

**University of Sunderland**

**School of Arts, Design, Media and Culture  
School of Education and Lifelong Learning**

**Handbook on Community Radio  
Training  
for  
Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

**Digital Dialogues**

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## **About using this handbook**

This handbook has been produced as a result of work undertaken in a 2-year project, funded by the European Grundtvig Programme for Adult Education. The project, called “Digital Dialogues” was aimed at giving access to new digital radio technologies to marginalised groups. The work builds on an earlier Socrates project “Creating Community Voices “ which was aimed at giving access to Community Radio and New Technologies for Socially Disadvantaged Groups. Further information on both projects is available at: <http://www.digital-dialogues.de/>

## **Handbook content**

This short handbook outlines a few of the lessons learned on the project. They are presented as a set of guidelines for others to consider when setting up digital radio technologies.

The aim is not to present a training course – the idea is more to offer suggestions based on our experiences that may be applicable to your own situation.

The handbook outlines some of our experiences and also gives examples of materials used in the training.

For 2 years since 2001 the University of Sunderland has been involved a project supported by the Department for Education and Skills Adult and Community Learning Fund (ACLF) project aimed at improving language skills amongst refugees and asylum seekers through use of radio and digital technologies. This project has been enhanced through EU Grundtvig funding under the Digital Dialogues project. The Digital Dialogues project has involved reflecting on processes and producing a handbook.

This handbook has been written using a case study approach and gives examples of methodologies and approaches employed when running workshops that have taken place at the University of Sunderland.

From the issues arising general points about community radio training are developed.

This handbook also contains examples of learning materials, descriptions of workshops; necessary equipment, materials, handouts and other background materials.

## **Background**

The University of Sunderland has worked with community groups over a number of years. It is one of the most successful UK universities in terms of attracting under-represented groups to study on its degree programmes.

## **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Over recent years the whole of the EU has experienced an increase in the number of refugees.

Since the year 2000 the British Government has adopted a policy whereby refugees and asylum seekers are dispersed from the capital to other parts of the country. The trend is that people are dispersed to areas where housing shortages are less acute than in London and the South East.

Sunderland is one such place that has seen a large increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. This has caused some problems in the predominantly white town.

Here are some extracts from a local community-based newsletter

<http://www.hendon-hub.org.uk/oct02eastwise.htm>

“The problem is with the system. There is no choice on where to live. Sometimes two or three people who do not know each other are made to share a room. I lived in London for 2½ years supported by the local authority. During that time, I was transferred three times, then [was] moved out to Nottingham. I did not have a choice in the matter. Nevertheless, I am now there and do voluntary work three days a week. I am making friends here. I am not allowed to work. They do not have enough workers. Sometimes you have to wait for 6 or 7 hrs, even when it was by appointment.’

Another refugee who lives locally was too fearful to give his name but had a message for the local community, ‘I think the system makes people racist because even the local people do not get support and they get angry with the asylum seekers. The local people have not been exposed to the reasons others flee their homes. They do not know that we are the same. When you talk to them [local people], you can see that they do not know. The media is censored. If I want to blame anyone, I will blame the system, the government, not the local people.”

## **Rationale and approach**

Many of the refugees and asylum seekers in Sunderland have poor language skills and often feel isolated within the community. The aim of the ACLF project was to use electronic based media, web pages and web radio to help develop language skills and to reduce feelings of social and cultural isolation.

Discussions with agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers indicated that the need to develop oral communication skills was one of the main priorities for refugees whose language skills were poor.

The increasing accessibility of the internet and development of new digital technologies opens up fresh opportunities to engage people in broadcasting and education. People can look for news, information or music from their own cultures/ interest groups. One of the aims of the project was to provide access to these new media and also how to provide learning opportunities become active contributors to digital media rather than passive consumers.

Another aim of the project was to promote English language development and inclusion using digital media as a tool for this. This is new – in previous radio training projects we have been involved with the focus is more explicitly on providing people with access to broadcasting.

A lot of the thinking informing this project Follow on from Creating Community Voices (CCV) project – building on not just our own experiences but learning from models developed by other partners. Vienna-based Radio Orange in particular with their model of “Tandem training” has provided useful ideas on which to build. The idea of “Training in Tandem” is the development of a training partnership in which radio trainers work with their counterparts, for example social workers, to plan and then implement training for a target group. Further details can be found by following the link to CCV at: <http://www.digital-dialogues.de/> . Once at the site click on the sitemap button on the left hand side of the page. The Creating Community Voices link can be found near the bottom of this page.

## **Objectives of training**

The objectives of the training can be divided into the practical, hands-on development of radio skills as well as the more difficult to quantify areas, such as, reducing feelings of cultural isolation.

### **Radio Skills**

Introduction to internet radio and international community radio  
Interviewing skills  
Recording skills  
Introduction to digital editing  
Programme building

**Other aims**

Develop language and communication skills  
Reduce feelings of cultural isolation  
Capacity building for local community workers/ volunteers  
Promote inclusion/ anti-racism

Following a several months of development work a series of workshops was planned. In total eight workshops took place, in addition to many informal sessions at the refugee and asylum seekers drop-in.

The first workshop was aimed solely at community workers and volunteers; the others were open to community workers, volunteers, refugees and asylum seekers.

Some examples of handouts and workshop content can be found in the appendices.

**Subjects covered included:**

History of community radio  
Internet resources  
Receiving radio on the internet  
Getting your voice on the internet  
Digital editing  
Broadcasting  
Recording  
Programme building.

**Issues****Developing trust**

Building trust with the refugees and asylum seekers is the first and most important step in the process in engaging them in the learning process.

Many were new to Sunderland and have few friends and access to wider support networks. In some instances refugees and asylum seekers experience hostility and racism from the local population.

A lot of time was spent working in partnership with Sunderland Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Network (SRASSN) to look at the best way of working with refugees and asylum seekers. The network consists of around 60 local partners, from education, health-related and voluntary sector organisations.

An initial stage of the work involved sending a questionnaire to all partners to seek their views on how to develop the project. (For a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix 3)

**Refugees/asylum seekers have many needs, priorities, fears**

For many refugees and asylum seekers food, shelter and safety are their main priorities. Many have been dispersed to the area and have few friends. Some speak very little English, some have mental health problems as a result of trauma. Whilst waiting to find out if they are to be given permission to stay in the country they have to attend numerous appointments with solicitors and court hearings.

Not surprisingly, apart from learning English, formal learning is not one of the top priorities. This raises the issue of “having a voice”. It means that unless your basic needs are met you are unlikely to be in a position to have your voice heard. In the UK there is an agenda to address basic skills – it will be difficult to address these whilst people are experiencing “human rights shortages”.

**Support for community workers and volunteers**

One finding of the project has been that the various community workers and volunteers who are working to help refugees and asylum seekers are themselves in need of support.

The issue of refugees and asylum seekers is so highly politicised that agencies don't want to be seen to be providing too much for fear of public outcry. This means that the people on the ground dealing with the human problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers are often under-resourced and overwhelmed by the issues they are dealing with. Some of the workers who took part in the project reported that they would in certain situations hide the fact that they worked with refugees and asylum seekers.

**Awareness of digital media, internet radio and community radio**

Early on in the discussions with SRASSN it emerged that workers and volunteers within the network had very little knowledge or experience of internet radio. Many did not have access to the internet in their workplace.

Clearly, this made it difficult for them to promote the idea with refugees and asylum seekers. As a way forward a workshop introducing the potential of internet radio for SRASSN workers and volunteers was organised. The form and content of this workshop are outlined in appendices 1 and 2.

**Access to internet/computing facilities**

Despite huge investments in community IT facilities the “digital divide” is still very much in evidence - lack of access to internet and computing facilities in places where the refugees and asylum seekers felt safe and comfortable was a major hindrance in the development of this project

In many cases community workers/volunteers did not have access to the internet.

Refugees and asylum seekers regularly attend drop-in support sessions in various locations. These would have been ideal venues for radio workshops except that they did not have computers with access to the internet.

A portable laptop computer was used to get round this issue in an informal way. Webpages/ radio clips were saved onto cds. This way people could view up to date web pages in a variety of languages and start to think about possibilities for getting involved with internet radio. The portable laptop was installed with digital editing software. Using a microphone, people were able to record their voices directly on to the computer and, with support, were able to have a go at using digital editing software.

This informal approach was useful for a number of reasons:

- 3 It was a very good way of illustrating the idea of internet radio – especially to people for whom English was not their first language.
- 3 It allowed people to get to know one another over a period of time and to build up trust.
- 3 The community venue provided an environment in which the refugees and asylum seekers felt safe and comfortable.

### **Attitude of students wanting to be seen as commercial/mainstream**

The planned end-products of the workshops for community workers, volunteers refugees and asylum seekers were an anti-racism campaign and world music show for broadcast on Utopia fm, the student-based temporary radio station. There were issues around this – some of the students running the station were keen that their station had a mainstream, commercial feel to it and this led to a protracted discussion via both e-mail and formal planning meetings about commercial versus community radio.

- 3 Having refugee and asylum seeker project led to debate on role of student programming in a multi-cultural society

### **Possible ideas for future work**

Explore opportunities for putting audio onto the web

Develop links with schools and parents



Look at using digital media and internet as tools to promote multi-culturalism and diversity

Work with established Refugee Community Organisations to train people in media techniques

## **Publications**

**Anwar Mohammed**, (1983) Ethnic Minority Broadcasting CRE.

**Commission for Racial Equality** (1990) Radio for Ethnic and Linguistic minorities. Prospects in the 1990s CRE.

**Downing, J.**(2001): Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements,Sage.

**Eldered, J** (2002) Voices of Practitioners: Good Practice in Adult and Community Learning, NIACE/DfES, Leicester, UK.

**Girard,B.** (ed) (1992) A Passion for Radio, Black Rose Books Limited, Canada

**Gordon, J.** (2000) The RSL, Ultra local radio, University of Luton Press

**Jankowski, Prehn and Stappers (eds)** (1992) The People's Voice: Local Radio and TV in Europe, John Libbey.

**Lewis,P. and Booth, J.**(1989) The Invisible Medium-Public, Commercial and Community Radio, Macmillan

**McGivney, V** (2002) Spreading the Word. Reaching out to new learners, NIACE/DfES, Leicester, UK

**Mitchell.C.** 2000 Women and Radio: airing Differences, Routledge

**Riano ,P.** (ed) Woman in Grassroots communication: furthering social change,Sage.

**Priestman, C.** (2002) Web Radio-Radio Production for Internet Streaming, Focal Press.

**Sakolski R and Dunifer S** (1998) Seizing the Airwaves The Free Radio Handbook. Scotland ,AK Press

**Servaes, Jacobson and White (eds.)** (1996) Participatory Communication for Social Change ,Sage.

**Short and Waghorn** (1993) Take to the air: The guide to setting up your own radio station. Trinity and All Saints, Leeds.

## **Groups and Contacts**

Community Media Association (CMA).

15 Paternoster Row

Sheffield S1 2BX

Tel: 0114 2795219

Web site: [www.comedia.org.uk](http://www.comedia.org.uk)

Bradford Community Broadcasting

2, Forster Square

Bradford, BD1 1DQ

Tel: 01274 771677

Web site: [www.bcb.yorks.com](http://www.bcb.yorks.com)

Women's Radio Group (WRG)

Unit 13

111, Power Rd

London W4 5PY

Tel: 020 8742 7802

Web site: [www.twiza.demon.co.uk/wrg/](http://www.twiza.demon.co.uk/wrg/)

WRG runs a range of training courses for women in London including courses for refugees and asylum seekers.

Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE)

Web site: [www.fire.or.cr](http://www.fire.or.cr)

Women's International Newsgathering Service (WINGS)

Web site: [www.wings.org/](http://www.wings.org/)

Association for Progressive Communication (APC) women's programme

Web site: [colnud.apc.org/apcwomen/](http://colnud.apc.org/apcwomen/)

World Association of Community Radios (AMARC)

AMARC-Europe

C/o AMARC Europe

15 Paternoster Row

Sheffield S1 2BX

Tel: +44 (0)114 221 0592

Web page: [www.amarc.org/europe](http://www.amarc.org/europe)

AMARC International

3575 boulevard St Laurent

Bureau 611,

Montreal, Quebec

Canada

Web page [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org)

International office for AMARC