



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

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25**

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## **1. Introduction**

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

Northern Ireland. Bomoko NI was established in response to the specific needs and challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking women in the region.

This report outlines the impact of the organisation's work during 2024–2025, as well as progress made since its establishment. Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening our organisational capacity to deliver Bomoko NI's programmes in line with our strategic plan. We have also continued to build strong and productive relationships with funders and a wide range of community organisations.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with partners and stakeholders in the year ahead and beyond.

## **2. Our Mission**

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

## **3. Our Vision**

Our vision is a society in which every refugee and asylum-seeking woman can fully participate, realise her potential, and have her needs and rights respected.

## **4. Our Core Values**

- We are led by refugee and asylum-seeking women and harness our collective energy, skills, and experience to support our community.
- We empower women to address their own challenges and meet their own needs.
- We collaborate with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, and wider society to -strengthen support for our community.
- We uphold equality, dignity, and the right to be heard, and to have access to basic needs.
- We welcome all refugee and asylum-seeking women and are inclusive regardless of religion, country of origin, status, age, family situation, or racial background.

## **5. Our Objectives**

Bomoko NI exists to respond to the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking women in Northern Ireland by:

- Preventing and relieving poverty through advice and advocacy services, including practical support for essential items such as furniture, bedding, clothing, and fuel, and the provision of grants to those in need.
- Advancing education through access to courses, training programmes, grants, and resources that support English language learning, skills development, and further education.
- Promoting cultural diversity and racial harmony through cultural activities that foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds and local communities, encouraging social integration and good relations.
- Providing welfare advice and specialist support, including workshops on the benefits system and guidance on accessing social housing.
- Advancing health and wellbeing through mental health and trauma-informed workshops, and referrals to professional health and counselling services.
- Promoting the human rights of refugee and asylum-seeking women through equality, anti-discrimination work, and social engagement that strengthens relationships between refugee and local women.

## **6. Advocacy and Advice Support Services**

Bomoko NI has delivered advocacy and advice services since its establishment in April 2019. The service operates five days per week through appointments and drop-in sessions. Members are supported in identifying issues and exploring appropriate options to reach the best outcomes.

On average, 10–15 members accessed the service weekly. Emergency support included supermarket vouchers, food parcels, clothing, baby supplies, and toiletries.

Membership has continued to grow steadily, with increased demand for services compared to previous years. During 2024–2025, we supported 1080 members across the following areas:

- **Housing**

280 service users received support with housing issues. We worked closely with families, single parents, and single women transitioning from hostels to NASS accommodation and from NASS accommodation to Housing Executive temporary housing after being granted refugee status.

We liaised with Migrant Help regarding utilities, heating systems, and property conditions. We also contacted MPs and MLAs on behalf of families experiencing extended hostel stays, unsuitable placements, or disruptions to children's education and healthcare.

Concerns regarding living conditions in hotels, payment delays, and family welfare were raised with relevant authorities. We worked in partnership with NICCY to support families with children relocated outside Belfast during the school year and assisted members in accessing appropriate accommodation.

- **Education and Training**

220 service users (adults, young people, and children) were supported in accessing education through grant applications, admissions, referrals, English classes, and accredited training programmes. These opportunities were delivered in collaboration with Belfast Metropolitan College, Conway Education Centre, East Belfast Mission, Gems Belfast, and other community groups who deliver the English lessons.

Participants also attended workshops, training sessions, and information events organised by Bomoko NI.

- **Welfare rights**

180 service users received assistance with welfare and benefits issues. We engaged with benefits offices to address delays, supported members registering with Job Centres, and referred cases to Law Centre NI and Advice NI. Practical support was provided throughout the benefit applications.

- **Referral and signpost**

180 service users were repeatedly referred to external specialised services beyond our remit, and 220 were supported through referrals to food banks, including:

- Immigration and legal support (solicitors, Law Centre NI, Advice NI, MPs/MLAs offices)
- Physical and mental health services
- Family reunion support via the British Red Cross
- Support for trafficking and domestic abuse (Flourish, Women's Aid)
- Food banks: including Bradbury Hub, North Belfast and South Belfast Foodbanks

## **7. Employment and Volunteer opportunity**

During the year, Bomoko NI worked with 23 dedicated volunteers and internship students from Ulster University. We supported members with job applications, volunteer placements, and references, and oriented and referred women to opportunities aligned with their skills and experience.

## **8. Funding and Donations**

### **Funding Overview**

Over the past 18 months, Bomoko NI secured diverse funding to sustain its programmes.

Funds supported:

- Programme delivery: various training and workshops such as employability, money management, basic financial training, money management, mental health support, English classes, cookery workshops, walking groups, cultural events, International Women's Day, refugee week, community engagement, and integration activities
- Operational costs: rent, insurance, telephone & internet, and staffing
- Direct family support: food parcels, supermarket vouchers, household essentials, and energy top-ups, and baby necessities such as nappies and toiletries.

### **Funding was received from:**

- The Executive Office (Minority Ethnic Development Fund)
- National Lottery Awards for All
- Cash for Kids
- Migrant Centre NI
- St Anne's Cathedral (Black Santa Appeal)

### **Donations Received**

We received material and financial donations from:

Alliance for Choice

Cash for Kids

Salvation Army

Homeless Period

Trademark Training

Individual donors (toiletries, nappies, baby supplies)

## **9. Social opportunities and integration**

Members participated in a wide range of social, educational, and integration events with partner organisations and Bomoko NI, including:

- International Women's Day
- Family residential programmes
- Refugee Week celebrations
- Good relations Week
- Belfast Mela
- Good Relations Week
- Queen's University
- QUB Sanctuary
- CFNI
- Migrant Forum
- Ulster University
- Volunteer Now
- CO3
- WRDA
- Housing Executive
- PSNI
- Migration Justice Project
- National women Council
- Refugee and Asylum Forum

These activities strengthened confidence, social inclusion, and community participation.

## **10. Networking and Partnerships**

Bomoko NI maintained active partnerships with a broad network of organisations, including:

Migrant Forum (BCC), Reclaim the Agenda, Belfast Trust, Law Centre NI, WRDA, Housing Executive, Community Foundation NI, National Lottery, PSNI, Lorag, National Women's

Council of Ireland, BIHR, Migrant Justice Project, Corrymeela, BIHR, CO3, Growing Story, Common Knowledge, and Community Foundation Northern Ireland.

## **11. Activities**

Bomoko NI conducts its work through several key activity areas, which are systematically classified in our financial accounts:

### **English Language Support**

We delivered twice-weekly English classes at beginner, intermediate, and Level 1. Classes were provided online and in person by qualified tutors, with an average attendance of 10–12 participants.

The classes are designed to provide Bomoko NI members with accessible informal ESOL learning opportunities tailored to their needs, one-to-one support was available when required.

### **Training and Workshops**

Workshops included:

- Mental health and resilience
- Employability training (CV Writing, Job Search strategies, and the interview skills)
- Volunteer training
- Money management
- Cooperative governance
- Online cookery workshops
- Accredited course information sessions (Belfast Works Connects)
- Health-focused walking programmes

### **Community Engagement and Civic Education**

Members and families participated in trips to Newcastle, Portrush, Belfast Zoo, Ulster Folk Museum, and Corrymeela residential programmes to support integration and cultural learning.

### **Walking Group**

Our weekly walking group, running since 2020, engages 10–15 women per month, promoting wellbeing and social connection.

### **Emergency Family Support**

150 individuals received repeated support with food parcels, supermarket vouchers, toiletries, baby supplies, and energy top-ups, based on family circumstances.

### **Online Cookery Programme**

Women shared traditional recipes from their home countries through online demonstrations. The programme reduced isolation, promoted cultural exchange, and supported emotional well-being.

## **12. Thanks, and Acknowledgement**

We extend our sincere thanks to our board members, service users, funders, Project Manager, finance staff, accountant, partners, volunteers, and everyone who has contributed to our work.

Your continued support makes our mission possible.

**Bomoko NI**



