



Northern Ireland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Women Association (Bomoko NI)

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Our Mission
3. Our Vision
4. Our Core Values
5. Our Objectives
6. Advocacy and Advice Support Services
7. Employment and Volunteer Opportunities
8. Funding and Donations
9. Social Opportunities and Integration
10. Networking and Partnerships
11. Activities
12. Thanks, and Acknowledgements.

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Refugees and Asylum Seekers Women Association (Bomoko NI) is a unique organisation created by and for refugee and asylum seekers and women living in Northern Ireland.

Bomoko NI has emerged in response to the needs of refugees' asylum seekers women living in Northern Ireland.

This document contains the impact of the work the organisation has delivered in year 22-23 as well as since its establishment.

There has been a focus on ensuring we are set up to effectively deliver Bomoko's NI program as written in our strategic plan document.

Since its establishment, we have also built strong relationships with funders and various community organisations.

We look forward to continuing to work with all the partners and stakeholders in the coming year and beyond.

2. Our Mission

Bomoko NI connects and empowers refugee and asylum seekers women in Northern Ireland to claim our rights and improve our lives through self-determination and public participation.

3. Our Vision

Our vision is a society where every refugee and asylum-seeking women can fully participate and unlock her potential and where her needs and rights are respected.

4. Our Core Values

We are led by refugee and asylum seekers women and seek to harness our energy, skills, and enthusiasm to support our community.

In all we do, we empower refugee and asylum seekers women to address their own challenges and meet their own needs.

We seek to collaborate with those who want to support our community, including statutory agencies, voluntary sector, and members of wider society.

We are equal and have the rights to dignity, to be heard and to meet our basic needs.

We welcome all refugee and asylum seekers women and be inclusive of all, irrespective of religion, country of origin, status, age, family or racial background.

5. Our Objectives

The organisation's objects ('the objects') are to support and emerging in response to the needs of refugee and asylum seekers women living in Northern Ireland by:

- To prevent and relieve the poverty of refugees and asylum seekers women by the provision of advice and advocacy services to help the

beneficiaries who cannot afford necessary items such as furniture, bedding, clothing, or fuel; to make grants of money for the relief of the poor;

- To advance the education of the beneficiaries by the provision of facilities, courses, training, programs, grants for education, and resources to enable, assist and encourage the education of persons in the English language, skills training, and learning programs through colleges and universities.
- To promote cultural diversity and racial harmony by the promotion of
- cultural activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds and the indigenous people in Northern Ireland and to cultivate a sentiment in favour of social integration and good relation;
- To provide relief to refugees' women through access to specialist advice, education, and workshops of the welfare benefits system and understanding of the social housing process.
- The advancement of the health of the beneficiaries through the provision of mental health well-being trauma workshops and the referral to health professional and counselling services for treatment.
- The advancement of the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers women living in Northern Ireland through the promotion of good relations and social engagement events between refugees and asylum seekers women and indigenous women, to foster understanding between them. And the promotion of equality and diversity through the elimination of any type or form of discrimination.

6. Advocacy and Advice Support Services

The advocacy and advice support services have been running since we set up Bomoko NI in April 2019, supporting refugee and asylum-seeking women in Northern Ireland. The advocacy and advice support services operate five days a week on an appointment and drop-in-based system. Members are provided with the opportunity to discuss issues they require support for, and several options are explored together to decide upon the best course of action for the individual involved.

On average 10 to 15 members, a week attended the Advocacy and Advice Service including 10-15 people for emergency support with Tesco and Lidl gift card vouchers, food parcels, clothes, babies' wipes and nappies, toiletries, and household furniture.

Each year, we have an increase in our membership. Families and single women joined the organisation every week and we noticed an increased demand for advocacy and advice services compared to the previous years.

Throughout the past 18 months, our service of advice and advocacy supported 1027 members on the following issues:

- **Housing**

175 members were supported on the housing issues.

We have specifically worked with families, single parents, and single women on housing issues moving from hostels to Nass accommodations.

We contacted Migrant Help about home electricity/gas, boilers, and dampness for asylum seekers families, and single who have moved to houses.

We contacted MPs and MLAs constituency offices to act on behalf of families and single women with physical and mental health issues who have been living in hostels for a long period.

We also contacted MPs and MLAs' constituency offices for families with children with special needs who were sent outside Belfast after being granted refugee status.

We also raised the issues of the living conditions of children and families in the hotels, the delays in the weekly payment support, and other issues that affected the living conditions of families in the hotels.

We also worked and supported refugee members of Bomoko NI to access the appropriate accommodations and addressed the ongoing issues.

We referred and signposted (members) to Housing Executive, Extern, Housing Rights, MPs' and MLAs constituency offices on the issues we do not have expertise or do not deliver.

- **Education**

Regarding accessing education, we supported 300 members throughout the year.

10 women were supported to access education through grant applications.

45 women accessed Bomoko NI online English classes twice a week (beginners, intermediate, and level 1).

75 women were signposted to Belfast Metropolitan College, Conway Education Centre, and Gems Belfast.

170 women attended training, workshops, and information sessions within the organisation.

- **Welfare rights**

190 members were supported on the issue related to benefits.

We contacted the job benefits for delay payments and for child benefits. We signposted newly granted refugee status members of Bomoko NI to the Job Benefits for registration.

We advised members on how to apply for benefits and helped on the processus.

We contacted Migrant help on behalf of asylum seekers families and single women members of Bomoko NI regarding the weekly support delay payments.

We also signposted (members) to Advise NI, Law Centre NI and the Job Benefits on the issues that we do not have expertise or do not deliver.

- **Referral and signpost**

During the year, we referred and signposted 362 members to the following organisations and companies on the issues for which we do not deliver and not have the expertise:

- **Immigration and Legal services**

90 members were referred and signposted to:

-Solicitor offices

-Law Centre

-MPs and MLAs constituency offices

- **Physical and Mental Health**

10 members were signposted to mental health specialist organisations to get the appropriate services.

-Healthy Mind Coach

-GP

- **Family Reunion**

10 members were signposted to British Redcross

- **Domestic violence and physical abuse**

22 members were signposted to the following organisations:

Victim Support

Women's Aid

- **Women trafficking**

10 women were signposted to the following organisation:

Flourish

- **Food Bank**

220 members were signposted to:

Bradbury hub

North Belfast foodbank

South Belfast foodbank

Swift Hearers Ministries

7. Employment and Volunteer opportunities

During the year, we worked with 20 active volunteers' members of Bomoko NI in the office and outside office activities.

We had 2 brilliant interns' student from Queen University.

We provided and completed the employment and volunteer placement applications and work references for members.

We also advised and signposted members to volunteer with other partners organisations which deliver works that match their qualifications gained in their home countries, in other to gain a work experience and be prepared for the labour market when granted refugee status.

8. Funding and Donations

Funding

Bomoko NI worked hard to have a variety of sources of funds to sustain its work for the last 18 months. The funds were used to deliver the following programs:

- Activities such as training and workshops, online cookery workshops, weekly walking group activity for health and wellbeing, multicultural day, refugee week and Christmas celebration.
- Core such as office insurance, office rent, telephone and internet, and salaries.
- Direct Families support of home gas and electric top-ups, parcel foods, Tesco, Dunnes Store and Lidl gift cards vouchers, household items, baby nappies and toiletries.

We secured funding from the following funders:

- The Executive Office (Minority Ethnic Development Funds)

- National Lottery
- Cash for Kids
- St Anne Cathedral (Black Santa)

Donations

We received cheques and Materials donations from the following organisations:

Cheques:

- Unison
- Lush Belfast

Materials donations:

- Homeless Period
- Household items from various donors and friends
- Tesco Express
- Cash for Kids (children Christmas appeal toys and babies' diapers, wipes, and toiletries)
- Salvation Army (children Christmas appeal toys)

9. Social opportunities and integration

Members attended meetings and took part to events, seminars, conferences, training, and workshops delivered by the Bomoko NI and partners organisations:

- International Women's Day in partnership with HSBC
- Family residential in partnership with the Corrymeela Community
- Refugee week celebration
- Victim Support annual conference.
- Women's Resources Development Agency
- Belfast Mela
- Volunteer Now
- DFC
- Queen University (Feminist Equality Society)
- National Women Council
- UK Pivot Ltd
- Housing Executive
- Good Relations Week
- Migrant Forum
- Refugee and Asylum Forum
- PSNI
- Christmas celebration

10. Networking and Partnerships

We took part in the following face to face and online meetings and events with the following organisations:

- Migrant Forum (Belfast City Council)
- Reclaim the Agenda
- Belfast Trust
- Law Centre NI

- All-Island Women's Forum
- Women Resource Development Agency
- Housing Executive
- NICRE
- APG
- CFNI
- National Lottery
- PSNI
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- Lorag (Inner South Neighbourhood Issue sub-group)
- Inter-Ethnic Forum
- MSCNI
- UK Pivot Ltd
- Corrymeela
- Stronger Together

11. Activities

Bomoko NI undertakes its work through the following areas of activities, which are the main classification used throughout our financial accounts:

Online English Languages Support

We provide online English classes twice a week at different levels: beginners, intermediate, and level 1.

The classes were run by a qualified professional English tutor through online zoom.

For the beginners' class attendance averages 12 students and can rise to 17; for an intermediate level, an average of 10 students and can rise to 15 students per class, and for Level 1 average of 12 students and can rise to 15 students.

Our online English classes provide an opportunity for Bomoko NI women who are not able to access mainstream education provision to attain informal ESOL classes at a level suitable to their needs. We provided One-to-one lessons for students when required.

Training and workshops

The following training and workshops were delivered for our members:

- Mental Health and Resilient
- Employment training (CV writing, Job search, interview skills)
- Volunteer training with Volunteer Now
- Child Protection Module 2 with the Belfast City Council
- Financial Education with HSBC partner
- Food hygienic
- Leadership training
- Cooperative and its rules
- Online cookery workshops
- Impact on the cost-of-living workshop.
- Belfast Works Connects information session on the free accredited training courses.
- Sewing classes
- Walking for health

- Review of the People and Place Strategy for NI (Strategic Investment Board)
- Impact on the cost-of-living with Women Resources Development Agency

Community Engagement and Integration/Civic Education

- 82 women, young people, and children visited women from the Inter-Ethnic Forum group and Ballymena Presbyterian Church Portrush
- 15 women visited the Northern Ireland Parliament Building)
- 120 women, young people, and children attended day trip to Portrush and Ulster Folk Museum
- 50 members, women and their children attended the family residential in partnership with Corrymeela

Fundraising

This year, Bomoko NI took part to the community challenge fundraising organised by Cash for Kids. The fund raised was used to buy Childrens' schools bags and shoes. 60 asylum children from the organisation benefited from this support.

Walking group activity

This is an ongoing project which started in January 2020 during Covid -19 pandemic to help members to keep active and fit for a better mental and physical health. Every week 10 to 12 women attend the walk.

Online Cookery Demonstration Workshops

We developed an online cookery workshop program where each week one woman demonstrates and cook meals from her country.

This project is to combat isolation among refugee and asylum seekers women.

The women found it enjoyable, and it helped them deal with stress of the asylum journey and the increased of the cost of living to which they are confronted.

Direct family monthly support

We supported 300 people, families, single mothers, and single women members of Bomoko NI 8 to 10 times with food parcels, Tesco, Lidl and Dunnesstore gift card vouchers, home electric and gas top-ups, toiletries, baby wipes, and nappies, household items, and home furniture.

12. THANKS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank our Board members, our Members and Service Users, our Funders, our Project Coordinator, our finance worker, our partners and all the volunteers for helping us to organise all the activities throughout the year.

