wanted to start a new chapter to my life in 2011; to gain some new experience and “give back”, before continuing my studies and where better than RTC to feel that each individual is capable of creating change, no matter how small.

Coming from a refugee background, the work of the RTC is close to my heart and it furthers my understanding of issues faced by people from all walks of life. It is also a place where I don't feel the need to explain who I am or how I came to be where I am in my life. The diversity of our clients and our team makes the Centre culturally rich and a great atmosphere to work in. I am proud to be part of a team, which helps rebuild lives affected by genocide, crimes against humanity or persecution and breach to their most basic fundamental rights.

Sule Cinemre, Turkish Speaking Volunteer

After completing the Introductory Course on Counselling, I started work at the centre as a volunteer. I then started working as a Community Development Worker for the Turkish speaking community. Unfortunately, after a serious brain operation, I could not continue my job because of my health condition. I then decided to go back to working as a volunteer at the centre. I didn't want to give up being active, and the centre, with its friendly atmosphere and community spirit, provided an excellent opportunity. At the moment I work as an interpreter with a very skilled and talented psychotherapist, Marie-José Loncelle-Burris.



I would like to thank Aida and Marie-José, on whose constant support I have always counted on. I could not even think about being here if they hadn't been there for me. Also I want to thank my colleagues who are very supportive in the course of my illness. My learning journey is still going on.

Nuria Martin, Counsellor in Placement



I have been working at the centre as a volunteer counsellor for the last six months, although I am only here a few hours a week, I feel very proud to be part of this organisation which I believe supports and covers very well the different issues and aspects that refugees have to face when they come to this country. I have the opportunity here to develop, not only professionally as a counsellor, but on a personal level as well. It is a learning experience and a very rewarding one.

Kiymet Omur-Bivolaku, Volunteer Counsellor

Another year has gone by. A year, which brought with it its changes, as each year does in its own way. Reflecting on the years since I started working at the Centre, I have seen it move twice and settle, flourish and expand, has its ebbs and flows; come across wonderful people who have come and gone to continue their journeys, and others with whom it is a pleasure to continue working with today. But most importantly, it is the clients that we meet and to whom this Centre is dedicated to, the people who come from all walks of life and seek refuge in this country and to whom this Centre has become to symbolize an anchor and compass to the directions of their journeys they will continue to walk.



I feel privileged to work at the Centre, and particularly with our clients who humble us greatly, and I would like to thank all who are involved at the Centre and make it the Haven it is today.

I thank my supervision group and my supervisor Marie-José in particular, for all their feedback, reflections and input. I would also like to express my eternal gratitude to Dorothy, who sadly passed away last year, for what I have learned from her and we all did. Her unique being has touched us all and she will always remain an important part of the Refugee Therapy Centre.

Linda Raymond, Community Development Worker

Another wonderful but challenging year has gone by, my role as a community development worker is to raise awareness of good mental health and to offer clients practical and emotional support when required.



As a CDW my role is to raise awareness of good mental health and to offer clients practical and emotional support when required. Every now and then the clients will ask to celebrate a special day, which is great; it's another way of working and engaging with people for us all to sing, dance and eat a lovely multicultural cuisine.

It has been another pleasurable year working at the RTC; it has given me the opportunity to meet such a wonderful range of people from different cultures and background. With hope for another successful year, wishing all a good health.



Lennox Thomas, Trustee and Consultant Psychotherapist

English Speaking Men's Group

This group has been running for over six years with members joining and in the main leaving after a couple of years. It has been helpful that when new men join there are existing members who welcome them and are supportive. This has been of particular importance in the past year for a couple of isolated young men who came to the UK as unaccompanied minors and have not built support in this country. Group members are from Southern and Francophone Central African communities, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kashmere. Unsurprisingly most are from minority communities in those countries and are without family here. All group members were referred by GP's or hospital Psychiatrist or Psychologist for a diagnosed mental health matter. All are medicated, some were considered violent most have depression anxiety and one hears voices. The group works well and is a leveller in that most members are isolated and they find support in being able to meet once per week.

Laura Gill, Mentor

I started volunteering at the RTC in November 2010 and I can't believe how fast the time has flown by. As a medical student, most of my week is spent sitting in a lecture theatre with two hundred other students and its easy to become detached from the "real world"! Being a mentor to four clients each week has brought me back to reality and been an invaluable opportunity to learn about the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in London. At times, it has been a steep learning curve, but I have also learnt a lot about working



with clients in a one-to-one environment. The best feeling is when you see mentoring really having an impact on people's lives. Every client's needs are different- for some the focus is on improving their English, for others it is more a question of confidence building- but it is great that the RTC and the mentoring programme are here to offer whatever support they need.

Julia Darko, Mentor



Volunteering at the Refugee Therapy Centre as a mentor has been a truly worthwhile and enriching experience. I have really enjoyed getting to know both the staff at the centre and my mentees, all of whom have been a pleasure to work with. As a mentor, I've had the chance to work with individuals in order to motivate them to realise their true potential and elicit a desire to thrive better, whether it be socially or academically.

Mentoring has also taught me a lot about interacting with people from different walks of life whilst employing a whole set of communication and listening skills as well as creative teaching. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Refugee Therapy Centre and feel privileged to have played some part in their great work!

Oscar Webb, Mentor



I have been working as a mentor at the Centre since Autumn 2010. Every Wednesday afternoon I make my way from Bloomsbury, where I study, to Finsbury Park. It never gets dull to see the difference between those two parts of London. Living in Central London, it's far too easy to forget, or not even realise that large number of vulnerable refugees who live in the same city. The people I work with, live on the periphery of British society, many are fleeing persecution. The Refugee Therapy Centre provides an increasingly important service for people who desperately need the support. I am certain that my time spent

working here has benefited those I work with greatly.



Natalie Yeong - Mentoring Project Co-ordinator

Another enjoyable year at the Centre has flown by - I have been busy with the Mentoring project, volunteers and admin. It's great running the Mentoring project, thanks to the lovely mentors who have been brilliant at engaging with the clients. It is lovely to see the children turning up every week and keen to start their sessions.

Thanks to everyone at the Centre for putting up with my bossy post it notes, particularly to Enisa and Sara, who has recently joined us and. as always, biggest thank you to Aida for being eternally patient and understanding.

Some events at the RTC during the last year

International Women's Day



The Refugee Therapy Centre (RTC) organised an event to mark the 100th anniversary of the International Women's day (8th of March) on Thursday 10th March 2011. The afternoon was opened by our Somali speaking Community Development Worker, Linda Raymond and followed by the Clinical Director, Aida Alayarian who expressed the importance of celebrating the International Women's Day and creating a space for all women who attended to celebrate together and to discuss future plans for the RTC to serve the Community. All those present talked and discussed openly about their experiences, in their own countries as well as in the UK. There was lively discussion about women who have fought for the rights of other women, and are admired for their courage and bravery. All participants agreed that much hard work, blood and tears have been shed for us to be able to gather to celebrate this day in our own right today.

To open the discussion Aida spoke of the achievements of women in the past and at present, and of the important role of women for the future - those who strive for equality and empowerment through their work as nurses, doctors, teachers, journalists, human rights defenders and political activists in all walks of life. She highlighted the recent waves of protests, which have gripped the Middle East and North Africa, and struggles for freedom that women are engaged in - an inspiration to us all and to generations to come. These women, by their call for change in the streets for a better life, for peace, for equality, and for human rights are part of an important movement for democracy and for peace - for themselves, their communities and future generations. The vast majority of these women are not political activists or human rights advocates. They are ordinary women united to oppose oppression, discrimination and inequality. They are courageous mothers, sisters, daughters or partners, speaking out against subjugation and inequality, and calling for a human's right to dignity.

Aida further emphasised the importance of our role, in the West, to call on our governments and the international community to take measurable and time-bound steps to ensure women have equal rights: indeed, to call on the media and regulatory bodies around the world to take active measures towards establishing equal opportunities for women, addressing the existing discrimination and ensuring effective ethical codes of conduct are implemented within our societies, including measures for fostering a gender-sensitive approach, assisting women in overcoming violence which is directed at them in different arenas of life.

Women are often placed under considerable social and cultural pressure to keep families together regardless of the circumstances, not given a choice to leave their abusers due to the attached stigma of abandonment within their community. Abduction and trafficking of young girls for sale into prostitution is one of the examples of serious crimes committed against humanity that need protective measures. "The United Nations estimates that 700,000 to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world for purposes of forced prostitution, labour and other forms of exploitation every year. Trafficking is estimated to be a \$7 billion dollar annual business." (Human Trafficking TEAM, 2011).

Aida ended by saying that we are here at the RTC to celebrate women and organisations that are raising awareness about sexism and campaigning to combat gender-based censorship; hoping for stronger dialogue and debates to encourage the development of women globally. She then invited the attendees to give examples of women who took steps in order to make a difference within their communities.



Following this, women attending the event shared examples of courageous women in their community and the country they come from.

One example was given by Nasrin from Afghanistan. She said:

"The women of Afghanistan want freedom and human rights. We have been fighting for a long time. The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan is an organisation campaigning for women's rights. It was founded in 1977 by a remarkable woman called Meena and other women in Afghanistan and since then they have been fighting for human rights and social justice." Nasrin also talked about other great women such as Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese activist who was freed after 15 years of house arrest.

Genet talked about women's situations in Eritrea. She said:

"In Eritrea women celebrate this day since the time that we were fighting for our independence." She gave examples of women leaders and told us Eritrean women are well organised here in London as well as back home. Genet said: "I am so happy to be celebrating this day at the RTC with people from different countries. We are women who come from male dominated societies, which makes this day a special one."



Adena stepped in and added

"We celebrate 8th of March in Eritrea by dancing, eating and wearing traditional dresses, but we also take part in different seminars and making business plans for women's activities within the community and for a better society."

Fatima from Eritrea said:

“8th March is a special day for me and for all Eritrean women, because we fight for our equality and independence for 30 years as the Eritrean Revolution is the longest war in Africa. We lost our comrades’ lives to be free and to celebrate International Women’s Day. We have an international organisation called National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW). It was established in 1979 as one of the mass organisations dedicated to improving the status of Eritrean women. The NUEW seeks to ensure that all Eritrean women confidently stand for their rights and equally participate in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of the country and share the benefits. I am pleased to say, today, Eritrean women are in all government sectors from the lowest position until ministry.”

Letina, another participant from Eritrea, added:

“I am so happy to be with you in this historical day. Thanks to RTC this is my first time I am celebrating this important international day with women from different countries. I have always celebrated the 8th of March only with Eritreans. I found this is a different experience, very rich and truly international from the food to the way of living, talking and we are dancing. Even looking at the difference in what we are wearing, our clothes are different, but all are beautiful and make this event a true International Women’s Day. Thank you for organizing this for us and I hope we will celebrate together next year here at RTC.”

Zohra from Somali said:

“Somali women are suffering in Somalia because men abuse women, but they don’t like their sisters or their female relatives to be abused. It is something that we should learn to fight against and to find our freedom and our right. Somalian women are beautiful and kind and can be the best mothers and men need to learn to love them and respect them.”

Tamara said: “Somalia women are pleading with Islamic groups that have banned aid agencies. The Islamic group Al-Shabaab banned foreign aid in areas under their control, causing devastating effects on millions of desperate people who rely on such assistance to stay alive. This put more pressure on women of Somalia as mothers and wives who, as women alone, have to provide for their families. They receive very little help from men within their family and in society and constantly try to survive ongoing military attacks in the civil war”.

Alma, a young Albanian woman, talked about what Women’s Day means to women in her country. Because of repression, occasions like Women’s Day are one of the few international days that can be celebrated openly; this day is also celebrated as Mother’s Day. She said on 8th March restaurants and cafés flow with women and girls gather to celebrate by dancing and singing and socialising, sometimes joined by men and children. Presents, flowers and good wishes are always exchanged between women, and are received by women.”

Shabnam, an Iranian Woman talked about difficulties woman are facing in Iran. She said:

“for example, Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer, accused of defending opposition activists, politicians and juvenile prisoners, who has been imprisoned in the notorious Evin prison in Tehran since 4th September 2010. Nasrin was arrested on charges of spreading propaganda against the regime and jeopardising state security. She went on a hunger strike as she was denied phone calls and visitation rights for her family; followed by a second hunger strike protesting against her detention and ill treatment while in custody. On 9th January this year, Nasrin was sentenced to 11 years in prison; disbarred indefinitely and prohibited from leaving the country for 20 years. It is admirable that in countries such as Iran, where oppressive regimes impose such limitations on one’s fundamental freedoms, remain brave women like Nasrin who continue their quest for equality and protection of human rights, which embody

women's rights and freedoms. She continued to talk about her sadness about the dictatorial religious regime in Iran and the increased level of oppression for women in Iran."

Yalda another participant from Iran added

For Iranian women the issue is not religion, but is the lack of respect, freedom of speech and gender discrimination." She said the fact is that no person in authority or no state should dictate to its citizens how to worship and connect their sadistic oppression to their religion and God. In Iran, Islam, as religion is used as an excuse for violation of human rights and in particular the right of woman and abuse of power due to a political ideology. Women in Iran, once again, as they did for centuries, are proving to be a foundation for human rights recognitions with no boundaries and are not inclusive at all level of society. She added "Although I am not religious, I have respect for women such as Shirin Ebadi, who is an example of an Iranian woman and said that she was a Muslim and she believed in human rights".

After presentation and discussions, everybody was invited to join the lunch prepared by the RTC team and its clients, providing a colourful palette of flavours and tastes, with music adding an extra layer of colour in the background. Some shared their experiences and spoke of women they admire. Some took part in Eritrean dancing; some, more shy, smiled and cheered on; whilst all celebrated being a woman at the time when much progress has been made, but the journey is still not over, not by far. The goals remain to achieve equality for all women in all aspects of life, to put in place effective socio-legal systems providing protection against violence towards women as well as providing a system of support when the latter fails in part.



Human Rights Day Celebration at the Refugee Therapy Centre

At the Refugee Therapy Centre (RTC), we mark the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year the Community Development Workers team organised an event to mark the International Human Rights Day on 9th December 2010. The Centre's clients as well as professionals and representatives of community organisations attended this event. The atmosphere was lively; there were talks, food and drinks.

Aida Alayarian, the Centre's Director, opened the afternoon with a talk about the role of the Refugee Therapy Centre in supporting those who have suffered from human rights violations. She emphasised the importance of marking this day at the RTC as it aims to appreciate and acknowledge that The Declaration embodies universal values which include principles of fairness, equality and inalienable rights of all human beings. At its heart lies the non-discriminatory application of these principles, to all areas of public and private life - everywhere and to everyone – the rights which all human beings are inherently entitled to and should be protected. This lies at the heart of the United Nation Charter, which is legally binding on all member States; defining the fundamental rights and freedoms for all. It represents a social contract

between the States and their citizens, giving rise to values and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming the inherent human dignity and worth of every person in the world, without distinction on any discriminatory grounds. More than ever, our world is affected by racial, economic, religious and other divides, thus now, more than ever, the importance of universal principles of justice, fairness and equality need to be reaffirmed and brought to the forefront of the socio-political dialogue.

Aida emphasised that the very need for, and existence of, institutions such as the RTC is a telling sign that human rights violations remain systematic and widespread. Oppressive governments around the world continue to maintain their political control, and their often arbitrary and abusive judicial systems remain. A good example of such violations are the timeless, borderless, and far too common violence against women and children, which still remain socially acceptable in many parts of the world. "Globally, at least one in three women and girls is beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime." (UN Commission on the Status of Women). Not restricted to the private arena of life, but also systematic, sexual violence is used as a weapon at times of war and conflict. Young women and children have become "cheaper than bullets" means of warfare. (Amnesty International, Rape Is Cheaper than Bullets campaign) In addition, such victims often lack the ability to escape such abuse, due to the scarcity of shelter and welfare resources.

Human rights are not only our common and inherent universal values, which transcend cultures and traditions, but they are also characteristically and directly relevant to our work and lie at the heart of our Centre and our commitment to improve the condition for refugees, seeking help with us.

We aim for freedom from fear and persecution, freedom from discriminatory conduct, hoping to allow refugees to build a new life, on an equal footing to the rest of the society; confirming the very fact that human rights are essential to the life and dignity of us all. One should not, however, lose sight, that as we are entitled to human rights; we should also respect the rights of others in order to make universal human rights a reality for all.

At the RTC, we work hard to ensure that every person coming through our doors, regardless of their gender, sex, age, race and regardless of their origins or socio- economic or political background is served equally and without prejudice. Our role is to advance the rights of all people we set ourselves to serve, and we strive to move towards the greatest fulfilments of human potential, a promise that is the ethos of, and central to all the RTC services and activities; we strive to ensure human rights become a living reality by every step we take. We enjoy our effort in serving people whose rights have been violated, and pride ourselves on providing a much-needed space to refugee and asylum seekers; a place where people can feel at ease to regain their voice and taking charge of their lives.

As an organisation, we strive to respond with compassion and creativity to the aftermath of cruelty, helping the refugees and asylum seekers who have endured gross infringement of their dignity and personal violence to feel empowered, rebuild their lost confidence and regain resilience. Every year we work with hundreds of survivors of genocide, torture, trafficking and rape. Listening to those we serve, we acknowledge and value their personal journeys and through support, we aim to assist and encourage people in their recovery, in a place where they can feel safe to rebuild bridges and to start their lives in their new society. Through the process of providing help, we do not lose sight of the troubling fact that there are others who are still at risk, enduring daily hardship and cruelty with little hope of respite; people tortured in prison, those who remain trapped in situations of sexual and labour exploitation, or locked away facing removal to countries where their human rights, once again, will be violated without a doubt.

So, join us to stand in solidarity - sending a clear message – showing the perpetrators that operate in the shadows of society – that together we contest their impunity and aim to bring justice for those suffering around the world. In our efforts lies the importance and necessity for human dignity and rights; hoping to continue to inspire our children and future generations, to bring about peace and respect for all.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the year ended 31st March 2011

These summarised accounts have been extracted from the full annual financial statements of Refugee Therapy Centre prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. The full annual financial statements have been audited and the auditors' opinions were unqualified. The full annual report and financial statements are to be submitted to the Registrar of Companies and to the Charity Commission. These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Charity. For further information the full financial statements, the auditors' report on those financial statements and the Boards' annual report should be consulted. Copies of these may be obtained from the Secretary at 1A Leeds Place, Tollington Park, London N4 3RQ.

	Note	Unrestricted Funds 2011 £	Restricted Funds 2011 £	Total Funds 2011 £	Total Funds 2010 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary income					
Grants, donations and legacies		24,269	114,697	138,966	99,369
Volunteer time	2	231,047	-	231,047	161,447
Activities for generating funds	3	661	-	661	576
Bank interest receivable		570	-	570	456
Incoming resources from charitable activities		185,099	106,596	291,695	298,271
Other incoming resources	4	-	-	-	18,447
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		441,646	221,293	662,939	578,566
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of generating voluntary income:					
		15,024	9,058	24,082	23,684
Costs of activities in furtherance of the Charity's objects					
Therapy		234,653	206,177	440,830	410,405
Governance costs		21,824	9,058	30,882	30,623
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		271,501	224,293	495,794	464,712
Net income/(expenditure) before transfer		170,145	(3,000)	167,145	113,854
Transfer between funds	14	73,500	(73,500)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		234,645	(76,500)	167,145	113,854
TOTAL FUNDS AT 1 APRIL 2010		1,265,264	220,500	1,485,764	1,371,910
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2011		£1,508,909	£144,000	£1,652,909	£1,485,764



Refugee
Therapy
Centre



ALL YOU WHO SLEEP TONIGHT
BY VIKRAM SETH

All you who sleep tonight
Far from the ones you love
No hand to left or right,
And emptiness above-

Know that you aren't alone
The whole world shares your tears
Some for two nights or one,
And some for all their years.