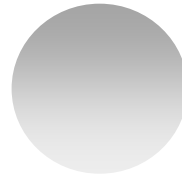
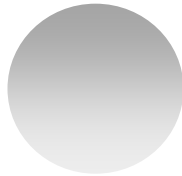
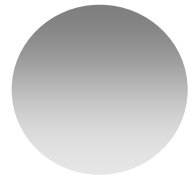
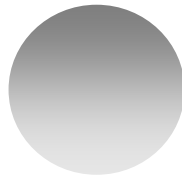
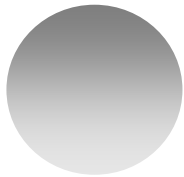




Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees
ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE



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TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

ICAR ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008

Introduction

Knowledge transfer is the cornerstone of ICAR's work. With our work we strive to reach and influence people who make decisions about asylum policy, who provide services to refugees and who write about and study migration.

This last year has seen our work reach the top levels of policy-making as the Independent Asylum Commission, for whom ICAR wrote a series of in-depth information briefings, published its final recommendations to the UK government. The Commission's findings, initially launched at the House of Commons in March, have commanded significant national media coverage.

We have also made an impact on the ground, where every day Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs), operating on shoestring budgets and struggling to be heard, provide incredible levels of support and assistance to new arrivals. ICAR's study for London Refugee Voice (LRV), a consortium of over 150 RCOs, proposed practical strategies for increasing the voice of RCOs and their impact on policy and service provision for refugees and asylum seekers. LRV's Chair described the study as an important stepping stone to giving a meaningful voice to RCOs in regional policy.

Next year will see ICAR continue to transfer knowledge to its key stakeholders: those making policy for central and local government, those providing services on the ground and those who seek to further public debate through academia and the media. Where there are gaps in knowledge about asylum and refugees we will aim to fill them with accurate and accessible information and through groundbreaking new research.

Although asylum applications have dropped in recent years, new migration from Eastern Europe means that immigration remains at the forefront of public debate. ICAR is responding to this by widening our research agenda. Whilst maintaining our key focus on refugees and asylum in the UK, we must place this within the increasingly important contexts of Europe and broader migration trends.

As the policies which respond to these dynamics rapidly and continuously evolve, the need to increase public understanding persists. Our stakeholders have let us know that ICAR's independent voice remains crucial to making sense of migration, asylum and refugees.

Neil Amas
Director

Achievements August 2007 – July 2008

Information

ICAR aims to be the leading source of information and analysis on UK asylum and refugee issues.

Our key achievements last year include:

- Launch of the Independent Asylum Commission's first findings from its review of the UK asylum system at the House of Commons in March, followed by launches of its final recommendations in the following months. ICAR's information team researched and wrote in depth reports and updates on six aspects of UK asylum issues for Commissioners in preparation for their 'roadshow' of public hearings across the UK. The briefings, on asylum determination, appeals, detention, destitution, vulnerable groups, and removals, are available on the ICAR website.
- Extensive guides and accompanying briefings on Women Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK and Employment Issues for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK.
- Comprehensive statistical analysis papers on asylum: one on asylum applications and the other on the decision-making and appeals process.
- Weekly 'Asylum Updates' to our subscribers and website audience, listing latest developments in research, policy and law, events and news.
- Provision of timely and authoritative information on UK asylum or refugee issues to the general public through ICAR's 'Ask ICAR' service, which averages 30 enquiries per month.
- Information workshops on 'Issues in Detention' and 'Issues in Removals' to service providers around the UK
- Merged existing ICAR blogs into one 'Refblog', which was awarded 'Website of the Month' in the Cabinet Office's Policy Hub Bulletin

Research

ICAR aims to identify and fill gaps in existing knowledge through policy and practise-relevant research, and in doing so generate new thinking on asylum and migration.

Our key achievements last year include:

- Research report on the community relations impact of migration to Coventry: ‘Local experiences of migration: consulting Coventry’.
- Literature review on the links between housing, new migration and community cohesion.
- Two literature reviews for the Refugee Rights and Responsibilities project, on citizenship and transnationalism. Early findings from the project, which examines refugees’ perceptions of their responsibilities towards the UK and their country of origin, were presented to seminars in the UK and Canada.
- Commissioned research began for the Greater London Authority which investigates confidence in policing among migrant communities in London. The project looks current policing practises on community confidence and strategies to improve relations between new migrants and the police.
- Research report, ‘Strengthening the Voice of Refugee Community Organisations in London,’ which proposes strategies for increasing RCOs impact on policy and service provision for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Commissioned research for the Media Trust which assesses the information needs of small community based refugee and migrant organisations.
- Updated and maintained Researching Asylum in London, a comprehensive database of refugee research and launched RAL research bi-monthly bulletin.

Impact

As an information and research organisation, ICAR aims to make an impact through the *influencing of local, regional and national policy and practise* and through the *improvement of public understanding* about asylum and refugee issues.

Two of the key outcomes of our work are:

- The improvement of policies and services for asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants
 - Increased knowledge, and access to knowledge, amongst both specialists in the field (service providers, academics, the media and policy-makers) and the public at large (host communities, asylum seekers and refugees)
- ICAR wrote a series of asylum information briefings to underpin the work of the Independent Asylum Commission. The Commission's findings and recommendations, initially launched at the House of Commons in March, followed by two report launches shortly afterwards, have been presented to Government and have commanded significant national media coverage.
 - ICAR's recent study of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) in London provides practical recommendations that have potential to make a real impact on grassroots advocacy. The report covers new ground for RCOs, being warmly welcomed by London Refugee Voice, the RCO consortium which commissioned the work. To date, the findings and recommendations have been presented at London Refugee's Voice AGM, attended by around 50 staff, RCO representatives, individual refugees and a local MP. The Chair described it as an important stepping-stone to increasing the capacity of both LRV and RCOs more broadly to have a meaningful voice at the regional policy level.
 - ICAR's bi-monthly newsletter, which gives details of new ICAR products and the latest on asylum news, policy and research, increased its circulation from 864 registered users to 926. Statistics for January to August 2008 show that our website received 76,962 unique visitors for the period (9,620 per month or 320 per day), and an increase in how often our users return to our website. We enjoy a very good Google ranking: when entering the words 'refugees in UK,' ICAR is listed on the first page.
 - Our Refugee Rights and Responsibilities project has been presented at a number of refugee forums in London, and two seminars in Canada; the Researching Asylum in London project was presented to information workers at a London Voluntary Service Council seminar; ICAR staff presented Media, Asylum and Immigration to City University MA students; presentations of our briefings on detention and removals were made at a workshop for the East Manchester Refugee Forum; and 'From the *Fugees* to *MIA* – changing perceptions of the world's displaced:' was presented at Tonbridge High School.

(ICAR's) research work supports our immigration work, social policy and helps to educate people on the plight of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant communities. The research is also useful for our funding with consortium groups' Abdi Abby, Legal Director, Oxford House

I will certainly be in touch with ICAR if I need anything- you are one of the best organisations around for asylum seekers and refugees. Dr. A. Anand, Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Heart of Birmingham PCT.

Staff Changes

This has been a year of significant change, with ICAR Director Christopher McDowell standing down at the end of March, after more than 3 successful years at the helm. Chris has taken a lectureship elsewhere in City University and remains in touch with ICAR.

Chris was replaced in April by Neil Amas, who comes with significant experience of senior management and more than 18 years working in the humanitarian and refugee sectors in the UK and overseas. He has managed a successful health and social care programme for asylum seekers and refugees in London, worked for humanitarian NGOs in South East Asian refugee camps and as a resettlement manager for a Vietnamese migration programme based in Bangkok. With an MSc in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, he has also worked in the media, including as producer of a radio news bulletin. Neil has been attached to ICAR since 2005 on a consultancy basis, assisting with strategic planning and organisational development and conducting research on community cohesion initiatives in the UK, new migrants and housing and on the advocacy role of Refugee Community Organisations in London.

ICAR also says farewell and thank you to Sophie Wainright, Jonathan Price and Sarah Eldridge. We will be making new appointments over the coming months.

This year we have supported and greatly benefitted from 5 interns on our internship programme. ICAR thanks Laura Zorilla Fernandez, Carmel O'Sullivan, Asta Tamuleviciute, Lauren Bruce and Rosanne East for their tremendous contributions.

Current Staff

Director

Neil Amas

Web Management

Bob Vinteller

Research and Information Team

Gareth Morrell

Jacob Lagnado

Kim Ward

Looking ahead

While there have been no major changes to national asylum policy in the last 12 months, asylum applications have been dropping for the last 4 years, although these seem to have steadied in the last few quarters. The main media focus has been on labour migration from the new EU 'Accession 8' countries from Eastern Europe, and this has, to an extent, shifted public attention away from asylum. It could also be argued, however, that this trend has simply blurred the lines between asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers even further, with 'immigration' as a whole, encompassing a variety of migrant categories, remaining a major policy and public concern.

ICAR, operating as it does in a rapidly changing policy environment, is responding to these challenges. Our draft 2008-9 Strategy acknowledges these trends and the potential for parallel funding changes, setting new objectives that acknowledge the need to be flexible towards new immigration discourses. We need to acknowledge that asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers are considered together in many practise, policy and funding areas, such as citizenship, cohesion, social inclusion, regeneration and community development, and target our activities accordingly.

Other policy areas are receiving increasing attention, with changes in financial services and the ongoing economic downturn the background for the Treasury's Financial Inclusion Action Plan 2008-11. New research into financial inclusion amongst new migrants, encompassing broad migrant categories, reflects our response to these new trends. At the same time, our 'niche' and reputation has been built on work that addresses asylum and refugee issues specifically and we will continue to build on this expertise and look for innovative ways to respond to related social problems and gaps in knowledge. Our continuing work on community relations and upcoming research into barriers to services experienced by disabled refugees will attest to this. Our existing work on refugee rights and responsibilities is well placed to respond, in the form of evidence-based information bulletins and findings papers, to an upcoming bill on citizenship, expected in early 2009. Furthermore, in the context of the fast-moving migration field and anxieties about the economy, our imminent consultancy arm, which will be informed by an expert market analysis, promises to make ICAR both increasingly relevant to policy trends and more competitive in the search for sustainable income.

ICAR will maintain and pro-actively disseminate existing strands of online information work, and develop ICAR's *Mapping the UK* product into a self-updating resource to disseminate local information, contacts and good practice within and between regions of major asylum and refugee communities. We expect the resource to be used by practitioners, advocates, advisors and local policy makers as both an information resource and communication tool allowing them quick access to local information.

ICAR's key strategic objectives 2008-9 are:

1. Ensure ICAR's long term core funding through new and diversified approaches
2. Develop new, more concise information products and proactively disseminate to key stakeholders, increasing public debate and heightening profile
3. Develop new and existing research that addresses current gaps in knowledge through improved processes and an increased focus on strategic alliances
4. Consolidate and develop the knowledge and skills of staff through training and recruitment appropriate to our needs.

ICAR Publications September 2007 – August 2008

Amas, Neil (2008) *Housing, New Migration and Community Relations: A review of the evidence base*, London: ICAR.

Amas, Neil and Price, Jonathan (2008) *Strengthening the Voice of Refugee Community Organisations within London's Second-tier Voluntary Sector: Barriers and Opportunities*, London: London Refugee Voice.

Morrell, Gareth (2008) *Globalisation, Transnationalism and Disapora: A literature and policy review*, London: ICAR.

Morrell, Gareth (2008) *Multiculturalism, Citizenship and Identity: A literature and policy review*, London: ICAR .

Ward, Kim (2008) *Local experiences of migration: consulting Coventry*, report and executive summary, London: ICAR.

Briefing Papers and Guides

Employment Issues for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK, navigation guide, updated 2008 (2003) by Mary Carter.

Women Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK, navigation guide and briefing paper, updated 2008 (2003) by Hildegard Dumper.

Detention of Asylum Seekers, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

Removals, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

Appeal Process, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

Asylum Determination Process, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

Support and Destitution, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

Vulnerable Groups, briefing paper for the Independent Asylum Commission, updated 2008 (2007) by ICAR.

ICAR account statement 2007-2008	
Total secured income 2007/2008	£181,274.11
Balance carried forward from 2006/2007	£170,389.53
Total expenditure 2007/2008	£249,592.75
Balance carried forward to 2008/9	£102,070.89
Income	
Greater London Authority	£22,500.00
Sigrid Rausing - core salaries	£70,000.00
Sigrid Rausing - advancement grant	£53,655.00
Independent Asylum Commission	£18,510.60
Miscellaneous income	£10.00
School of Social Science, City University	£17,790.00
Total Income	£181,274.11
Balance brought forward from previous year	£170,389.53
Expenditure	
Salaries	£198,768.79
Consultancy	£22,018.64
Staff Recruitment and Training	£348.98
Seminars and Conferences	£952.00
Books, Publications and Newspapers	£249.27
Information Technology	£795.07
Travel	£1,190.89
Hospitality and Subsistence	£1,263.00
Stationery and Postage	£316.78
Telephone	£937.33
Printing	£2,386.93
Art and Web Design	£8,266.16
Office Equipment and Furniture	£0.00
Room Hire	£125.00
Overheads	£10,419.00
Miscellaneous	£1,554.91
Total Expenditure	£249,592.75
Balance carried forward to 2008/9	£102,070.89

Funders

The following organisation's provided funding for ICAR's core and research and consultancy activities in 2007-2008.

ICAR is very grateful for the continuing support of:

Greater London Authority

Independent Asylum Commission

Media Trust

New Philanthropy Capital

School of Social Sciences, City University

The Sigrid Rausing Trust

Contact Us

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