



STAR (Student Action for Refugees)

Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011

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Introduction

STAR (Student Action for Refugees) has been at the forefront of engaging students with refugee issues since students in Nottingham started the first STAR group in 1994. STAR has developed unrivalled expertise and practical know-how in engaging and supporting students to take positive action on this still controversial issue.

The STAR network currently has twenty-eight STAR groups affiliated and reaches approximately fourteen thousand students nationwide with positive messages about refugees each year.

STAR is a democratic organisation strongly committed to leadership by young people. We believe refugees need and deserve support and believe in students' power to achieve a whole-scale change in attitudes by focussing on the next generation to achieve a UK society that is welcoming and supportive towards refugees.

The purpose of this plan is to outline the strategic aims and priorities for STAR (Student Action for Refugees) from July 08 to June 2011.

The strategic plan will guide STAR's development and decision-making over the three year period 2008-2011. The plan has been developed by a sub-group of STAR Trustees and is built upon contributions from STAR members and the staff and volunteer team.

Executive summary

Our environmental and stakeholder analyses confirm that over the next three years, refugees will continue to need support and advocacy to secure their human rights and to access opportunities that enable them to rebuild new lives in the UK.

There is increasing pressure on the refugee sector for resources and from changes in Government legislation on asylum and immigration and from public opinion.

STAR's remit is nationwide and we seek to make an impact directly on the lives of refugees:

- a) Locally by providing practical support to refugees in communities where there are higher education institutions;
- b) Nationally by increasing awareness of and changing attitudes towards refugees; and
- c) By campaigning and lobbying for humane person-centred policies and provisions for refugees at all stages of seeking asylum in the UK.

Our specific aims for the next three years are:

- 1) Be a responsive, effective and accountable youth activism organisation that supports a national network of student volunteers engaged with refugee issues
- 2) Provide and support a network of volunteers with knowledge and skills to provide high quality practical support to refugees in their local communities
- 3) Engage students in learning about refugee issues and support a network of volunteers to deliver awareness-raising activities on refugee issues to their peers
- 4) Enable students to take action in relevant and meaningful ways as campaigners for refugee rights

Environmental analysis

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Political

- Possible change of Government and Prime Minister
- UK immigration legislation increasingly punitive focus
- Decreased number of asylum applicants due to increased use of barriers and preventative action
- Reduced availability of legal aid → increased refusals and destitution

Economic

- Destitution
- Decrease funding for ethnic / nationalization specific organizations
- Increased pressure on LA's to fund refugee services

Social

- Continued hostility to *any* immigrant
- Conflation of asylum and immigration and increasing need amongst new migrant communities
- Increased use of detention → decreased visibility of people seeking asylum
- Conflation of asylum and criminality in policy and therefore public attitudes
- Increase in general services and decrease in specialist services for refugees
- Change in provision of status – people being unsettled for longer periods
- Possible dispersal of separated children

Technological

- Growing ease in use of communications offering opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to make their voices heard

Students and higher education

Political

- Interest in opportunities that generate career advantages
- Degrees aimed at creating good workers - increased vocational degrees.
- Low levels of participation in formal political process
- Low levels of awareness of and participation in student politics
- Volunteering as credits in a university degree
- Loss of unique voice / identity / unique characteristics of student volunteering
- Growing 'consensus' - less radical

Economic

- Increase in 'remote' learning (staying at home to save money)
- Businesses more active in promoting employment with benefits
- Student finance – top up fees, reduced availability of grants leading to increased financial pressure, no of students working part or full time and therefore less time to volunteer or get engaged in extra-curricular activities

Social

- Increased diversity within student population
- Increase in numbers of students short term due to government targets, less in 5-10 years due to demographics
- Increased number of students staying at home and local uni to study, (reduced likelihood of involvement in extra-curricular activities)
- Increased awareness of 'CV potential' of extra curricular activities

- Increased competition between single issue topics for attention in society at large
- Overwhelming attention to climate change and the environment
- Increased number of organisations targeting students as activists or future donors

Technological

- Increased internet based social interaction
- Bring students around UK closer together (inter-group community)
- Empowering technology growing responsibility, ownership but also increasing risks
- Possible decrease in active engagement

Opportunities and Threats for STAR

Opportunities

- New media – low cost networking opportunities
- Increased funding for activities with young people
- Changes in asylum process needing new practical support projects
- Increased value placed on volunteering amongst young people
- Increased awareness of international issues and scope for activism locally to affect change
- Provision of high quality and responsive volunteering opportunities by STAR
- Focus on youth led flexible self-directed volunteering
- Peer to peer support to young refugees
- Extension of citizenship curriculum as means of reaching young people, younger!
- Building profile through collaborative working opportunities

Threats

- Opportunities to fund core of organisation sustained over time are reducing
- Campaigning not legitimised as form of volunteering with employers and voluntary sector at large
- Unpopular / unfashionable issue
- Decreasing number and visibility of asylum seekers in communities
- Increased competition in our areas of activity from partners and other organisations
- Reducing infrastructure to support student activity, e.g. student volunteering infrastructure
- Financial pressures on young people
- Standardisation and professionalism of voluntary sector
- Pace of technological change

Stakeholder analysis

In order to inform this plan, STAR staff and Trustees considered feedback received from STAR's stakeholders, and sought to respond to this feedback in devising this plan.

STAR's key stakeholders are:

- STAR groups
- STAR members/volunteers
- Refugee sector organisations
- Community and local voluntary groups
- Volunteering organisations
- Universities and higher education institutions
- Human rights organisations

Section 2 STAR's network, governance and management structure

STAR is a network of twenty-eight locally based and constituted student groups who affiliate to the national network annually.

The network is supported by a national support office. The national charity employs a small team of staff to deliver activities and support to the network of STAR groups. This team is led by the Chief Executive who is responsible for all external affairs. The team is supported by a number of interns who provide invaluable support and capacity to the national support office and the STAR network.

STAR is a registered charity, (number: 1079042) and a company limited by guarantee (number: 3902118). It has a Board of Trustees whose role it is to safeguard the charity's objects as well as ensure compliance with all relevant statutory requirements.

STAR seeks to work in partnership with other organisations in the education, refugee, youth and wider voluntary sector in order to achieve our objectives and the best outcomes for refugees and a life changing experience for students.

Section 3: STAR's vision, mission and values

STAR's vision is of a UK society that welcomes and supports refugees.

STAR will work towards achieving this by inspiring students to take positive action for refugees: raising awareness of refugee issues, providing practical support to refugees in local communities and campaigning for refugee rights.

In all our activities and operations STAR seeks to be:

Effective Inclusive Inspiring Youth-led

Note: work is currently underway to define what is meant by each of these terms and how they will be applied across the STAR network.

Section 4: STAR seeks to benefit and create change for:

- a) **Refugees** across the UK in towns and cities with a university or higher education institution; particularly who are children and young people.¹
- b) **Students** who attend a university or higher education institution in any one of the four countries of the UK; and as members of STAR groups and as members of the student population.
- c) **Young people** aged 13-18 in schools and colleges or youth clubs or youth groups in all four countries of the UK (as recipients).
- d) **Other voluntary and community sector organisations working for and with refugees and young people**

STAR seeks to reach a wide audience of students and young people through its awareness raising and campaigning activities. The people reached with messages and through STAR activities are described as '**recipients**'.

'**Participants**' are people who have made a conscious decision to get involved and take further action. STAR National Support Office delivers activities and resources to support participants' work with their peers and with refugees.

¹ NOTE: STAR does not distinguish between people on the basis of their immigration status and will not enquire about an individuals' status. Throughout STAR's work the term 'refugee' is used to describe a person who has in the past or is currently, seeking asylum in the UK.

Section 5: Outline of specific aims, outcomes and objectives

Specific aim	
1	Be an independent responsive, effective and accountable youth activism organisation that supports a national network of student volunteers engaged with refugee issues
2	Provide and support a network of volunteers with knowledge and skills to provide high quality practical support to refugees in their local communities
3	Engage students in learning about refugee issues and support a network of volunteers to deliver awareness-raising activities on refugee issues to their peers
4	Enable students to take action in relevant and meaningful ways as campaigners for refugee rights

Specific aim 1	Outcomes	Objectives
<p>Be an independent, responsive, effective and accountable youth activism organisation that supports a national network of student volunteers engaged with refugee issues</p>	<p>Strong relationships and effective communication between STAR groups, the National Support Office and Board of Trustees</p> <p>STAR groups utilising democratic structures and actively participating in decision-making within the STAR network</p> <p>STAR externally recognised as an example of good practice in youth participation and leadership</p> <p>For refugees: STAR groups react to changing needs of refugees in their local communities</p> <p>Refugees are actively involved in the development and delivery of STAR activities</p> <p>For STAR participants: A network of STAR groups offering opportunities for students to take positive action for refugees</p> <p>Opportunities to meet and share experiences and learning with other participants</p> <p>Opportunities for progression and leadership within STAR</p> <p>For other organisations: Partners and external agencies choose to work through STAR to reaching young people with messages about refugees and to engage young people in their activities</p> <p>Knowledgeable, skilled and experienced individuals continue to be involved as volunteers or employees within the refugee, youth or voluntary sectors</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a strategy for practical action to foster and embed participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels in STAR. 2. Develop and deliver to STAR groups a practical and policy based national volunteering infrastructure encompassing volunteer recruitment, training, support, monitoring and evaluation and accreditation opportunities. 3. Provide a 3-way communications infrastructure including a website and new media tools to enable communications between groups and the national support office and between groups. 4. Sustain and develop the national network of STAR groups providing training, advice, resources and support to committees in response to their changing needs. 5. Provide opportunities to enable STAR groups to meet, communicate and learn from each other. 6. Devise and implement practical quality assurance measures for groups and STAR nationally. 7. Celebrate and communicate externally successes and contributions of STAR and its members to civic society. 8. Establish and grow a database of STAR alumni. 9. Provide national and regional opportunities for volunteers to contribute to delivering National Support Office activities.

Specific aim 2	Outcomes	Objectives
<p>Provide and support a network of volunteers with knowledge and skills to provide high quality practical support to refugees in their local communities</p>	<p>For refugees: Refugees have improved experience of seeking asylum in the UK</p> <p>Improved quality of life for refugees in the UK</p> <p>Refugees experience positive interaction with young people</p> <p>Refugees feel included and connected in/ with the local community</p> <p>Refugees are actively involved in the development and delivery of STAR activities</p> <p>Peer led activities provide increased opportunities and quality of life for young refugees</p> <p>For STAR participants: Volunteers gain confidence and self-esteem</p> <p>Volunteers gain transferable life skills</p> <p>Volunteers access quality assured, safe and effective volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>Volunteers are empowered to be leaders and catalysts for change in their communities and in society</p> <p>For other organisations: A ready supply of well-informed and skilled volunteers available to support local projects.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver specialised training & learning resources to prepare groups for practical support activities and offer expert advice in response to demand 2. Sustain and develop relationships with partner agencies nationally and regionally, working in partnership where appropriate, to provide access to practical support opportunities for STAR members 3. Capacity building with organisations across higher education, volunteering and refugee sectors in order to ensure availability of sustained and appropriate local support for STAR volunteers practical support activities 4. Develop resources and provide support to STAR groups to engage in successful partnerships with locally based organisations working together to deliver practical support to refugees 5. Provide information and support to STAR group committees to support their development, secure local or young person targeted funding and improve sustainability of their practical support activities. 6. Measure and evaluate the impact of STAR's practical support activities for all people affected: refugees, students, partner organisations and local communities 7. Deliver specialised training and learning resources to encourage and support STAR groups to involve refugees in the planning, delivery and evaluation of their practical support activities

Specific aim 3	Outcomes	Objectives
<p>Engage students in learning about refugee issues and support a network of volunteers to deliver awareness-raising activities on refugee issues to their peers</p>	<p>For refugees: Refugees experience less hostility</p> <p>A long term attitude shift of the next generation of policy makers to provide positive outcomes for refugees</p> <p>For recipients: Increased understanding of refugee issues</p> <p>Positive attitude towards refugees</p> <p>Knowledge of opportunities to take action for refugee rights</p> <p>For STAR participants: Have the skills, resources and confidence to be peer educators and challenge myths and stereotypes about refugees</p> <p>Volunteers gain confidence and self-esteem</p> <p>Volunteers gain transferable life skills</p> <p>Volunteers access quality assured, safe and effective volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>For other organisations: Ability to easily reach a network of students with messages about refugees</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide attractive and accessible information to encourage students to engage with and understand refugee issues 2. Produce resources and activities to enable STAR groups to deliver awareness-raising activities to their peers locally (e.g. Journey to Safety) 3. Lead the network in safely utilising the STAR website and other new media tools to maximise the reach of STAR's messages to widest possible student audiences 4. Work with partners to ensure information and awareness-raising materials are appropriate for student audiences 5. Deliver specialised training to prepare groups for awareness-raising activities and offer expert advice in response to demand 7. Measure and evaluate STAR's impact as a result of awareness raising 8. Identify opportunities and provide support and co-ordination to enable STAR volunteers to raise awareness of refugee issues at student focussed events.

Specific aim 4	Outcomes	Objectives
<p>Enable students to take action in relevant and meaningful ways as campaigners for refugee rights</p>	<p>For recipients: Increased understanding of refugee issues</p> <p>Positive attitude towards refugees</p> <p>Knowledge of opportunities to take action for refugee rights</p> <p>For STAR participants: Volunteers gain confidence and self-esteem</p> <p>Volunteers gain transferable life skills</p> <p>Volunteers are empowered to be leaders and catalysts for change in their communities and in society</p> <p>Volunteers feel they have made an identifiable positive impact on the lives of refugees through campaigning</p> <p>An understanding of informal and formal political activity</p> <p>Opportunities to engage in formal and informal political activity</p> <p>Volunteers access quality assured, safe and effective volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>For other organisations: Able to make campaigns relevant and engaging for student audiences</p> <p>Access to a mechanism to communicate messages and asks to student audiences</p> <p>Partner agencies receive support from students for their campaigns and activities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner with organisations around shared aims and objectives to develop and implement joint campaigns for refugee rights 2. With campaign partners deliver one national campaign each academic year 3. Provide campaign training and support to STAR groups to ensure members' energies are used effectively for maximum benefit for refugees locally and nationally 4. Create and disseminate a campaigning toolkit to enable STAR groups to plan and deliver locally focussed campaigns in conjunction with local partners or on topics of local concern 5. Measure and evaluate the contribution made by STAR to partnership campaigns, other organisations campaigns and to local level campaigns.

Section 6 Staffing structure

At July 2008 STAR's current team structure is as follows:

Chief Executive

Student Outreach Officer

Volunteering Support Officer

Refugee Children's project Officer

Campaigns Co-ordinators (2x intern positions)

In addition, throughout the year STAR will engage fixed-term staff to undertake discrete pieces of work, including a Conference Organiser (June – Nov) supported by a Conference intern.

STAR will seek funding to enable the national support office to meet the organisations needs in communications and administrative support.

Volunteer involvement in STAR operations and activities:

STAR involves volunteers in three key ways:

- Volunteers involved in student-led projects which are managed and owned by groups affiliated to the STAR national network;
- Volunteers involved in local projects led by partner organisations;
- National Support Office supported volunteers. These are volunteers who are directly supported by STAR National Office and include interns, Regional Coordinators and Trustees.