



CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON



Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees
Annual Report 2008/2009



INFORMATION CENTRE ABOUT ASYLUM AND REFUGEES

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About ICAR

ICAR is an independent centre based in the School of Social Sciences at City University in London. It provides information and research on key issues on asylum, refugees and migrants in the UK.

Information work includes:

- **Large web site** providing a wide range of information including Briefings, Statistics, Mapping the UK, Directory of Research and access to our research publications
- **Researching Asylum in London** is a separate website maintained by ICAR which provides a database of research on asylum and refugee research published in London
- **Asylum Update** is our weekly blog highlighting new research, news and events
- **Enquiries service** which responds to media, student and public requests for information

Research work in 2008/2009:

- Refugee Rights and Responsibilities
- Supporting Disabled Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Financial Inclusion of New Migrants in Northern Ireland

Mission statement

ICAR's mission is to increase public understanding of asylum and migration issues, and inform policy and practice through applied research and policy evaluation.

ICAR aims to:

- collect and make available independent information on asylum and refugees in the UK
- undertake research, publish and teach on UK and global asylum and migration issues
- generate new thinking on asylum and migration and raise the level of public debate
- provide consultancy expertise to government, practitioners, funders and community organisations

ICAR strategic objectives 2009-12

1. Build and sustain the capacity of ICAR through a mix of core, project and consultancy funding and by increasing collaborations within and outside the University
2. Maintain ICAR's position as a leading centre of high quality, independent, up to date online information on UK refugee and asylum issues and develop European expertise
3. Establish ICAR as a leading centre for qualitative research and policy analysis on asylum and migration
4. Establish ICAR as a key contributor to migration policy, practice and public debate by improving knowledge transfer and exchange linkages between academics, students, practitioners, policy makers and the media.

Values and principles that underpin ICAR's work

- Impartiality
- Accessibility
- Quality and rigour
- Ethics

Introduction

The past year has been one of great change in the staffing of ICAR. Long serving staff members Gareth Morrell, Kim Ward and Bob Vinteller left, having made outstanding contributions to our work, and so much time and effort was spent recruiting a new team. I am delighted to welcome Julie Gibbs, Gabriela Quevedo and Adeline Trude to our research and information team, while Daveena Taurah has come on board as a part-time Web Content Officer. With the invaluable help of our interns, the new team has bonded extremely well and, with their excellent mix of skills, knowledge and experience, I am pleased to say normal service has been resumed with minimum disruption.

Our recent web user survey has reassured me that we continue to play an important and highly appreciated role in providing high quality and independent information and research. The overwhelming majority of respondents rated our work as of high relevance and quality. Hits on our website have increased, with over 5,000 visiting each month and feedback from individuals across the government, voluntary and academic sectors has been overwhelmingly positive.

We continue to receive regular enquires from the media, having given interviews and assisted with reports and news programmes for the BBC and a range of national and international newspapers. Our research into support networks for disabled asylum seekers and refugees was broadly welcomed at a launch to over 100 policy makers, service providers and academics at London's City Hall and we are delighted that some of the recommendations have led to training events for London health professionals on the needs of this population. Our work on financial exclusion among migrants in Northern Ireland received a warm welcome from the Mayor of Belfast and local Members of the Legislative Assembly at a high profile launch at Stormont. We have begun an important research project for Refugee and Migrant Justice which will examine the cost of providing good quality legal representation to asylum seekers in the light of the recent introduction of a new fee scheme.

Despite these achievements, we remain anything but complacent. There are early signs that the recession is affecting funding opportunities. Since the summer there appears to have been a drop off in new grants, charitable trust funding and the traditional research routes that ICAR has successfully targeted in previous years. Furthermore, UK Universities are facing testing times. We are therefore re-doubling our efforts to identify new funding opportunities and partnerships. Our new research and consultancy initiative, kindly funded by the Sigrid Rausing Trust, has greatly assisted in this. I am greatly indebted to the Trust who have supported us now for a number of years, and also to the other funders listed at the end of this report who have supported ICAR this year.

Finally, the rise of the far right in this year's European election has demonstrated that asylum and migration issues continue to be a major policy and public concern. With the recession threatening the livelihoods of many UK nationals, fears appear to be rising of a backlash against job and housing seekers from abroad.

It is in this context that factual, accurate and impartial information is as important as ever. While a number of research centres have sprung up in response to recent migration from the EU, ICAR's role, not only as a provider of independent information and research but also as a centre focusing mainly on asylum and refugees, remains an important one.

Neil Amas
Director

Main Achievements

Research and Consultancy

- Published and disseminated final research report for the *Refugee Rights and Responsibilities* project
- Completed commissioned research on *Supporting Disabled Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Opportunities for New Approaches*, launching to 100 policy makers and practitioners at City Hall, London
- Completed consultancy project for the Media Trust to assess the information needs of small community based refugee and migrant organisations
- Began research on the cost of good quality legal advice to asylum seekers in collaboration with colleagues from City University Law School and Economics department, commissioned by Refugee and Migrant Justice
- Began research examining financial exclusion of new migrants in Northern Ireland in collaboration with Citizens Advice Belfast
- Established *Migration and Asylum Research at ICAR*, an income generating research and consultancy arm aimed at bringing in new income to fund ICAR's public information work and research activities.

Information Work

- Re-launched the ICAR website with improved design, architecture and search functions
- Wrote 2 statistical analysis papers on asylum applications and the decision-making and appeals process
- Revamped the popular 'Asylum Update' weekly bulletin, listing latest developments in research, policy and law, events and news, producing 56 weekly editions
- Added or updated 7 cities as part of the Mapping the UK project (Leicester, Manchester, Bristol, Glasgow, Southampton, Leicester and Cardiff)
- Published 2 online briefings: *Disabled Asylum Seekers and Refugees* and *Refugee Resettlement*
- Added 190 new entries to the Research Directory
- Published a bi-monthly ICAR newsletter to increased subscribers of over 1000
- Completed online User Survey
- Hosted inaugural Information Providers Forum for UK migration sector information workers
- Responded to around 350 enquiries through the 'Ask ICAR' service, providing evidence and information to the media, voluntary and statutory sector service providers, students and the general public
- Supported four internships
- Added new summaries to the Researching Asylum in London database and website and added asylum statistics in new London Statistics section.
- Sent RAL subscribers bi-monthly research updates

Impact

Media

Referenced and/or quoted: BBC Online, Disability Now, Medical News Today, the Morning Star, The MidEast News Source, TNT magazine, Immigration Advisory Service Annual Conference Opening Address;

Assisted the BBC's Panorama programme and Germany's Die Welt newspaper in providing evidence for news items;

ICAR Director interviewed by BBC for series on refugee diaspora in the UK;

ICAR Director interviewed by TNT magazine for article on migration impact on the UK.

Research

ICAR's research report, *Supporting disabled refugees and asylum seekers: opportunities for new approaches* launched to an audience of over 100 stakeholders from statutory and voluntary sectors at London's City Hall, introduced by the Deputy Mayor of London. Received considerable press interest including mentions in Disability Now and Medical News Today and recommendations directly led to recent training events for London health professionals on the needs of this group;

Research project on financial inclusion in Northern Ireland launched at Stormont and endorsed by Belfast MLAs and the Deputy Mayor of Belfast with presentation from ICAR Director (pictured).



Seminars and Presentations

Strengthening the Voice of Refugee Community Organisations was presented to Refugee Community Organisations and refugee support organisations at a findings seminar;

ICAR's Director made a keynote presentation in Manchester for local service providers on ICAR's disability research;

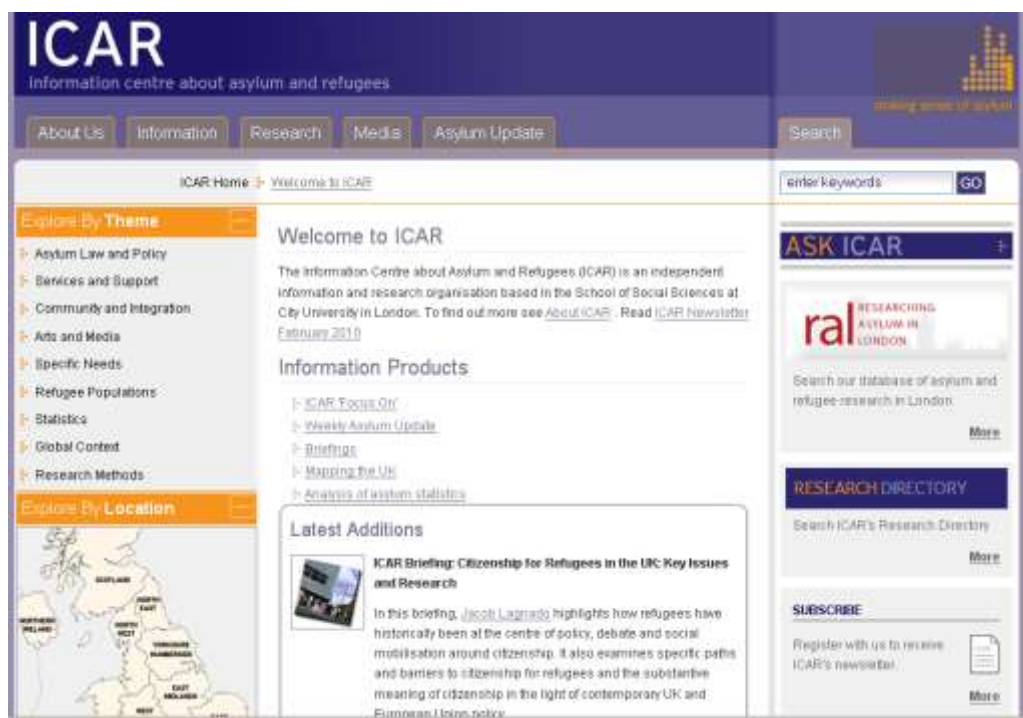
Researching Asylum in London project was presented to information workers at a London Voluntary Service Council seminar.

'Thank you for your extremely comprehensive reply and for your very helpful suggestions of where I can turn to for further information. (Law Centre Northern Ireland)

"Thanks very much for all your help and the help of ICAR's stupendous research staff on this"
(BBC Journalist)

Spotlight on: Web Developments

In January 2009 ICAR launched an improved web interface with better search functions and greater accessibility, including new options to explore by theme and area. This has helped us to increase our user base and our web statistics show that we currently receive around 5,000 visitors per month.



ICAR Homepage as of January 2009: <http://www.icar.org.uk>

We continually strive to develop and enhance the web pages and in June 2009 undertook a web survey to gain a better understanding of how people use the site, which products are most useful and what developments people would like to see in the future. Over 70 people responded to the survey and the resulting data shows that;

- Users come from a wide range of backgrounds including researchers, academics policy makers, service providers, RCOs, NGOs, students, librarians, and solicitors;
- The majority of the respondents work in the UK voluntary sector or local, regional and central government, but ICAR also has an international audience with users coming from Europe, Africa, Australia and the USA;
- Over half of respondents had used the ICAR web site for over two years showing that users come back to the site for further information;
- 95% of respondents rate the quality of information is good or excellent and 97% say the relevance of the information is good or excellent
- Asylum Update is the most used 'product' followed by Briefings and Statistics.

Outputs

Research reports

ICAR / Metropolitan Support Trust (2008) Supporting disabled refugees and asylum seekers: opportunities for new approaches

Morrell, Gareth (2009) Refugee Rights and Responsibilities in the UK , London: ICAR

Rahim, Nilufer, Wan, Ken and Franceschelli, Michela (2009) Financial Inclusion amongst New Migrants in Northern Ireland: A Literature Review, London: ICAR

Trude, Adeline (2009) Refugee Experiences of Asylum Legal Advice, London: ICAR (unpublished)

Briefings and statistics papers

Disabled refugees and asylum seekers in the UK (March 2009)

Resettlement programmes and the UK (September 2008)

Employment issues for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK (November 2008)

ICAR Key Statistics Paper 1: Key Statistics about Asylum Seeker Applications in the UK (Updated February 2009)

ICAR Key Statistics Paper 2: Asylum Decision Making and Appeals Process (Updated March 2009)

Asylum statistics for London (July 2009)

Newsletters

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 in 2008 to over 1000 in 2009;

We also publish a bi-monthly Researching Asylum in London update.

Looking Ahead

Asylum and immigration remains a sphere of constant and often unpublished policy revision, litigation, and relentless implementation of change. Major issues with the potential to affect large numbers of asylum applicants waiting in the system and refugees remain, such as management of the remaining 250,000 application backlog or 'legacy' cases; the first cohort of refugees given 5 years Leave to Remain rather than Indefinite Leave to Remain coming on stream in 2010; and calls to either detain and deport or grant amnesty to the estimated 400,000 - 700,000 undocumented migrants in the UK.

The widely expected change in government next year may have a significant impact on asylum and immigration. While it is as yet unclear as to what these changes will be, the Conservative party, should it be elected, has indicated that human rights legislation, which has served as an invaluable legal instrument for many migrants, may be under serious scrutiny, and that migration and border controls will continue to be increasingly tightened, with talk of a cap on immigration numbers.

While the recession appears to be encouraging a drop in EU labour migrant work registrations, asylum applications have remained steady since 2006-7, with the first Quarter of 2009 showing an increase over the same period last year.

Over the last ten years ICAR has established a strong reputation in providing objective information and undertaking high quality policy-oriented research in an increasingly politicized field. Asylum and migration remain close to the top of the political agenda in the UK, and the need for an independent organization to encourage understanding and promote dialogue is as important now as it has ever been, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Over the next year we will continue our core information work, producing regular policy briefings, updates on asylum law and policy, summarising new research and maintaining our public enquiry service. We will continue to develop our research into the asylum legal process and financial inclusion and will develop new work in the areas of detention and migrant employment.

Our strategic objectives for 2009-12 are:

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Funders and Staff

Funders

We are extremely grateful for the support received from the following funders in 2008/2009:

Sigrid Rausing Trust
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Refugee and Migrant Justice
New Philanthropy Capital
Metropolitan Support Trust
 Greater London Authority
 Media Trust

Staff

ICAR Director Neil Amas
Senior Research and Information Officer Julie Gibbs
Research and Information Officers Jacob Lagnado Gabriela Quevedo Adeline Trude Web Development Officer Daveena Taurah Interns Erica East Laura Zorilla Victoria Armitage Petula Truscott

Farewell and thank you to former ICAR staff members Gareth Morrell, Kim Ward and Bob Vinteller

Accounts

ICAR account statement 2008 - 2009	
Total secured income 2008-2009	178,889
Balance brought forward from 2007-8	79,571
Total expenditure 2008-2009	248,569
Balance carried forward to 2009-10	9,891
Income	
Greater London Authority	20,397
Sigrid Rausing Trust	70,000
New Philanthropy Capital - Anonymous Donation	26,253
Media Trust	11,283
Metropolitan Support Trust	25,865
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation	25,034
School of Social Science, City University	58
Total Income	178,889
Including balance brought forward	258,460
Expenditure	
Salaries	160,722
Consultancy	54,383
Staff Recruitment and Training	241
Seminars and Conferences	452
Books, Publications and Newspapers	56
Information Technology	601
Travel	1,364
Hospitality and Subsistence	2,182
Stationery and Postage	14
Telephone	568
Printing	5,586
Art and Web Design	1,569
Overheads	20,597
Miscellaneous	235
Total Expenditure	248,569