



SCHEDA DI APPROFONDIMENTO N° 44

Scalabrini Centre Cape Town South Africa by Miranda Madikane director of SCCT

INTRODUCTION

My name is Miranda Madikane. I come from Cape Town, South Africa. I work for the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town in the position of Director. South Africa's legal framework around refugees and asylum seekers is one of the most liberal in the world offering asylum seekers and refugees all the rights offered to South African citizens. While legally refugees do have rights, their problem is that in practise the government does not have the capacity to ensure these rights are delivered.

Our OBJECTIVE and VISION

The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town is a non-profit organisation committed to alleviating poverty by promoting development in the Western Cape and to offering assistance to refugees and their children. Our ultimate aim is that of fostering integration between local communities and refugees.

HISTORY

The Scalabrini Fathers have offered support to over 8000 refugees since their arrival in Cape Town in 1997. In June 2003 after having acquired the 4-story building in Commercial Street, literally one block from the Houses of Parliament, the Scalabrini Fathers set up this lay organisation governed by a Board of Trustees with the mandate to achieve their objectives.

WELFARE

SCCT offers assistance to newly arrived refugees through our Welcoming Programme. At the Welcoming Programme

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

(which runs each Wednesday) food rations, clothes, blankets are distributed and assistance in finding temporary accommodation is offered. Accommodation is one of the biggest problems newly arrived refugees face and the most difficult problem for us to solve as it is expensive and there is no state-offered solution. There are no camps for refugees and they are left to find their own place, which often leaves people living on the streets or creating makeshift shelters. Our only answer is to find temporary accommodation in night shelters. There is often no space in these services especially in winter. This is an on-going problem across South Africa.

In the recent past the Democratic Republic of Congo has had the highest number of asylum seekers in South Africa, however with the ongoing political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, it is now the country with the highest number of asylum seekers in South Africa. Since all Zimbabweans do speak English, it is easier for them to integrate into society. However, to combat the difficulties faced by the French and Portuguese speaking refugees, the centre offers free English lessons at three levels.

Yet another difficulty all asylum seekers face is in acquiring a legal status from the Department of Home Affairs. There is an enormous back-log of people (150'000) waiting to be processed. It is my belief that South Africa is failing to comply with its legal and ethical obligations towards asylum seekers and refugees simply through "administrative incoherence". The Department of Home Affairs seems to believe that if they close their eyes for long enough the problem might just go away! The situation is ever worsening and the facts are clear, with so many people waiting asylum but with no documentation they can find it difficult to receive medical care, to find employment or access schools for their children. This is creating a group of people living in limbo.

At present SCCT is assisting some 210 newly arrived refugees through this programme. Mothers with young babies receive baby food and milk. On an individual and case-to-case basis financial help is offered to refugees with

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 - Fax 071.7501972

HIV/AIDS or who are chronically sick or who are victims of xenophobic attack.

Also the Welcoming programme is collecting empirical information on the conditions experienced by the refugee in terms of service delivery by government departments as part of a national research conducted by the Forced Migration Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand.

As part of our strategy to advocate for and promote the rights of refugees, the Welcoming programme also includes weekly workshops on what asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to by law. The workshops are given mainly in French and educates people on local conditions and on how to access education, medical, legal and social assistance. One of our success stories in advocacy, is that having sued the government for exclusion of disabled refugees from a social grant, Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town has won its case and disabled refugees are now entitled to monthly financial assistance from the government.

In another initiative to educate not only the public but also workers in government departments and to offer a platform for debate and research of issues and policy affecting migration, the centre runs a bi-annual programme entitled, the Migration Research Project (MRP) which works in partnership with the University of Cape Town. For 2008 the focus area will be migration, labour and development and two workshops will be held that explore this theme.

SKILLS TRAINING

Given that many refugees are desperate for food and accommodation, and that they struggle to enter the labour market and that when they do it is with a general downward development regarding their skills and experience. What can the centre do to offer assistance? Since South Africa faces a critical skills shortage and is attracting immigrants in the medical, teaching, engineering and IT profession a possible solution for refugees with tertiary education is to find placement in these sectors. This is not that easy as first

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

*Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 - Fax 071.7501972*

their foreign qualifications need to be recognised by the South African Qualifications Authorities and by the national boards governing these professions. This can be expensive and take time, since most of these national boards will insist on the applicant taking an examination to ascertain depth of knowledge. It is to better understand the process of accreditation and the eventual placement of professionals that the centre will now pilot a project which will walk 10 professionals through the process of attaining this recognition.

But what of the much larger percentage of refugees who only have a high school qualification? In a country where the majority of her residents at best also only have high school qualifications, how is the refugee to find employment under fair and humane conditions, unless they have some skills to offer? It is with this rationale that the centre now supports a few basic skills training programmes. While the centre is particularly involved in refugee and migrant related issues and needs, our skills training activities are available to everybody including South African citizens, who are also in desperate need of skills development. This is a policy that works against xenophobia and encourages integration given the understanding that people who learn together can live together.

Our skills training projects include:

- 1. Life Skills – A four-day workshop focussed on how to developed a career path, assessing personal strengths and weaknesses**
- 2. Microsoft Office Training – Digital Literacy with the goal to teach and assess basic computer concepts and skills so that people can use computer technology in everyday life to develop new social and economic opportunities fro themselves, their families and their communities.**
- 3. Communication and Graphic Design – Using Open Source software the course aims to teach basic DTP , Marketing and Publicity to small business owners, NGO employees and the unemployed interested in following a career in communications. This training project will begin in 2008.**

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 – Fax 071.7501972

4. Teaching English as a Foreign Language – For refugees from French and Portuguese speaking countries.

At present the centre is an *emerging* training provider and needs to receive accreditation for itself and the courses it offers.

DEVELOPMENT

While the unemployment rate in Cape Town is amongst the lowest in South Africa, it is still very high. Many South Africans and refugees alike have little understanding of the labour market, have little knowledge of good business practise or have little understanding of the different tertiary education opportunities available. Added to this many have a poor grasp of English which is the language of commerce. The problem of denied access is historical and is one that is so entrenched that is reflected in the very layout of the cities. Once again the question is how can the Scalabrini Centre help alleviate these deep seated problems?

Since for the majority of the unemployed it is a lack of access and understanding that is their first obstacle, it is the centres vision to offer a Consultation Office where people can:

- ❖ find access to information on how to create or find work,
- ❖ receive help in understanding what their personal strengths and skills are and what is a good skills area for the individual to develop
- ❖ find information on skills training and educational opportunities available in order to follow a particular career path
- ❖ receive practical support on how to set up a business and guidance on good business practice depending on the specific business
- ❖ offer internships or job placements for excellent graduates of the SCCT Digital literacy programme

While this consultancy is not yet in operation, I am steering the centre towards being able to offer all of these services to the unemployed.

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 – Fax 071.7501972

We have already piloted a job placement project where graduates of the Scalabrini Digital Literacy programme were placed in internships in NGO's around Cape Town. The project was set up as follows. Each student was given the opportunity to undergo an interview where they introduced themselves, their backgrounds and their career goals. From this interview, SCCT contacted local NGO's and requested placement for individual students in entry level positions for a period of 4 months. SCCT offered a minimum stipend to cover transport and lunch costs. 12 placements were made, of these, 3 people were offerd

THE SEWING PROJECT

Mixing Welfare and Development, the sewing project offers a shared studio for refugee tailors to work. The studio has 3 ordinary machines, 1 zig zag machine, 1 overlocker and one row machine. The main idea of this project is to offer a space to work, to assist in a marketing plan for their products and to mentor good business practice around it.

VOYAGE ENSEMBLE

This is an art project aimed at fostering relationships between professional local and migrating artists. As the name suggests, the project aims to celebrate a journeying together of people and visual art that is not defined by borders but by a broader understanding of a shared African visual imagery. The outcomes of this project have been fantastic, 4 exhibitions have been made and the artists are not only learning from each other by exploring new techniques but are also raising their local profiles and selling their works.

SOCIAL TOURISM

While the concept of social tourism is new to South Africa, SCCT has just renovated the top floor of the Commercial Street building into 12 en suite rooms with shared kitchen which are now available at market rates as accommodation. The project is set up to make a PROFIT, the profit will be used to support the other programmes the centre is supporting.

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 - Fax 071.7501972

LAWRENCE HOUSE

Aside for the activities happening at the centre, the Scalabrini Fathers are also running a children's home for abandoned and orphaned refugee children called Lawrence House. At the moment 25 children are in our care and are loved, fed and schooled.

All of this sums up the work the Scalabrini Centre of Cape is doing.

30.09.2007, Miranda Madikane

A cura di Sisifo Italia - Ufficio Stampa MIM

*Responsabile: Giuseppe Lanzi, 335.66.98.734 giuseppelanzi@scalabrini.net
Email: development@scalabrini.net WEB www.meetingloreto.it www.sisifoitalia.it
infoline: 071.7500256 - Fax 071.7501972*