

RAPAR
(Refugee and Asylum seeker Participatory Action Research) Update to
the Salford Community Network
June 2005

RAPAR's involvement with the Community Network began in summer 2002. Since that time different representatives from RAPAR have attended the monthly meetings while RAPAR has carried the responsibility for communicating about the needs of refugee people seeking asylum in Salford to the Network.

RAPAR is committed to continuing to embrace refugee people seeking asylum, and their Salford neighbours, without discrimination.

From the beginning, our charity set out to work *with* people rather than *on or for* them. That commitment has grown in strength as we have learned how to ensure that, within our organisation, refugee people seeking asylum really do have a say in what happens to them and their families, alongside the rest of their communities.

Since our last report, presented at the 2004 AGM, RAPAR has been concentrated on the challenge of fulfilling its commitments to its membership and its partners while, at the same time, developing a clear understanding of why the Salford RAPAR SRB5 Project (£600,000+ SRB5, September 2002 – March 2005) was taken away from us in April 2004, what we can and should do about it, and actually doing what we can and should do to right this wrong.

It has been a complex and painful - but ultimately productive - period.

Activities

RAPAR has elected its Trustees and its Management Committee: for 2005-6 with the elected members representing a combination of continuity (for our history) and new blood (for our future) and, for the first time, the committee is a real mix of people who are refugee people seeking asylum and British citizens. We are very happy about this development.

Throne of Weapons: Manchester Museum invited RAPAR to take part and promote the Throne of Weapons. As an organisation whose membership centrally includes people who are here because of the wars that have torn their countries, this is an opportunity to consolidate our search for peace. The Chair, which forms the centre piece of the exhibition, was made out of guns collected in Mozambique after the guerrilla war. The Chair will be in Manchester from the 16th of June 2005.

Salford Museum: is currently exhibiting some of the work we carried out last year through the Salford RAPAR Project and it includes some absolutely beautiful images of the faces of people who have recently come to Salford from many different parts of the world.

Salford University: The mentoring project is up and running and RAPAR is offering insights into the needs and aspirations of people seeking asylum who wish to enter the Higher Education arena.

King's College, University of London and ICAR (Information Centre on Asylum and Refugee issues): RAPAR has been invited to speak at the Annual Post Graduate Conference at ULU later this month, tackling the crucial issue of The ethics of doing research with migrant populations.

Women's Group: This small but very vibrant group began through encouragement and support from the Chap Can Do projects in 2003. The Monday meetings moved from St. Boniface's Church and now meet at an old convent in Upper Kersal every Monday between 10.00 –1.00. Transport is provided because most of these women are elderly. The women are planning an exhibition of their handicraft later in summer.

Volunteers: RAPAR volunteers are working work with CHAP (Community Health Action Partnership) as Directors and with the International Red Cross and they continue to offer services to Bethel Community College.

Learning to Live Together: This study was completed in Autumn last year and launched in February at a conference held in Manchester. We were very disappointed not to have been invited to the conference to celebrate the completion of our research but, nevertheless, the report was published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the organisation that funded this research. Please contact RAPAR for copies of the summary.

Salford RAPAR SRB5 Project: This piece of work was taken away from RAPAR in early 2004 and was later renamed The Welcome Project. The project ended in March 2005, however RAPAR continues to search for answers as to why the project was interrupted, as reported in Private Eye earlier this year.

The Mary Seacole Cultural Centre: has welcomed RAPAR, offering us office space and opening up their agenda for our contributions. We are absolutely delighted with this development and look forward to developing shared programmes of work over time.

With the help and support of RAPAR, the University of Bristol has recently completed a short film about the death in 2003 of Israfil Shiri, a destitute young man from Iran who lived in Salford. RAPAR will be organising screenings, and welcomes requests for screenings and discussions, in the coming months.

The RAPAR Network holds its monthly public meetings at the Angel on The Crescent in Salford.

ALL ARE WELCOME