

Message from the Director

Latitude Care Network (LCN) is today a very exciting organisation. The very best of LCN are the programmes and services we provide to our clients and our dedicated volunteers, all of whom share our belief in care and compassion for the vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised members of our society.

The majority of LCN's services are delivered by our devoted volunteers; they are our most valuable asset and the life blood of the organisation. Our volunteers work in all of our programmes, including day-to-day organisational management, administration support, community outreach activities and on the board of trustees. Without volunteers LCN would not exist.

Our Work

Over the past four years, from the time of LCN's inception to today, we have seen significant development and growth as a result of our commitment to meeting people's real needs. We have delivered a wide variety of work with our clients, including services in the areas of:

- ▣ health
- ▣ social care and support
- ▣ information, advice and advocacy
- ▣ practical assistance
- ▣ international development
- ▣ research
- ▣ education
- ▣ community buildings

We have implemented the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisation (PQASSO) Quality Assurance Standard, as well as submitting funding applications and carrying out various 'do-it-ourselves' fundraising and development activities.

Micro-finance Mutual Loan Scheme

Recently we developed the Micro-finance Mutual Aid Loan Scheme, an Investment Plan that will enable us generate our own income by lending to our clients and other members. All of our services are thriving.

The Micro-finance strategy is particularly aimed at starting a social enterprise business that would increase our poorer clients' access to Mutual Aid Financial Services to generate their own income so as to improve their livelihood. The scheme also aims to improve LCN's own viability by reducing its current dependency on grants.

International Development

Our programmes in Northern Uganda have been the biggest and are expanding, under the governance and leadership of our affiliate body in the region which works extremely hard to ensure LCN delivers on its promises. Our major programmes in the region have been:

- ▣ humanitarian emergency relief

- 🚩 educational support
- 🚩 psychosocial support
- 🚩 baseline surveys and needs assessments
- 🚩 community centre building projects.

LCN now works at the cutting edge in the region, moving from humanitarian emergency relief to rehabilitation and development programmes, helping to create sustainable livelihoods for people as relative peace and tranquility returns to the region. For example, our Community Centre building project started in Lira district but is now to be extended to our other districts of operation in the region, subject to funds becoming available in the coming years.

Leaders Together Mentoring Programme

In the last year LCN has taken part in the Leaders Together Mentoring Scheme. Our Director has been mentored by the very skilful and experienced Chief Executive of 'Music in Detention.' The scheme was aimed at tapping into the knowledge and skills within the mainstream voluntary sector and sharing this with the directors and managers of refugee community organisations. The learning from the mentoring has been passed onto the other staff members and management committee. So far the programme has made significant impact on LCN's development; it has helped us diagnose our strengths and weaknesses, identify new opportunities, and areas for improvement. We have put together a number of improvement measures, which a year ago were unthinkable. We are beginning to develop a fundraising strategy to acquire funds from mainstream funding bodies, external endorsement or sponsorship as well as improving our 'do-it-ourselves' fundraising activities and strengthening our board and governance.

Work with others

One of LCN's functions is being a resource for other agencies; this has led to working in partnership with many other organisations, both at a local, national and international level. We:

- 🚩 Were appointed to the Steering Committee of Refugee Environmental Action for London (REAL), an organisation supported by the Mayor of London which is the first UK environmental project of its kind for the refugee community.
- 🚩 Became a 'Community Champion' for environmental issues.
- 🚩 Sat on the Reference Consultation Group of the National Older Refugee Programme, working in collaboration with Age Concern England and Refugee Council.
- 🚩 Became a member of the Reference Group for Consultation Forum for Mayor of London Strategy for Refugees with reference to older people.
- 🚩 Became a Founder Member of Climate Change Refugee/Migrant Forum

Last December we were selected by Age Concern England to accompany their Ethnic and Minority Policy Officer to represent England at the **European Conference of 'The Power of Older Refugees'**, in **Amsterdam**. As a result of the European conference, we are now collaborating with seven other European

partners to develop and implement Refugee Intergenerational Programmes which stem from the conference's manifesto.

LCN also sits on the board of a number of voluntary/ community sector organisations and attend forums of many other bodies. We will continue our involvement and participation in these initiatives and seek to extend our collaboration and partnership works in the coming years.

Volunteers

LCN is working hard to streamline our volunteer programmes and develop our recruitment, training and retention processes for volunteers. At LCN many opportunities exist for those who want to help themselves by helping others. In return, our volunteers receive reimbursement of expenses, training for both the volunteer's and LCN's benefit, employment support, emotional and family support and recognition through an annual awards ceremony. We have recently developed our website to enable the wider public to have improved access to information about the organisation, its services and other activities as well as volunteer opportunities.

Funding

We continue to seek funding for all our programmes which have been operated for the past four years, since LCN's inception, without any recurrent funding. Each year we struggle to attract mainstream funding to maintain these very important programmes for our service users. Despite the challenges of finding funds, all our services continue to flourish. We have now diversified our service by investing a small but significant pot of money with the London Rebuilding Society. In return we received four times the amount invested, and are reinvesting this through lending to our clients at affordable interest rates. Profit from the repayment is ploughed back into the organisation to enhance client services.

Every year since inception we have organised 'Do-it-Ourselves' fundraising activities. At the start of this year, with the support of a local faith group and Miss Uganda UK, we staged a very successful Charity Fun-Walk event aimed at raising funds and awareness of the plight of the people of Northern Uganda we support, and walked in solidarity with the entire community of Northern Uganda affected by over two decades of civil war. The event attracted a significant number of people including the very young children and old. The event raised a significant sum of money which will without a doubt make a real difference to our work.

LCN Social and Recreational Activities Group

This is a peer-led self-help group which runs social support workshops through cultural activities like dancing, music and art as well as support for one another. The group has been performing at events, entertaining the general public, and has bookings lined up for them this summer from community groups' as well as private functions and parties. Funds raised from performances are put into our Social Fund and used both to run the group and small support our clients and local community members when they go through bereavements and other social difficulties.

Miss Uganda UK

A beauty pageant organisation in the UK has endorsed LCN as their official Charity to support over the next few years with particular reference to the Children of Northern Uganda. This means they have volunteered to fundraise. The reigning champion Miss Uganda UK 2009 became LCN Ambassador to raise awareness of the voices of vulnerable children in Northern Uganda throughout this year and the years to come. So far, Miss Uganda UK 2009 teams and contestants have participated in the LCN Charity Fun-Walk organised in February 2009 and have collaborated with Club Volt and organised a charity fundraising bash. The biggest event, the grand final for the selection of Miss Uganda UK, took place on 13th June 2009. The event was dedicated to the plight of the children of Northern Uganda affected by war and other destitutions, the motivating force behind their support for LCN. The endorsement of Miss Uganda UK will without a doubt raise LCN's profile and highlight our desire to support the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised members of our society, who are in need of our care.

With thanks

As Chair and Director of LCN, I would like to thank all our supporters, donors and funding bodies, capacity builders and umbrella bodies, local authority and central government departments, our collaborative partners, other community and voluntary sector organisations, faith groups, members of the local communities, individuals and private businesses. Your support has been second to none and without it, LCN would not have achieved what it has achieved to-date.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank our affiliate body in Uganda, our Board of Trustees and all the other volunteers both in the UK and Uganda who, by working together every day, make such a difference to the lives of others.



Grace Adok
Director