

mIN

Maryhill Integration Network
BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



Newsletter 11

Welcome to our eleventh Newsletter

Readers of our earlier Newsletters will remember that mIN is drawn from a wide variety of local statutory and voluntary organisations (listed on back page) as well as a number of interested individuals in our community. Our office is in Ruchill Parish Church at 17 Shakespeare St, and our Development Worker continues to make a big difference to the integration of the Maryhill communities and the asylum-seeking communities.

We have been active for more than 4 years now and hold monthly meetings of the Network to progress the aims of the Network, namely:

- to give opportunities for local residents and asylum seekers to meet
- to promote understanding between the local communities and the Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Greater Maryhill
- to provide general assistance and advice to asylum seekers, access to health and legal advice, language classes with childcare provision

This is our eleventh Newsletter in which there is an update on the activities we have been involved in since our Winter Newsletter. In this edition some of the Asylum Seekers in Maryhill are sharing their experiences of why they are here, and how they are integrating into our communities in Maryhill. This will be a series in the mIN Newsletter.



Asylum-seekers' autobiographies:

The following experiences, shared with you, show what lies of the past behind the faces of many of those we pass in the streets of Maryhill. In the main, they feel welcomed. But in addition, there is the constant concern about the future – the waiting for a Home office decision – or a Judicial review – or a removal about 5 in the morning when doors are broken down with the kind of rams used in breaking up criminal activities that are familiar to us from watching crime series on TV.

Where I came from...

I am an asylum seeker from Rwanda. I will write anonymously as the situation in my country makes me fear for my safety. People have been fleeing from Rwanda since the mass killing of 1994. This tragedy began on 6th April 1994 when Tutsi rebels shot down the plane with two Hutu presidents, one from Rwanda and one from Burundi, on board. They both died along with other important people and the two French pilots. In the conflict following this incident around one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu died and around two million people fled the country. This situation is not yet settled because of ongoing reprisals and revenge attacks.

Where I am now...

I came to the UK with my three children and claimed asylum. We arrived in Glasgow some time ago. We were really happy to find a safe place where we could start a new life away from danger and trauma. I found the people of Glasgow to be very friendly and always trying to help. My children are happy and doing well at school and enjoying their new, safe lives. We are settled in Scotland now and consider it to be our new home country. We feel that "we belong to Glasgow"

Where I came from...

We ran away from trouble, we ran away from unfairness, from injustice, from inhumanity, from killing, from children being burned in ovens, from the knifing of pregnant women. We ran away from saying yes is no and no is yes, from right is wrong and wrong is right. We ran away from un-fairness, to Britain, to security, to warmth, to justice – because we were hopeful and wished for a better life. I had to leave Algeria, leaving everything behind; my beautiful house, my husband's business, my office, our car...looking for safety and peace of mind.

Where I am now...

I arrived in Glasgow at six o'clock in the morning. Everything was confusing me but I got a lot of help from local people who helped me sort things out. I felt very welcome in Glasgow; people smiled at us even although we didn't know them and they said to me "Hiya! how you doin'" and I reply "no bad" First I was housed in South Nitshill for four years, then our houses were boarded up for demolition. They moved me to Maryhill where I found a multi-cultural community with a big mix of people from many different countries speaking many different languages. People seemed well integrated in to the Maryhill community. There is an Integration Network in Maryhill who work very hard to make people understand each other and to build bridges of comprehension between the host community and the asylum and refugee communities. I like so much the Maryhill community and Glasgow. It is where I found tranquillity and peace. Glasgow is my home now and its people have become my friends!

First Anniversary of Music Integration Project

In the past year, there is evident achievement of social and cultural integration of asylum seekers, refugees and local residents along the Maryhill corridor through the setting up of the Music Integration Project. Excellent progress has been made in integrating people from various backgrounds through making music and taking part in performances. Anti-racism and multi-culturalism have been promoted; barriers between people are breaking down, and learning opportunities have opened up. After taster workshops, questionnaires and conversations with our service users, most interest was expressed in the fields of dancing and learning musical instruments.

Running on a weekly basis beginning last spring, a women's dance group was established. Taken under the wings of Maritza Rodriguez and Sharon Roulston, who offered tuition in Gumbo Salsa and Oriental Dance, this group have since performed at local and citywide events.

With the support of our sponsors GARA, Community Planning Partnership and Awards For All, the Music Integration Project developed into a large scale dance/theatre production involving asylum seekers, refugees, BME communities, local professional dancers, musicians and residents. A special contribution came from Natasha Gilmore, artist in residence with Dance House, choreographer and contemporary dance artist. Months of hard work beginning last summer resulted in the performance of To Glasgow....With Love.

The piece created was very personal to the group and each member of the group contributed creatively. Some told their stories of what brought them to Glasgow and what they experienced when they got here; revealing their relationships to Glasgow and looking at ways they and their children are creating new cultural identities.

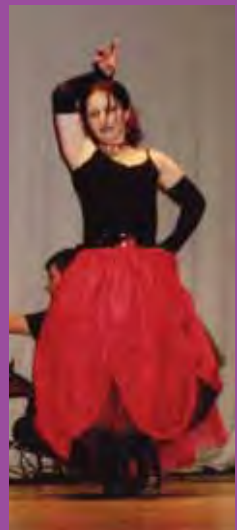
To Glasgow....With Love helped the audiences gain an understanding of the experiences of refugees and other immigrants to Scotland.

After performances in Glasgow at G12 and Maryhill Community Central Hall and a performance in Edinburgh as part the International Festival for Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, there are plans to take this piece on tour to other parts of Scotland.

Weekly classes for children and adults in dance, aerobics and music (guitar and piano lessons) continue at 17 Shakespeare Street (Mackintosh building) every Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Future integrated dance and music performances are already scheduled for International Women's Day, Mugdock Festival, Refugee Week celebrations, Sighthill Festival and local Gala days.

If you want to have a good, enjoyable relaxing time learning about other cultures and having a chance to be part of our performance team, join our music project!

**Contact 0141 946 9106
or 07704 850188**



What the Network has been up to!

The Network continues to operate the weekly Drop-Ins and projects like the Music Integration Project which offer meeting places for asylum-seekers, refugees, and local people to get to know each other. The Oasis Women's Group is a hive of activity with the women taking part in activities tied in to events in the wider community. For example, we made a collage for the 16 Days of Action for the Elimination of Violence against Women which we designed with the support of an artist funded by Glasgow City Council, it was displayed in the Gallery of Modern Art. At the moment we are creating a series of wall hangings which will go on display in Shakespeare Youth Club on Thursday 8 March as mIN's celebration of International Women's Day. The Music Project has a page to itself to tell you of its activities and some of the exciting developments for the Dance Group.



The Framework for Dialogue Group (FFD) consists mostly of asylum-seekers and refugees, meeting fortnightly, to discuss issues that affect them and to learn about the links that can be established to help them have a presence in our society. At the November social event organised by the FFD group, the Maryhill Writers' Group was invited along and Pollok Integration Network joined us. One of the

poems read that evening is on another page. Asylum-seekers and refugees have a very positive contribution to make to our society, and should not always be brought to the attention of the general public by negative publicity. There will be contributions to mIN Newsletters from this group.



The St Vincent de Paul Society and St Gregory's Church once again hosted a Christmas Dinner for the Network which was a memorable evening for the warmth and hospitality shown, as you will see from the photos. The Network hosted a play, *The Flats*, in Community Central Hall, which had a cast of asylum-seekers, refugees, and Pollok residents to give Maryhill folk the opportunity to see this excellent Dance drama, *To Glasgow...with Love* which has been the result of partnership working with Dance House, Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance (GARA) and sponsored by CPP and Awards for All. Already this event has been performed in G12 as part of Black History, in CCH, and on 16 February at Edinburgh's International Festival for Spirituality and Peace.



Our Late New Year's Party was held on 27 January in Woodside Halls. Just over 100 people were entertained by singers, dancers and musicians from around the world. A big thank you to those who gave much-needed support with getting everything in place in a short space of time, and this includes the staff of the Woodside Halls. Pictures show the enjoyment of the occasion. We are very grateful for the additional funding which comes from Cash for Kids and Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees to add to the success of our party.



While all this is going on, we are heavily involved in submitting funding applications to the various bodies which consider whether our efforts at integration are worthy of financial support, and which could not take place without funding.



The Midnight Knock

This poem was read at the Social Event at the end of November organised by the Framework for Dialogue Group. The editor thought it 'chimed' with the experiences of our asylum-seekers – apart from the timing, midnight instead of 5am! Later, in seeking permission to reproduce this poem, the writer told me that it was written in April 2006 as a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising. Although some of the details do not apply to asylum-seekers, nevertheless, the feelings expressed in this poem mirror those of the asylum-seekers in our community, and those supporting asylum-seekers.



The Midnight Knock

The midnight knock on open door
that sound we have all heard before
that sounds a shiver down the spine
of those who have stepped out of line.
You know what's on the other side
you know there is no place you can hide
*they know your name, they know your face
and how to keep you in your place.*
You see their shadow on every street
heavy boots on heavy feet
the smell of thunder in the air
they are there, they are there, they are there.
Enemies of the people we
though we do no harm that you can see.
but look in our eyes...they will not dare
we are there, we are there, we are there.

B.L. April 2006

Where we work:

The International Meeting Points (formerly called the Drop-In Centres) are held at:

Findlay Memorial Church
56 Clarendon Place

Mondays 10am – 12noon

Maryhill Parish Church,
1990 Maryhill Road

Fridays 10am – 12noon

St Gregory's RC Church,
130 Kelvindale Road

Thursday evenings 7.30pm – 9.30pm

Women's Group meetings are held at:

North West Women's Centre,
Shawpark Street

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am – 12noon

Maryhill Community Centre,
35 Avenuepark Street

Thursdays 1.00pm – 3.00pm

How you can get involved:

If you feel you would like to help in the work of the Network, or if you know of people who might like to volunteer or make use of our services, please feel free to contact Queen's Cross Housing Association on 946 1999, or Maryhill Integration Network at Ruchill Parish Church (Tel 946 9106). Rema Sherifi can also be contacted on her mobile (07704850188) or at MIN's office 0141 946 9106. You can contact us through our website:

www.maryhill-integration.org.uk

We would be delighted to hear from you.

Key members of MIN are:

Glasgow City Council, Queen's Cross Housing Association, The Breakthrough Project and Woodlands Youth Initiative (both of Community Central Hall), North West Women's Centre, St Gregory's Roman Catholic Church, Maryhill Parish Church, Findlay Memorial Church, Home-Start North West, Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, Ruchill Community Learning Centre, Maryhill Mobile Creche, and the Council for Homeless Young People.



Funded by North Glasgow Community Planning Partnership and Scottish Refugee Integration Fund, Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance, Scottish Refugee Council, and GCC's Culture and Leisure Services.

Newsletter designed and produced by Keywest Design & Advertising:

www.keywest.co.uk

Maryhill Integration Network is a registered Scottish Charity (SC 037300).

keywest ◀

