



Iraqi Community Association Needs Assessment Report June 2004

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Executive Summary

The Iraqi Community Association (ICA), is a leading Iraqi charity in the United Kingdom. This short document summarizes the outcome of a needs assessment, which has been carried out after one year of the toppling of the Iraqi regime. It has taken two months to source, write and prepare this report. This assessment has benefited from ICA information resources, users feedback of primary and secondary data, focus groups, staff, director, volunteers, and trustees of the organisation. It aims at highlighting the postwar needs of the Iraqi community in the United Kingdom. A sample data of 956 people were collected.

The assessment identifies 'needs' and not 'wants'. Need exists when a benefit could be achieved from an intervention and a measurable improvement could occur as a result of a change. The aim is to better meet the needs of the target community as one of the post war initiatives, and the process of this assessment was based on gathering information to find out what those needs are, and what are the best ways of meeting them. In most cases, the exercise will result in change – either in the way existing services are provided, or in the introduction of new services or interventions. It is important to check if these changes are making a difference in relation to the identified needs. For that reason, monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of the process.

The purpose of the ICA monitoring and evaluation is to determine whether the changes that ICA made have had the expected impact. The evidence gathered through monitoring and evaluation may also be used, as the basis for further needs assessment.

The purpose of this needs assessment is to inform ICA stakeholders, relevant policy makers, different working groups, network organisations, funders and supporters.

It is anticipated that the assessment will lead to necessary strategy developments, coupled with measurable organisational working plan that includes agreed targets and outcomes.

ICA was founded in 1987, with a core message to benefit and support members of the Iraqi community in the United Kingdom, to settle and integrate, without distinction of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic background, and religious or other opinions. ICA thrives to sustain and develop its services to serve the intended beneficiaries.

It is estimated that over 250,000 Iraqis live in this country. Britain, has benefited considerably from this influx. Over 60 per cent of the community live in the greater London, others based in Britain's major cities.

Since the toppling of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, ICA has been actively involved in supporting the community with impact of the changes in relation to the movements and arrivals of new comers and the established members of the community. As a non-profit organisation, ICA is determine to sustain and develop its role and services further, as this report plots different trends that may lead to future development of the organisation, as windows of opportunities may become wider.

Forty years of terror and repression in Iraq led to ruin and broken country. Saddam maimed and traumatised Iraqis, and eliminated Iraqi professional and intellectual classes. Since 1970's, thousands have fled the country and sought asylum in Europe and elsewhere. During the last 10 years, Iraqi were one of the main top nationalities of asylum seekers in Europe. This report highlights the associate settlement postwar needs that ICA requires to consider and develop necessary strategies to face those challenges.

The primary and secondary data provides different plotting and trends that the organisation needs to use in relation to the needs of its users and potential beneficiaries. See the report charts and data manipulations. This will assist readers to identify and confirm the emerging trends for pre and post war users.

The trends equally reflects the unfolding events in Iraq and its implication on the target community here, for example, fewer and fewer new Iraqi refugees are coming to the U.K. Though, the benchmark of meeting the needs correlates to the ICA core purpose. This leads to the following '*needs description*':

- Domestication: that ICA has no more significant destitute asylum seekers
- Specialisation: that ICA will direct and plan to meet those emerging needs
- Authorisation : that ICA has expertise to become an authority in meeting those needs

This assessment presents ICA's core purpose with challenging trends, which is expected from a large and diverse Iraqi community in diaspora. Majority of Iraqis are refugees or naturalised here in the United Kingdom, the process of settlement and integration often associates with obstacles, which ranges from protection of identity and individual rights to positive contribution towards the host society. That will deliver individual security and integration. The characteristics of the ICA data interpretation in relation to 'needs identified' suggests the following concerns for the organisation:

- Affordability: If it is considered to meet those needs
- Acceptability: If it is considered to be good tools to use
- Accessibility: If it is considered to target all beneficiaries
- Achievability: If it is considered to use SMART

It is a legal process, whereby refugees are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by the host state. Under the terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention, or similar protection, these include, for example, the right to seek employment, to engage in other income-generating activities, to own and dispose of property, to enjoy freedom of movement and to have access to public services such as education. The process whereby refugees gain and accumulate rights may lead to the acquisition of permanent residence rights and ultimately to the acquisition of citizenship in the country of asylum.

Integration can be regarded as an economic process. Acquiring the rights and entitlements referred to the above, refugees also improve their potential to establish sustainable livelihoods, to attain a growing degree of self-reliance, and to become progressively less reliant on state aid or charitable assistance. In accordance with these indicators, refugees who are prevented or deterred from participating in the local economy, and whose standard of living is consistently lower than the poorest members of the host community, cannot be considered to be integrated.

Furthermore, integration is a social process, enabling immigrants to live amongst or alongside the host population, without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by the authorities or people of the asylum country. It is consequently a process that involves both immigrants and the host population.

The concept of local integration does not imply the assimilation of refugees in the society where that have found asylum. While the concept of assimilation is to be found in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the international community has always rejected the notion that refugees should be required or expected to abandon their own culture, so as to become indistinguishable from members of the host community. Integration is a more useful term than assimilation, suggesting as it does that refugees, maintain their own identity, yet become part of the host society to the extent that host population and refugees can live together in an acceptable way.

From now on, the challenge for ICA is to embrace 'adjust and adapt' to meet the increasing pressure, both from its clients and external factors.

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