

**Shpresa Programme
Evaluation Report**

Children and Young People's Project

Funded by BBC Children in Need and Jack Petchey Foundation

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction and Background to the Project	4
2.1 The Need for the work with Children and Young People	
3. Services Provided	5
3.1 Description of Services : Traditional Dancing, Football, Basketball, Kickboxing, Performances, Campaigning and Other Projects	
3.2 Logistics of Service Provision in Redbridge, Newham, Barking & Haringey	
4. Methodology	7
Feedback from Children and Young People & Parents	
4.1 Internal Feedback	
4.2 External Feedback	
4.3 Working with Parents	
5. Findings	10
6. Recommendations	11
6.1 for Shpresa Programme	
6.2 for BBC Children in Need	
7. Acknowledgements	13
8. The Author	13

1. Executive Summary

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation of Shpresa Programme's work with children and young people is to :-

- assess the impact of the project upon the lives of children and young people
- review the effectiveness and quality of the work
- make recommendations for the work of the organisation in relation to its services for children and young people

The evaluation methods used were:

- consensus workshop (held with two different age groups of children and young people)
- observations of activities with children and young people (Mayfield School, Kickboxing, Football)
- group discussions (with children at Mayfield Primary School activities)
- one to one interviews

Aims of the Project run by Shpresa Programme

The work aims to improve the quality of life of children and young people from refugee/migrant (Albanian speaking) backgrounds. The project aims to address difficulties and issues faced by refugee children and to combat the disadvantage and discrimination they experience. Specific aims are to:-

- enable Albanian speaking children to take part in a leisure activities and provide opportunities for respite from responsibility for family members
- to overcome fears and mistrust amongst refugee parents that prevent children engaging in activities outside the home and family
- reduce isolation by providing opportunities for Albanian speaking children to meet with other
- young within their community and wider community
- enable young Albanian speakers to develop a sense of identity and feel proud of cultural heritage
- reduce the stigma felt by Albanian speaking children about their ethnic identity
- enable Albanian speaking children and young people to access mainstream provision and services

Main Findings

The main findings of the evaluation are that:-

- refugee/migrant children have **improved confidence and self esteem**
- **participation levels are high** with demands from children and parents for more activities
- the project significantly **combats isolation** of many Albanian speaking families, many only engage in the activities provided by Shpresa and see this as a lifeline to engagement with their local community. This is especially the case in London boroughs of Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Haringey

- the work is **preventative**, providing activities that offer young people alternatives to engaging in criminal/anti-social behaviour but also, importantly, enabling them to develop a strong sense of identity and self esteem
- the work in schools contributes to **parents engagement with their children's education**, basing activities in schools bridges a gap between home and school life and parents feel more included and able to talk to teachers, attend other school events
- the project enables young people and children to **engage in other mainstream activities** and to feel part of life in London. The work done with the Mayor's Office (page 3) indicates the extent to which young people take part in wider community/society.

Recommendations

For Shpresa Programme

- to continue to develop and review appropriate support services (including therapeutic support) and professional development for staff and volunteers
- to consider the capacity of the organisation when responding to demand for increased/new services and activities

For BBC Children in Need

- to consider the **value added** by refugee led organisations, the high motivation and commitment of staff and volunteers (as they share similar experiences to their users) results in them providing high quality, demand led support.
- to consider the **importance of ethnic specific projects as a stepping stone** to enable people to access mainstream/other provision, many women that Shpresa Programme support would be totally isolated without this organisation.

2. Introduction and Background to the Project

Shpresa Programme has been working in Newham since 2000, though their work has expanded into other London boroughs over the last three years. The organisation provides services and activities for Albanian speaking refugees and migrants. They work predominately with families, women and children.

The organisation was founded by its now Director Luljeta Nuzi - herself an asylum seeker. She began by organising support groups for women with children, which provided them with a space to share experiences and provide emotional and practical support for each other.

Shpresa is a user-led organisation, staff, volunteers and more than half the management committee are from the Albanian speaking community. The organisation now employs five members of staff and has 31 volunteers and has grown fairly rapidly. It is well respected within the Albanian speaking community and within the statutory and voluntary sector. Staff have worked especially hard to overcome initial suspicion and scepticism within the Albanian speaking community. Their Director, Luljeta Nuzi says, "the idea of volunteering just doesn't exist within our culture back home, people thought we couldn't be doing all this to help the community without something for ourselves". Over the years the group have been committed to working in partnership and developing services that really meet the needs of people within the community.

Shpresa Programme is vibrant and thriving organisation providing a range of services and activities to children, young people and adults. This aspect of their work has developed considerably over the years and has received support from:-

- Local Network Fund
- London Borough of Newham
- BBC Children in Need
- Jack Petchey Foundation
- Little Ilford Early Start
- Connecting Communities + (Home Office)
- A Glimmer of Hope (Charitable Trust)

This report focuses on the service provided with funding from the BBC Children in Need and The Jack Petchey Foundation. Both agencies support Shpresa Programme in its aim to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged children and young people.

2.1 Work with Children and Young People - The Need

Shpresa Programme is in the second year of funding from BBC Children in Need. The organisation was granted £39,164 in 2006 and £23,978 in 2007. The grant has been significant in terms enabling Shpresa to develop its capacity to work with children and young people. At the time of writing this report the organisation has just been granted further support with a 3 year grant of approx £34,000 per annum. Funding has enabled the organisation to employ a Development Worker specifically to develop and run services for children and young people.

Children from refugee and migrant backgrounds experience particular disadvantage, including:-

- bearing inappropriate levels of responsibility for the family (often translating for parents)
- poor self-esteem and lack of confidence

- their families/parents feelings of mistrust and fear around them attending and participating in outside activities
- having few/no opportunities to take part in activities outside of school hours or to develop new skills and friendships
- a lack of confidence and pride in national heritage and own identity
- underperforming at school

The project has been designed to combat the negative experiences of children from refugee/migrant backgrounds, to help them integrate into wider community life, to reach their full potential and lead positive and fulfilling lives.

3. Services Provided for Children and Young People

Within this project, Shpresa Programme work across the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Newham, Barking and Dagenham and Haringey. Funding provided by the BBC Children in Need enables the organisation to support 213 children and young people through the following activities :-

3.1 Description of Services

- **Traditional Dancing** - This involves teaching traditional dance, from home countries in Eastern Europe. Children learn dance steps and develop an understanding of the links with dance and their own cultural heritage. Children work in small groups practising steps and moves and work towards a choreographed piece of dance. Sessions involve showcasing developments to parents, assemblies at schools and performances at local events.

- **Football** - One of the sporting activities provided by the organisation which involves children and young people developing skills, competition in matches, being part of team. The organisation provides professional coaching. Children and young people learn self discipline, anger management, to take instruction and participate as a team member. They are also given information on fitness, diet and nutrition and keeping healthy. The group have also made links with the youth section of Leyton Orient Football Club.

- **Basketball** - An additional sporting activity provided for children and young people. They have the opportunity to develop new skills, play as part of team and are supported in understanding their own bodies and the importance of health and fitness. The organisation employs a professional coach and the sessions focus on fitness, skills development and include a team game.

- **Kickboxing** - This takes place in Newham on a Sunday morning and is a very popular activity particularly among young men, (a few girls also take part). The group is not specifically Albanian and is very mixed with young people from a range of backgrounds taking part. The sessions, which run 52 weeks a year, are organised within age groups with appropriate activities for those (i) aged under 10 years (ii) 10-14 year olds and (iii) 14-19 year olds. Sessions focus on skills, fitness and developing and improving techniques. Shpresa Programme work closely with Mantis Kickboxing Club and employ professional coaches on a sessional basis. Young people have also progressed to become coaches themselves. The group take part in nationwide competitions nationwide and last year one young person aged 16 years achieved 2nd place in a national competition. A number of young people who attend these sessions were previously engaged in criminal behaviour and have now made more positive choices as a result of attending kickboxing. Commitment is very high with young people travelling from other

boroughs including Lewisham and Haringey arriving early for 9:30am start on Sunday morning. An additional benefit of this activity has been the development of young people and their desire to achieve and develop themselves. Older boys began to bring their young cousins, brothers and friends “to stop them getting into trouble”.

- **Youth Achievers Award** - is a scheme developed by The Jack Petchey Foundation, whereby young people receive awards of £300 to develop an idea that will benefit the community. Shpresa Programme has received funding from Jack Petchey Foundation to support 12 award winners. The winners are selected and chosen by other young people involved with the organisation.

- **Performances** - As well as regular activities Shpresa Programme work with young people to produce performances. These provide a way of young people showcasing their achievements and work to family, friends, school community and the wider local community. The organisation encourage and support young people to take part in the performances; understanding the growth in self esteem and confidence this brings about. As well as local productions, young people involved with Shpresa Programme have opportunities to perform in larger community events including Newham Refugee Week, Coin Street Festival, the Lord Mayors Show and one planned next month at Stratford Circus. Over the last year 45 children/young people took part in performances through Shpresa Programme.

- **Campaigning and Other Projects**

The organisation strives to ensure the inclusion of Albanian speaking young people and seeks opportunities for them to have their voices heard. Young people have taken part in a photography project in partnership with professionals who worked with young people to express how they saw London. They plan to exhibit this during Refugee Week. They have also been involved with Telco “Strangers into Citizens” campaign to promote positive media coverage of refugees and migrants. This is an on-going campaign and has led to young people becoming involved in the Safer City campaign and work with the Ken Livingstone and Refugee Youth with a “Creative Campaign” to give young refugees the opportunities to engage with policy makers.

3.3 Logistics of Service Provision

- **What Happens in Redbridge**

Activities take place all day on a Sunday at Mayfield School. Provision began in 2005. Shpresa Programme use the school facilities, and classrooms, outside play areas and the school hall are busy and lively. Many parents attend with their children and the activities are structured and staffed by staff and volunteers. Children are grouped according to age within three groups of (i) under 10s, (ii) 10-16yrs (iii) 17-25yrs. Activities are organised on a rota basis so everyone gets the opportunity to try out all that is on offer. Refreshments are provided. The children are enthusiastic and eager to take part in all that is on offer. The work is supported by a teacher who works closely with Shpresa Programme and provides a crucial link between the organisation and the school.

- traditional dancing (approximately 50 children/young people take part)
 - football (just over 30 children/young people take part)
 - basketball (12 children/young people take part)
- **What Happens in Newham**

Shpresa Programme is based in Newham and has been working with young people here since 2001. The organisation has strong links and partnerships which are used to benefit the project and their work with children and young people. They run a variety of activities on a number of different days and for varying age groups. They use school and community spaces targeting areas where Albanian speaking families live and drawing on existing relationships they have with other service providers in the borough.

Activities run in a number of venues including schools and community centres.

- traditional dancing :- on Mondays at Lister School (20-25 children/young people) & on Saturdays at Little Ilford Youth Centre (16 children/young people)
- football on Saturday at Little Ilford School (just over 25 children/young people)
- kickboxing on Sunday at Durning Hall (just over 35 children/young people)

- What Happens in Barking

The organisation works closely with Gascoigne school where there are 103 Albanian speaking children. Shpresa Programme has been working in Barking since 2007. They run traditional dancing on Thursday afternoon (38 children/young people take part).

- What Happens in Haringey

Activities take place in two venues, Gladsmore Community School and South Haringey Junior School. Shpresa Programme have been working in Haringey since 2006. They were approached by parents who had heard of the organisation's work in Redbridge and asked them to develop services in Haringey. There are no other services for the Albanian speaking community in the borough and the group have developed their links with the Women's Therapy Centre to provide more comprehensive support for refugee women. They have also received funding from City Parochial Foundation to develop support groups for women in Haringey.

Activities comprise:-

- Dancing on Saturdays at Gladsmore Community School 32 children split into two groups 6-8yrs and 9-11yrs)
- Dancing on Wednesdays at South Haringey Junior School (22 children)
- Football on Tuesday (18-20 children/young people take part)

4. Methodology-

Feedback from Children and Young People and Parents

4.1 Internal Feedback from Children and Young People

Shpresa Programme are committed to gathering the views and opinions of the young people they work with and are very successful at involving young people in the running and development of services. Each service (as stated in section 2 of this report) provides time and support to enable young people to talk to staff and volunteers. They do this through:-

- questionnaires
- regular planning meetings/committees - where a group of young people meet with staff and volunteers involved in running the service each month. These meetings provide young people with the opportunity to say what they think about how the project is going, what they like, what could be improved and what they dislike or find difficult.

4.2 External Feedback

An external consultant gathered feedback from young people using the following techniques:-

- (i) consensus workshop with young people aged 11 to 16yrs
- (ii) group discussions with children aged (6-8yrs and 9-11yrs) at Mayfield School
- (iii) individual interviews with young people from Kickboxing

The use of questionnaires was suggested but young people said they preferred to talk.

(i) Consensus Workshop - 16 young people who take part in a range of activities with the organisation attended a consensus workshop. Initially young people aged over 11 were selected but on the day of the workshop younger children insisted on taking part. Children and young people were grouped according to age and the younger ones engaged fully in the project. The workshop enables participants to input their ideas and feedback collectively. Participants were made up of young people from the different areas and who took part in different activities. These were, 2 from Haringey Football, 2 from Kickboxing, 3 from Traditional Dancing, 1 from Basketball and 2 from Other Projects

The young people developed and then considered a key question which was discussed and debated **“What difference has the project made to my life”** They were asked to consider this individually and note 5-8 points. Young people then discussed this in small groups and fed back to the whole group. Through a process of clustering similar answers key themes emerged which were:-

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS THE PROJECT MADE TO MY LIFE

Preventative

- keep me out of trouble
- don't get into gangs
- Kicking boxing helps me with self defence/you can fight against each other

Enjoyment

- Football is fun and I keep fit
- Visiting different places
- made new friends
- I get to go out more often

Made me a Better Person

- more confident at performing
- gained new skills
- improved my skills through doing drama
- I am better at school
- more confidence
- am good at things I didn't think I could do
- improved social skills
- I get to go out more often

What else do we want

- go on more trips
- football should be registered in the league
- more fun activities like ice-skating and cinema
- more opportunities to perform
- help with homework

(ii) Group Discussions

Around 10-12 children took part in a focus group and were asked to talk about their involvement with the project. The following comments were collected:-

I am more exposed to different activities such as workshops, visit to big businesses, campaigning, drama (Ilir 16 years old)

My award enabled me to set up the ice skating group (Deni 12 years old)

We have set up the “chilling out” session where we decide the agenda and the time when we want to get together (Orald 15 years old)

I always loved drama, and wanted to play in a real one. I had the chance through shpresa to take part to a number of performing. (Julio 14 years old)

When we get together our ideas go wild, I have met three other girls that love fashion and we have decided to set up our company in the future” interior design”, We get regularly together and sometimes have sleep over to each other houses. (Nafjola age 12)

(ii) Individual Interviews

Fabion aged 16yrs started kickboxing at 14yrs old. He brings his younger brother with him each week.

Before he started kickboxing he was in special education within school due to his disruptive behaviour. He had problems managing his anger and “was getting into trouble”. He is now working towards GCSEs and plans to attend university.

He takes part in lots of other sports and says he has much more confidence.

“They teach you to be careful, that you may hurt someone so I don’t fight on the street anymore... if I am angry I wait till I come here and talk to my friends and coach and punch the bag”

4.3 Working with Parents

It has been vitally important that the organisation work closely with parents. Building trust with parents has been crucial. This has enabled staff in the organisation to challenge attitudes and behaviour towards children by parents.

Parents were often aggressive, towards their own children, other children and each other. They used physical punishment regularly, speak down to children and shout.

- *Evis - the women that we work with come from a background where to punishing children when they don't behave is ok and is seen by community as a good parenting.*
- *Parents decide for the future of their children so they don't have a say within the family until they are over 18. We have done quite lot to overcome these difficulties and address these issues and have managed to bring a better communication and understanding with in the family. It has been a very challenging process but I think we have made a great progress.*

Initially staff dealt with major conflict between parents including physical and verbal abuse between mothers. Over a period of time staff provided consistent support that enabled users to develop trust, change their behaviour and provide more positive role models for their children.

PREVENTING HARM TO CHILDREN OUTCOME :

Staff worked hard with parents and children individually and using group work. Issues of resentment, tragedies in their past, lack of confidence, inability to articulate themselves, their own experience of being beaten as children have surfaced. As a result of these work Shpresa has identified that more work needs to be done and have linked with the Women's Therapy Centre to work intensively with the mothers.

5. Findings

Key Question -

What is the Impact of the Project upon the Lives of Children and Young People?

1. Participation and Enjoyment levels are high - the organisation has had to develop waiting lists and manage expectations both from young people and parents. Attendance is also impressive with young people turning up for early morning starts regularly. **Children have more opportunities to socialise outside of the home and to engage in activities that support their personal and physical development.** Children and young people are thriving and taking part in activities which they enjoy and find challenging. They have formed new friendships.

2. Local Significance of Work - this has been critical in some boroughs notably the work in Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge where there is little other provision and the service is relied upon heavily by Albanian speaking families. It provides an opportunity for parents to socialise, reduces isolation of children and encourages families to engage positively with their local school

3. Preventing Young People from engaging in Criminal/Anti-Social Behaviour - an issue highlighted by a number of young people who expressed their relief at having found the project. Staff and volunteers work closely with young people and it is evident that they value and respect those involved in running the organisation. Young people said they brought their friends to the project.

Comments from young people :-

“I’ve stopped doing bad things now”

“I don’t fight on the streets anymore”

The project has clearly provided many vulnerable young people with positive activities and developed their trust.

4. Cultural Gap between Parents and Teachers - often Albanian speaking parents are invisible in school life. Engagement with teachers is low and involvement with their children’s school life poor. That much of the work takes place in schools has enabled parents to feel more confident about their participation in the school community. They have come to view the school as a community resource and this has significantly broken down barriers between them and teachers.

Comments from Mothers:-

“Before I didn’t bother to talk to teachers, I didn’t think they liked us”

“It is good they use school in this way I think the teachers must want us come here”

5. Improved Children’s confidence and self esteem particularly around their national heritage. Activities like the traditional dancing are oversubscribed and very popular with children and young people. They particularly like the opportunities to perform and will speak to their peers about taking part in this activity. The activity involves them dressing in traditional costume.

Comments from children:-

“I love the dancing best”

“we do this at our school for everyone”

“my mum likes watching me dancing”

“I have learned to do the dancing with my friends”

5. Mainstreaming with other youth work - the organisation has developed strong links with other organisations and maximises the opportunities for young people from Albanian speaking communities to take part in community and London wide events.

Comments from young people who have benefitted from this work include:-

“it has been great to be part of Shpresa, we don’t get just activities to attend, we decide what we want and we are exposed at all the times with new opportunities. For me the training on Leadership has been great and very challenging and has enabled me to get involved at the “City safe” campaign and as a result of my involvement at the youth centre activities now I am playing a key role at mentoring at my school.” (Izmir 16)

6. Participation in running the project. Children and young people clearly feel part of the group and are involved in shaping the project. They are confident in speaking to staff about their needs and were enthusiastic about taking part in the evaluation process. The organisation has a structured approach to involving children and young people with representatives from

activities taking part in planning and review meetings. **All the children and young people spoken to said they felt confident about talking to staff and discussing improvements, problems or things they were unhappy with.**

Recommendations

1. Commitment of Staff and Volunteers & Their Need for Support

Speaking to staff they find it difficult to turn down requests for support or the development of services in other areas. As a user-led organisation the culture is to respond to need swiftly and this often means staff, including the Director, and volunteers working extra hours. This has taken its toll on staff and volunteers who have felt stressed and overworked. Staff have often survived similar experiences as the users of the organisation and although this provides them with a deep understanding of the experiences the users it has led to difficulties in staff setting boundaries with users. Shpresa Programme are working in partnership with the Women's Therapy Centre (for female staff as there are issues which relate to staff's own experience and that of users that needs a women only space in order for staff to feel comfortable about sharing concerns and experiences) for therapeutic support and professional development for staff and volunteers. A similar service has been developed for male staff in the organisation in partnership with Aston Mansfield.

Besa - for me Shpresa has played an important part in my life and is an excellent place which has helped me to grow professionally, build up my confidence, and improve my networking skills. I started to use Shpresa services with my daughter; than I became volunteer and now I am working full time and I am fully qualified. I have given to Shpresa my time and I got back a lot more. And I don't know how to thank them enough.

The organisation has developed new support for staff in partnership with the Women's Therapy Centre and Aston Mansfield and this will need to be regularly reviewed to ensure it is beneficial to staff and volunteers involved.

2. Managing Demand with Organisation Capacity - The organisation's management (staff and committee) are aware of the demands placed upon staff in responding to the needs of the community. Opportunities are eagerly taken up by the organisation to publicise the issues facing young and children refugees and migrant families and this is undoubtedly of enormous benefit. The partnership work with other organisations is also advantageous. The capacity of the organisation to manage demand needs to be considered in the longer term to ensure the organisation remains flexible and responsive to users and has adequate resources and capacity in which to do this.

Recommendations for BBC Children in Need

1. Added Value due to staff Motivation/Commitment - To consider the high levels of motivation and commitment of staff and volunteers in refugee led organisations. Although the capacity of organisations is limited the quality and quantity of service delivery Shpresa Programme provides is outstanding. This would not be possible without high levels of dedication of staff. It is clear that Shpresa Programme provides tremendous value for money to funders, both in the amount of children and young people being supported and the ways in which they maximise the resources they have. They clearly bring considerable added value in

addition to the directly funded work eg. campaigning work, working with policy makers. Much of this is possible due to the commitment of staff and volunteers.

2. The Need for Ethnic Specific Projects - To consider the importance of ethnic specific projects. Shpresa Programme is an ethnic specific organisation, working with Albanian speakers, many of their users do move on to accessing mainstream services and staff are committed to ensuring this happens wherever appropriate. Without the support of Shpresa Programme many families would be considerably more isolated, lacking information and the confidence to take up other services provided.

“it is hard to get the Albanian speaking children involved at any after school clubs or their parent involved, since we have open our doors to Shpresa’ activities the children and their parents are very active and much more engaged in the school life”

Headteacher Gascoigne

The project provides an important stepping stone for its users and bridges the gap for many families between them and statutory services including health, education, training, leisure and employment. Without the work of this organisation many Albanian speaking families would remain isolated and estranged from their wider community and the “host” community in which they are now settling.

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8 . Evaluation compiled by Emma Mortoo :

Over 15 years experience in the voluntary sector including senior management; working within organizations supporting victims of domestic violence and refugees and asylum seekers. Achievements and experience includes wide range of fundraising projects, service development, staff and volunteer management.