

# **RAPAR AGM NOVEMBER 2008: OFFICER'S REPORT**

## **Overview from RAPAR Matrons and Patrons**

We believe that RAPAR may be unique in the country for being a displaced persons charity and registered company with autonomous and independent, publicly accessible space and infrastructure, where people who are inside and failed by the asylum system work alongside a range of other volunteer members to shape and deliver the organisation's agenda.

During 2007-8, from its base at the Friends Meeting House in Manchester, RAPAR has promoted the self-advocacy, empowerment and affirmation of displaced individuals, families and communities. It has done this through casework, community development and research activities that use action learning methods and human resource networks to define problems and secure solutions to those problems. As has been the case since its formation in 2001, RAPAR'S work is driven by the presentation of need - and people's needs do not fit into neat boxes.

In the UK, people's access to their human rights are very bound up with their citizenship status and RAPAR's work often takes place in the space between citizenships: RAPAR works with people who the Border and Immigration Agency presuppose to be citizens of the State that they have come from until they are conferred with some sort of citizenship here. This limbo is a very painful space to exist within, and a very challenging and complex place to advocate from. Further, that pain and RAPAR's work do not necessarily end when people achieve some sort of statutory recognition here: they may have a version of 'citizenship', but very often they still have no home, decent job or opportunities to secure education, good health and personal safety, and the barriers to securing such basic human needs can continue to be enormous.

With the continued and growing involvement of its volunteering members and its supporters, RAPAR's skills and experience base, alongside its vitality, passion and capacity for learning and leadership make it an organisation that is well-placed to secure grants, commissions and donations that shall further consolidate its abilities to deliver.

## **Commentary from Zeinab Mohamed, Current Chair**

RAPAR was founded to support people seeking asylum/refugees by helping them to settle and live in harmony with other communities in the UK. But over the years RAPAR has become a source of support not only for people seeking asylum but for all people facing difficult times in terms of displacement, housing, health or with any other socio-political issues. RAPAR as an organization has been through difficult times for the past few years in terms of its funding, but that never stopped the work of the organisation which has been to create support, guidance and action strategies with those who are in need. This would not have been possible without the help and support of our volunteers who have dedicated their time and effort.

The nature of RAPAR'S work is very challenging and requires people who are passionate about helping individuals whose basic human rights have been denied

because of the government's current policies which create destitution and expose individuals to gross exploitation and slavery. People seeking asylum - and other people - need the opportunity to develop capacities to generate income while they are displaced, but unfortunately that is not possible for so many who are seeking asylum in the UK now, and because of that, RAPAR's volunteers have had to deal with individuals who have developed psychological as well as social problems during the progress of their cases. I know it is not easy - the work that the volunteers do - and they are an inspiration to us all as they have shown dedication and commitment to helping those in desperate need.

In the coming year, I hope that RAPAR will continue to provide help, services and leadership to all people who otherwise would not be able to access such services and guidance. I believe that RAPAR fills important gaps that many other organisations cannot fill because they may not be able to recognize, or may not be positioned in such a way as to work with, the range of clients that come through RAPAR's door. Our door is always open.

## Areas of work

**Casework (currently unfunded but enabled through volunteers time and donations that contribute to securing office overheads, travel and communication costs)** Our casework with families and with individuals involves addressing: poverty; indigence(destitution); deportation; homelessness; overcoming barriers to learning the English language; securing appropriate housing, social care, healthcare (especially mental health), access to education, legal representation and/or employment opportunities; suicide; human trafficking; prostitution, disappearance; harassment; interpersonal violence.

To do our casework thoroughly and effectively, RAPAR works in partnership with a wide range of agencies and involves itself in a number of networking or working group bodies such as the Trades Union based *BASW-Unison Network* about Pushing the Frontiers of Professional Practice, the *Migrant Workers Partnership* and the *National Council of Voluntary Organisations*, from which RAPAR recently secured a bursary to attend a forthcoming political conference in London.

Sometimes, as a part of the process of understanding how a problem has come to exist and, thereafter, creating solutions to that problem, RAPAR has to expose poor professional practice. This is always a sensitive area of our work because the organisations that we may ask about why they have done things in a particular way are not always open to – or used to – being asked to explain their actions.

In the coming year our casework will be expanded to deliver a *Surgery dedicated to Section Four* work.

**Community development (currently funded for specific activities and unfunded for others)** involves our delivery of educational, sports and creative writing projects alongside the formation and consolidation of community based organisations. During this year we have been delighted that the *Congo Support Project*, originated through RAPAR's infrastructures, has come to occupy an autonomous and dynamic position in developing Congo-related activity.

In the coming year our work programme includes the development of: a non party-political *Zimbabwe Support Network*; a French-speaking African publication *The Elikya Project*; a *Roma Community Initiative*; the formation of a *Sports Club* through our supplementary school *RAPARLASS* in Longsight; a planning role for *May Day 2009* celebrations and representation at the *Strangers into Citizens* mobilisation in London on May Day; making a *Voucher Exchange Scheme* work offering *basic ESOL* classes and, in partnership with Community Arts North West and Commonword, publishing *RAPAR Stories by Indigent People*.

These are community development areas that have already been agreed and there may be other ideas that can come forward – we are always open to listening and discussing potential developments.

**Research Commissions (funded for specific activities)** At this time, we have the ongoing production of research notes e.g. our *What are the Needs of Displaced People in Greater Manchester?* (published in the Summer of 2008) and our research on Wellbeing with women in Cheetham Hill that began over a year ago. RAPAR always tries to integrate an evaluation research dimension into our other projects and into our casework so that we have the potential to generalise from the specific. Through a new partnership, we are just beginning a new research project with young people about the current proposals to extend compulsory education from 16 to 18 years.

Over the coming year, we intend to secure more research commissions that reflect our researching capacities: without RAPAR the first book in the world on *Doing Research with Refugees (2006)* would not exist.

## Communication

Understanding how to, and being able to, communicate well in an active organisation where the volunteering members often have different mother tongues and not a lot of money between them is a constant challenge. Alongside emailing and phoning we find that holding regular, minuted, management committee meetings is an essential part of our working practice as is the ongoing development of our **Website**. During the last year, using a partly finished website and other material, a finished accessible web site was constructed by a volunteer from MMU. The website now allows RAPAR to:

- explain its activities to potential and current volunteers
- explain its activities to displaced people
- explain its activities to potential funders
- publicise RAPAR-organised and allied displaced people events
- publicise allied local/national campaigns and resources relating to displaced people

For the future, we intend to transfer web update skills to RAPAR volunteers (graphics skills, HTML skills and BLOG skills) and we would love to be able to have our website in more than one language. We also intend to create mailgroups that people can opt into for specific activity areas.



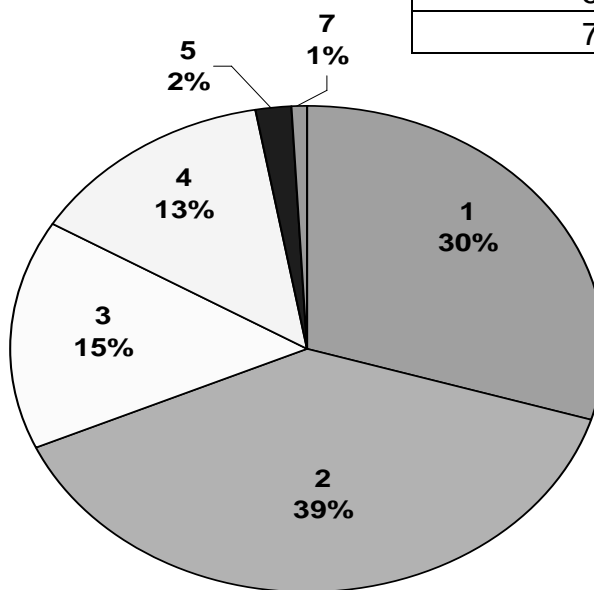
#### 4. What languages do our members speak?

Language	Members
Aja	1
Amharic	1
Arabic	14
Kibajuni	3
Bangala	1
Balochi	1
Bosnian	1
Gujarati	1
Croatian	1
Czech	5
Dari	3
English	63
Farsi	4
French	13
German	3
Hindi	5
Hungarian	1
Kunama	1
Kurdish	8
Lingala	4
Ndebele	4
Norwegian	1
Nyanja	1
Pashto	3
Polish	2
Portugese	3
Punjabi	9
Romani	2
Romanian	4
Russian	4
Shona	6
Sitona	1
Slovackian	2
Somali	1
Spanish	2
Swahili	5
Tigrinya	3
Tshiluba	2
Ukranian	1
Urdu	14

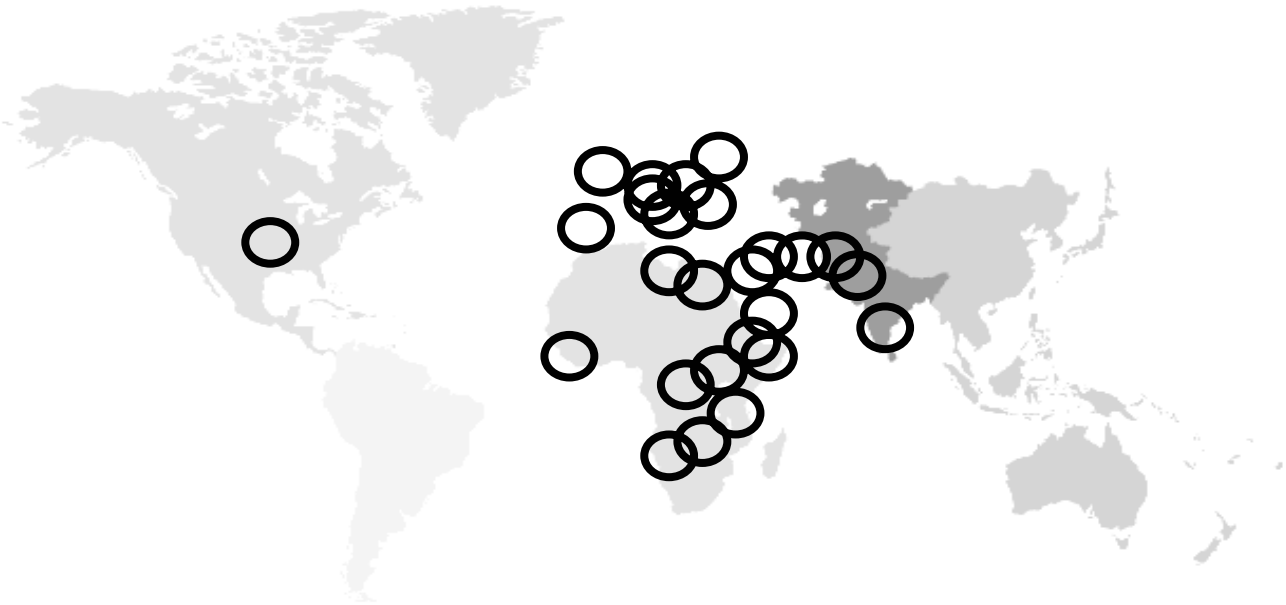


#### 6. How many languages do our members speak?

Number of Languages Spoken	Members
1	31
2	40
3	16
4	14
5	2
7	1



#### 4. Where in the world are our members from?



Country of Birth	Number
Afghanistan	7
Angola	1
Bosnia	1
Czech Republic	4
Democratic Republic of Congo	4
Egypt	1
Eritrea	3
India	1
Iran	6
Iraq	5
Ireland	1
Libya	2
Pakistan	6
Palestine	3
Portugal	2
Romania	6
Russia	1
Sierra Leone	1
Slovakia	1
Somalia	5
Tanzania	1
Ukraine	1
Uganda	2
UK	14

Country of Birth	Number
USA	1
Yemen	2
Zimbabwe	7
Unknown	107
Total	196

**If you would like to join us or support us, please leave your contact details with us – we will be in touch.**

**Thank you for coming tonight.**

**RAPAR**  
**(Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research)**

**Income and Expenditure Statement and Balance Sheet**  
**for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008**

## **Thanks to RAPAR sponsors**

**RAPAR would like to thank its sponsors listed below:**

- Broughton Trust (Salford)
- Community Foundation (Manchester)
- Individual Donors
- Joint Public Health Unit (Manchester)
- Religious Society of Friends (Manchester)
- Trades Unions Donations

## **RAPAR (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research)**

### **Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended March 31st 2008**

#### **Incoming Resources**

Donation, Grant, Research Income	<u>£4,590.60</u>
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#### **Expenditure Resources**

Office	2412.42
Rent	1280.00
Telephone, computers, and internet	633.08
Other project expenses	617.00
Total expenditure	<u>£ 4,942.50</u>

<b>Surplus</b>	<b><u>-£351.90</u></b>
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## RAPAR (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research)

### Abbreviated Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2008

<b>Fixed Assets</b>	£0.00
	<hr/>
	£0.00

#### **Current Assets**

Cash at bank and in hand	-£351.90
	<hr/>
	-£351.90
	<hr/> <hr/>

<b>Current Liabilities</b>	£0.00
	<hr/>
	£0.00

#### **Financed by:**

Retained Surplus, 2006/2007	£ 1,639.11
Retained Surplus, 2007/2008	<hr/>
	- 351.01
<b>Surplus</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
	£ 1,288.10