

Welcoming A Greener Future 2015-2021 Evaluation Report

by the Centre for Human Ecology

January 2022





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Contributors and Acknowledgments

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation team thanks Tesfu Gessesse, Chiara Puppi, Adil Ibrahim and the rest of the staff of The Welcoming Association for their cooperation in the preparation of this report. We are also grateful to the participants and volunteers who completed surveys and took part in focus groups to assist in the evaluation.

Photographs used throughout were provided by The Welcoming and are used with consent.

List of Abbreviations and Figures

Abbreviations

TW The Welcoming
WAGF Welcoming A Greener Future
CCF Climate Challenge Fund
CHE Centre for Human Ecology
ToR Terms of Reference

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Executive Summary

From 2015 to 2021, Edinburgh-based charity The Welcoming (TW) ran a programme of activities titled 'Welcoming A Greener Future' (WAGF). The programme was funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund (CCF). Funding criteria included significant reductions of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions, as well as other social and environmental benefits to the target community. TW's target community were 'New Scots' – refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants seeking support upon arrival in Edinburgh.

This evaluation's focus is how WAGF successfully (1) meets the needs of its participants, (2) connects social and environmental benefits in holistic ways, and (3) builds participants' capacity and capability. The evaluation is based on a review of project documentation, including all available WAGF reports to the CCF, an online survey of participants and two online focus groups, one with staff members and one with participants, conducted in January 2022.

The evaluators observed that, true to TW's stated ethos and values, WAGF was responsive to the needs of participants around improving their sense of belonging, safety and building inclusive community. Furthermore, many of the different WAGF programmes and activities, while having clearly defined remits and CO₂e reduction targets (usually specified by CCF guide-lines), were broad-ranging and linked up in synergy with projects within the broader umbrella of TW. WAGF had four streams – energy efficiency, waste reduction, food growing and community engagement and education. All streams made an impact on the wellbeing of the participants, as they benefited from English classes, practical advice on everyday living, support against social isolation, education and training towards finding work, and inclusive community spaces.

A particular strength of the programme was its success in integrating social and environmental benefits. Home energy efficiency visits that provided service users with operating knowledge of the Scottish housing and utilities systems, as well as tools to save money. Swap shops and community fridges provided new migrants with household and clothing essentials in a dignified manner, as well as reducing waste. Food growing activities reduced food miles and supported participants in their social integration as well as involving time spent outdoors, improving physical health. There were also unexpected outcomes in terms of nurturing capability and leadership among participants through volunteering opportunities and, in some cases, career progression within TW itself. The programme also raised awareness about climate justice and made links to people's experiences of migration: An important point of engagement were English classes which incorporated learning about climate change and sustainability.

TW is well placed to play a key continuing role in the belonging and wellbeing of New Scots in Edinburgh, and its work may become more critical in the future given likely trends of increased migration, climate change-induced displacement and increased energy and food costs. The evaluators conclude that follow-up activity from WAGF should build from the solid base of current work and concentrate on continuity with an integral way of working, informed by the links between social and environmental justice.

The evaluators' recommendations include:

- Recognition from funders and policymakers for the benefits of TW's holistic and inclusive work, and for the need of flexible and inclusive targets and performance indicators to ensure unintended positive outcomes are identified and documented.
- Development of an integrated food justice approach that links food growing, sustainable food systems and the social and cultural aspects of food.
- More advice and advocacy work on home energy efficiency, and integrating this with wider collaboration and consultation with local and national policymakers and housing providers.
- TW may wish to incorporate some appropriate, trauma-informed monitoring and evaluation on health, belonging and wellbeing among migrant communities.
- Deepen and expand work on climate justice in Scotland, and work with researchers to feed into policies around the vision for a just transition.
- Consideration of increased provision for children and young people, and development of inter-generational practice.

1 Purpose and Scope of the Report

The purpose of the report is to qualitatively evaluate TW's WAGF programme between 2015 and 2021. The programme aimed to raise awareness about climate change and increase engagement in related activity among migrant and refugee communities living in Edinburgh, and to integrate this with TW's ongoing migrant support work.

The evaluation asks whether the organisation's activities are effective primarily in three areas – if WAGF successfully (1) meets the needs of its participants, (2) connects social and environmental benefits and (3) builds participants' capacity and capability. In relation to these questions, participants' primary needs as migrants in Edinburgh were considered - such as health and wellbeing, housing, social and economic integration, food and fuel security, experiences around race and migration and climate justice and responsibility. Staff members and participants were invited to share unexpected project outcomes that can inform the organisation's future work.

As the evaluators did not have a baseline against which to assess all project activities, these were assessed in relation to TW's vision "of a diverse and inclusive Scotland, where everyone feels welcome and can achieve their potential", and to the organisation's mission to "welcome New Scots to Edinburgh, build community and learn together".

While the carbon saving aspect of WAGF's environmental impact was not the main focus of the evaluation, an overview is presented, as it was one of the main requirements for the funding by CCF and was monitored and evaluated internally by TW accordingly.

CCF's stated mission of "community-led organisations in Scotland to tackle climate change by running projects that reduce local carbon emissions", shaped the WAGF project. However, rather than focusing on the CCF's targets itself, our analysis focused on how these relate the TW's wider aims and objectives focused on participants' needs and aspirations.

1.1 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The following evaluation criteria and questions were established in accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToR) and subsequent discussions between TW and the evaluators:

- · How effective were the project activities in meeting the declared outcomes?
- To what extent did the WAGF activities intersect with other social and climate justice issues?
- What were the long-term benefits for service users¹ and the wider community?
- · How effective were the project activities in enabling increased capability for service users?
- Were there any unanticipated outcomes or cases of synergy between outcomes that emerged during the project delivery?

1.2 Evaluation Narrative and Methodology

The evaluation was conducted between December 2021 and January 2022. The evaluation's scope covers all WAGF project activities. Project outcomes and the benefits accrued to the various stakeholders are reviewed and analysed. This includes assessing the degree to which desired - and unanticipated - outcomes have been achieved.

The evaluators used the following data-collection methods to assess the results and outcomes of the work of WAGF:

- 1. Desk review and secondary data-collection analysis of WAGF project documentation, available CCF reports, video and photographic documentation of project activities, and associated project web pages and social media content.
- 2. Self-administered electronic qualitative surveys distributed to project participants in English and Arabic, which received 9 replies (40 individual optional field entries).
- 3. Semi-structured focus group interviews one with WAGF staff members (including sessional staff) and one with participants - conducted on 13th and 18th January 2022 via Zoom online video conferencing.

These data sources were transcribed and analysed using qualitative research methods, and coded according to themes identified in the ToR, as well as identifying outcomes that emerged in the course of the project that were unanticipated. This analysis forms the basis of the findings contained in the evaluation report.

The evaluators used a narrative methodology to interpret the project activity. This approach seeks to develop a theory of change that touches on the fundamental conditions that shape lives, and make visible achievements and intervention effects that may be hard to trace among numerous strands of activity². This allowed the evaluators to identify areas of success in WAGF

¹A note on terminology: the evaluators used the term 'service users' to refer to project participants and beneficiaries of project activity to ensure consistency with internal TW evaluation, while recognising the term does not fully reflect the participatory nature of the project activity.

²van Wessel (2018) [19]

with regards to social justice and wider community benefit.

It would have been desirable to conduct field visits to WAGF project sites and conduct faceto-face interviews, but owing to COVID-19 restrictions that was not possible. As none of the evaluators spoke Arabic, the evaluators relied on TW staff member Adil Ibrahim for translation in the electronic survey and focus groups.

During the course of this report, staff members and participants present in the focus groups are referred to by name. The staff members include Tesfu Gessesse (TW Director), Chiara Puppi (WAGF Programme Manager), Adil Ibrahim (WAGF Senior Programme Coordinator), Robin Shaw (WAGF Project Worker) and Nawras Hussein (WAGF Sessional Worker). The participants, (whose names have been anonymised for privacy reasons), include Osman (male from Syria in 35-44 age bracket), Aisha (female from Syria in 18-24 age bracket), Muhammad (male from Syria in 45-54 age bracket), Iffat (female from Syria in 45-54 age bracket), and Patience (female from Nigeria in 35-44 age bracket). Direct quotes from the focus groups have been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.



A participant working in The Welcoming Sustainable Garden



Staff and volunteers at The Welcoming Sustainable Garden

2 Overview of Programme Outcomes

This chapter examines the main areas of WAGF programme activity and summarises the main project outcomes.

TW was first awarded CCF funding in 2015 to deliver a one-year programme 'Welcoming a Greener Future 2015-2016'. Following the success of WAGF 2015-16, the programme received four additional rounds of CCF funding – continuing as WAGF 2016-17, WAGF 2017-18, WAGF 2018-20 and WAGF 2020-22. At the time of writing (Jan 2022), TW was in receipt of funding from a range of sources to resource a wide range of programmes which had been designed in response to identified needs of participants. Activities which intersected with WAGF are mentioned in this report, even if they were part of other funding streams.

The initial target community for this programme was TW's already existing service user base. TW seeks to provide social and cultural integration support for otherwise marginalised and isolated 'New Scots'. 'New Scots' is an umbrella term used in TW's promotional materials and reports to refer to participants in the organisation's projects and activities. It was clear from speaking to staff members that the term is inclusive of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as other migrants who seek to orient themselves. The organisation has around 1,500 service users and receives around 125 new registrations each month according to the most recent available figures, 2019-20. This number of service users had increased from 1,138 in 2015-16. This reflects increase in international migrants over the last five decades¹ due to new social, political and environmental pressures.

The start of the WAGF programme coincided with the arrival in Edinburgh of a growing number of Syrian families through the UK government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme. This fact, and the strong community ties between Syrian families, contributed to a significant proportion of WAGF participants belonging to the Syrian migrant community. This has led to the formation of a deep bond between WAGF, and TW in general, and the Syrian migrant community.

¹World Migration Report (2022) [21]

The WAGF 2015-16 programme included three main streams:

- Home Energy Efficiency visits, where TW team members would travel to participants' homes and educate them on how to improve their home energy efficiency (for example, by switching to LED lighting, or improving their boiler efficiency). Besides the carbon emissions outcome reported in the CCF reports, this project had many side benefits for participants, including: communicating and liaising with housing providers (usually the Edinburgh City Council for refugees and asylum seekers) and home energy providers, providing a way to save money and alleviate financial precarity and fuel poverty, and enabling participants to integrate and acclimatise to Scotland.
- 2. The Reuse and Recycle programme, which involved multiple events and activities, including a weekly 'Free Shop', multiple Reuse and Recycle Fairs, multiple workshops, and a Learn to Sew project which culminated in the Restyle Fashion Show. The aim of this programme was precipitating a change in behavioural spending habits with a direct effect on carbon emissions. In addition to this, the creation of a secondary economy of recycled goods allowed new migrants to receive household essentials easily and thus also helped alleviate financial precarity. The Welcoming also planned for migrant volunteers to gain retail work experience through the Reuse and Recycle programme, enabling them to develop employment skills.
- 3. **Community Engagement and Education**, which was carried out through multiple workshops, short films and community events.

In 2016, The Welcoming supported a group of volunteers creating a fashion enterprise, which emerged from the Learn to Sew project and the Restyle fashion shows. This became an independent Community Interest Company called the **Remode Collective** in May 2017.

The Home Energy Efficiency programme was expanded in 2018. As well as the ongoing work of home energy efficiency visits (including both initial visits to newly arrived migrant families to help them set up their home energy system, and follow-up visits for ongoing support), they ran several home energy education workshops and hosted one-on-one drop-in energy advice sessions, which were open to everyone in the wider TW community.

The Reuse and Recycle programme was also expanded in 2018 to include home recycling visits, as well as continuing the recycling workshops and swap shops. At the time of writing, the programme included the following activities:

- Living Well Lunch Club
- 'English for Climate Change' Short Course
- Home Energy Efficiency Advice
- Home Recycling Advice
- Home Food Growing and Green Skills
 Workshops
- The Welcoming Sustainable Garden
- Cooking Sessions
- Swap Shops and Community Events
- Community Fridge
- Volunteering opportunities

Initial **Food Growing** workshops in 2015 led to the establishment of a new programme stream. In 2018, The Welcoming Sustainable Garden was set up at Saughton Mains Allotments, and offered a space for participants and volunteers to come together and learn about

gardening and food growing. In addition to CCF funding, TW successfully applied for other small grants, and worked in collaboration with several other organisations (for example receiving tool donations from Saughton Prison and gardening training from Corylush Horticulture) to fully build and establish the garden. Additionally, they ran food growing and cookery workshops and helped participants set up raised beds and vegetable gardens in their homes, facilitated by food growing home visits.

The WAGF project won the **Ashden Award for Green Community 2021** at COP26 in Glasgow.

WAGF continued to deliver its various project streams during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the ongoing operational difficulties. In Figure 2.1, the most relevant milestones and themes in the development of project WAGF in the years 2015 and 2021 are presented as a timeline.



Figure 2.1: WAGF Programme Timeline



WAGF participates in the Stitches for Survival 2021 'mass-craftivism' project for COP26

3 Key Achievements

This chapter primarily evaluates those achievements of the WAGF programme which were not covered in detail in prior internal evaluations to CCF. The evaluators sought to identify intervention effects of the program among several areas of delivery. Due to the complexity of change processes and the unanticipated nature of outcomes, these effects can be hard to measure in standard funder reports.



A WAGF environmental outing - canoeing along the Union Canal

3.1 Responding to the Needs of Participants

"As a newcomer to Scotland or to any country, the first thing you can think about is your safety in the new country or new home. And the other thing is about your wellbeing, which means communicating and being able to learn to interact with your neighbours, with the people around you. And being able to feel confident also, taking your children to school and coming back home safely, and making sure that the children are safe as well. ... And then about upskilling yourself in terms of the skills that you have from back home, and getting employment and maximising your income. These are the aspirations of many or all refugees – I can speak as an ex-refugee myself."

– Tesfu

The programme has:

- >>> Offered opportunities for learning and practising the English language
- Provided practical orientation and support for navigating day-to-day life in Scotland
- Improved participants' wellbeing, integration and sense of belonging
- Supported participants with accessing education and work opportunities
- Screated a place for making friends and a supportive, inclusive community
- >>> Offered volunteering opportunities
- Provided practical support in relation to housing, energy efficiency and waste management

As TW works with 'New Scots', the WAGF programme is responsive to the needs of this specific and often very precarious target community. Participants would typically get involved in TW as soon as they arrived in Edinburgh. Aisha, for instance, mentioned that the organisation was recommended to her by a friend's husband before she arrived in Scotland, and after reading some good reviews online, she followed up on the recommendation and got in touch.

WAGF activities were not static but evolved dynamically. Listening to participants was deemed important, as well as providing opportunities for participants to get together and share

their experiences, for example through the Syrian Forum or the Syrian Women's Group. The programme underwent several revision processes, taking on board the ideas shared in these spaces. As Osman said: *"[Between the] Syrian community and The Welcoming there is a big strong relationship. They always keep moving with us."*

"[WAGF] can adapt to the need of our specific community to integrate and learn about the local system and establish a good and positive life in Edinburgh."

– Chiara

Participants' needs and aspirations are centred not just within the WAGF programme, but in the interlinked wider TW services; through English classes, activities which emphasise employability skills, and befriending. **Opportunities for participants to learn and practice the** **English language** was an important part of TW's programme as it helps participants to meet other needs such as orientation, employment, accommodation, making friends and integrating into the community. For example, Muhammad shared that he would like to find a job which he can do with his limited English language skills, which currently disqualify him from many jobs. Five survey respondents emphasised that learning or improving their ability to communicate in English was important to them. Accessible English classes suited to different levels tended to be the entry point to TW's activities.

Participants highlighted practical orientation and support for navigating day-to-day life in Scotland as particularly valuable to them. Aisha mentioned that TW helped her to navigate Edinburgh and its culture in her daily life, *"like going on the buses and how you do things. Because it is totally different from where we were living"*. After her laptop broke, TW provided her with a replacement so she could study and work online.

Osman shared that, while he initially sought out TW for orientation advice, in the intervening years the organisation has provided him with pastoral support, immigration advice, and assisted him with bringing his family to the UK. In particular, he observed that TW helped him understand what rights he has and what he can speak out about. At the time of writing, Osman was also an active volunteer for TW.

Participants also valued experiencing **improved wellbeing** through their engagement with WAGF. In the survey, three participants reported improved wellbeing as a result of taking part in the programme, and one reported increased confidence. Specifically, one person found an 'action for pain' workshop *"extremely helpful"* for dealing with chronic pain. In the focus group, respondents spoke about enjoying day trips and the Living Well Lunch Club - and that, in general, the WAGF activities were something to look forward to in their week.

Support towards progressing their education and vocational pathways was also important to participants. Four respondents to the survey named support in job hunting, preparing CVs and associated activities as important; three found volunteering beneficial. Aisha, a civil engineering university student who wanted to specialise in environmental engineering, became involved in the WAGF programme recently through the 'English for Climate Change' short course. While she was reasonably confident about her spoken English, Aisha felt that she lacked the technical English writing skills required to excel in her field. She credited TW for providing her direction and support towards achieving her education and career goals.

Other participants joined TW to make friends and to feel part of a supportive, inclusive community. This was reflected in the organisation's name 'The Welcoming'. For example, for Patience, TW was the only group apart from her church community she felt connected to: *"I see Welcoming as a place to meet people, a place to learn about your community."* Among survey respondents, three mentioned that building connections, socialising or being part of a group were beneficial to them. TW promoted inclusivity by celebrating the cultures and languages of participants. Part of the staff team speaks Arabic, which one said helped him to communicate to build trust and learn about the needs and aspirations of Arabic speaking participants. While integration and practical support were foregrounded, TW staff members also wanted migrants in

Edinburgh "to feel part of a community, to not feel isolated, to feel that they are doing something, they are contributing to something and they are having a positive impact" (Chiara).

Offering **volunteering opportunities** was a way for staff members to connect with participants, and to overcome language barriers through shared practical activities. TW ran a multifaceted volunteering programme: recruiting volunteers from outside the organisation where necessary (for example, for language classes or horticulture training), but also recruiting volunteers from within their participant community as much as possible (for example, for home energy efficiency visits or for working in the garden). This had many benefits: it helped TW to overcome the communication barrier (for example, during home energy efficiency visits), and it also enabled TW to provide training and experience. TW, and in particular WAGF, has also provided opportunities for paid sessional work for its volunteers (subject to available funding and sensitive to benefits entitlement issues). 31 people volunteered for WAGF in 2015-16, 26 in 2016-17, 12 in 2017-18, 56 in 2018-20, and 14 in 2020-21.

WAGF provided practical support in relation to housing, energy and domestic waste management. Many participants required regular advice to learn how to use the heating and hot water systems efficiently, and how the recycling system worked, after moving into new accommodation. Many participants who were entitled to a warmer home discount did not know about it, so TW staff helped them access it. Where any of the families that TW staff members visited faced difficulties with their housing, TW staff members raised the issue with the support workers from the council. They also mediated between the tenants and energy supply providers.

3.2 Connecting Environmental and Social Benefits

"I think the strengths of our CCF project come from the strength of The Welcoming itself. I work for two other CCF funded organisations in Edinburgh – similar projects. And just a simple example: if I wanted to run a climate literacy workshop for these projects I worry about, 'Are people going to turn up? Am I going to get enough people for this workshop?' While at The Welcoming people come to us!"

– Adil

The programme has:

- Siven advice towards curbing energy consumption, resulting in important energy savings
- Created opportunities towards improving English language skills while also learning about sustainability, climate change and climate justice
- Improved food security, reduced food miles, helped participants save money and improve their wellbeing and social connections
- Made the learning about climate change and sustainability education intrinsically enjoyable and useful
- Run swap shops, 'upcycling' workshops and a community fridge; preventing waste and giving participants access to free resources such as surplus food and second hand clothing
- Raised awareness about links between climate change and related pressures which caused migration

The Welcoming employed a holistic approach to running their activities, both within and outwith the WAGF programme. Rather than recruiting new participants for climate changerelated activities, TW staff members worked with people who were already participating in other aspects of TW's programme. While accessing the support detailed in section 3.1 was a priority for participants, the programme appeared to stimulate an interest in climate change and the environment. Three survey respondents stated that their interest in or satisfaction with the WAGF programme at least partly arose from a desire to learn more about climate

change and sustainability. There was also a pragmatic interest in changing everyday behaviours. Three respondents mentioned that learning how to save energy was useful for them, and one respondent states that they began recycling their waste after joining the programme.

It was commonplace for participants to attend multiple WAGF activities, as well as other services offered by TW such as befriending, employment and business advice. Responses in the participant focus group reflected this. For example, having been involved with TW since she arrived from Syria about five years ago, Iffat first joined the English classes, then became involved in the environmental activities and benefited from home visits offering energy, recycling and food growing advice. She was also a key person in the Syrian Women's Group.

Staff members found that over the course of the project, they learned to make climate change-related activities relatable to participants and service users, and ensure social as well as environmental benefits. Climate change education workshops were run in tandem with

English language classes. Accordingly, WAGF changed over time – at first, climate change was a prominent aspect of the programme, and participants learned about the causes and impact of climate change, carbon emissions and so on. Over the course of the project, climate change as a topic was more subtly interwoven with other activities. Nonetheless, tangible CO_2e savings continued to be an important part of the project.

Home energy visits contributed the most towards CO_2e emissions savings, which increased substantially in the most recent WAGF funding report, as can be seen in Figure 3.1. The advice participants received to **curb their energy consumption resulted in important energy savings**. These translated to a decrease in the CO_2e emissions required to supply that energy to the households. Waste reduction and food growing programmes were also measured, making a contribution to the total CO_2e savings, as can be seen in Figure 3.2.



Figure 3.1: CO₂e emissions savings due to home energy efficiency visits



Figure 3.2: WAGF CO₂e emissions savings by category

The support given to participants to grow their own food brought with it intersecting environmental and social benefits. Producing fresh produce locally not only reduced food **miles**, it also helped participants to **save some money and improve wellbeing** by *"being outside and making friends with other people"* (Robin).

Food growing has also reconnected people to their heritage, as many participants had grown food in their countries of origin, sometimes even leaving farmsteads behind.

"[In Syria] we used to grow food at home. So when we moved to Edinburgh, we thought that we'd no longer be able to grow food at home, or we almost forgot about growing food at home until we find The Welcoming providing these projects, the food growing programme. And we help the Syrian community or the other users to [grow food], like for example we build a raised bed for them, we give them seeds, we told them how they can grow food at home."

- Nawras

Osman originally got involved with TW when he first moved to Edinburgh. His involvement with WAGF began when staff members carried out a home energy efficiency visit and supported him in understanding his heating system. Staff members soon discovered that he had an interest in food growing, and he got involved in the food grow-

"Now basically he's self-sustaining on fruit and vegetables during the summer, but that also gives him the opportunity to connect with his neighbours. So it definitely accelerated his integration significantly."

– Chiara

ing programme. With the support of the programme, he began to grow food in his garden, which aroused the curiosity of his neighbours. They began sharing information about how to grow vegetables, and new friendships formed. Osman continued to grow food in his garden for

"My small circle from my home got bigger, bigger, and now we know all my neighbours. Together we are sharing vegetables." about four years. He eventually acquired his own allotment, which improved his **food security**. The fact that food growing and gardening activities enabled participants to **build lasting friendships** links up with TW's befriending and social integration goals.

– Osman

Chiara named Osman's journey with WAGF as an example of how the project intersected with several social and economic issues. She also pointed out that **spending more time outdoors** helped participants to adapt to the cold weather.

Another example of combining social and environmental benefits were the **opportunities to improve English language skills while learning about sustainability**. This happened most prominently through the 'English and Climate Change' short course. However, TW staff members also brought conversations about the environment and climate change to existing English classes, and encouraged participants in these English classes to attend WAGF activities.



A WAGF participant and his family in front of their raised vegetable beds

TW involved participants in activities around COP26's 'Green Zone' run by the UK Government in Glasgow. Pledges were made, such as recycling correctly and walking more rather

"We have access to different English language classes. So that's a great opportunity for us to go and speak to a group of 20 plus people. And obviously out of these 20 people you will get a good number interested." than taking the bus (Aisha) and buying a reusable water bottle (Patience). However, participants also **learned about climate justice** by mingling with the global environmental movement present for the occasion. Aisha shared that the concept of climate justice was new to her, and she found it beneficial to learn about it during TW's COP26 activities.

– Adil

Participants found **learning about climate change and environmental topics intrinsically enjoyable and useful**. For Patience, it was something *"to look forward to, because there is something new for you to learn. Even if it is not new, it's bringing it to your awareness."* Aisha appreciated learning about environmental issues and recycling through the 'English for Climate Change' course. As she hoped to pursue an environment and sustainability related vocation, she found it *"very beneficial to know all the different things that how we contribute to the environment, to ourselves, to the standard of living"*.

Social and environmental benefits also intersected where participants were able to **access to free resources such as surplus food and second hand clothing**. At the Living Well Lunch Club, participants could mend, sew and learn about recycling together. At the community fridge, participants were able to 'do their weekly shopping' by obtaining surplus food items. The swap shop allowed participants to share and acquire second hand resources.

"For those that have recently just moved to Edinburgh, it has a huge benefit to come to the Swap Shop, because they have a huge amount of stuff available for free. And in November, I remember, there were a few families that I helped by booking a taxi because they just went and got everything they needed for their new house."

– Chiara

However, there was another way in which climate change was relevant to the lives of participants. Conversations at TW **raised awareness about the links between climate change and related pressures which led to migration**. In TW's conversation cafe, participants who left their countries of origin due to a range of political, social and environmental causes were able to share their stories with one another. While focus group participants would not name climate change a reason for fleeing or migrating, its local impacts, such as drought and flooding, have

had social repercussions which contributed to their displacement. TW staff members named land grabbing, deforestation and activism as examples of this. Some participants had farms in their countries of origin but were forced to leave them behind when they fled.

Nawras believes that climate change and the resulting drought was a cause of dislocation in Syria, and the reason why people began to migrate internally and flee the country even before the Civil War. "I didn't know that was the reason [why] I was displaced in Syria, or that the members of families left Syria even before the Civil War, until I started working with the [Syrian] community and became aware of how climate change was having a big impact on communities even before the war started in Syria."

- Nawras

3.3 Building Leadership and Capability

The programme has:

- Built a culture that nurtures a sense of co-responsibility and leadership
- Enabled participants to step up to become decision-makers within the organisation
- Been a stepping stone towards embarking on vocational pathways in the sustainability field
- Enabled the formation of an independent social enterprise promoting waste reduction and upcycling
- Built capability around social and environmental justice within the staff team

regularly ran surveys and focus groups with participants. Operational decisions, such as the involvement of participants in the decision on TW's logo, indicated a culture of openness and willingness to involve users in decision-making.

TW's ethos of responsiveness to participants' needs led to **participants stepping up to become decision-makers within the organisation**. Some of TW's former participants and volunteers joined the board of directors, or moved on to paid positions within the organisation – for example, Zaria (TW case study) or Nawras.

In particular, **the Welcoming Sustainable Garden**, built and launched in 2018, provided participants with valuable volunteering experience which led some to turn this into a vocation within TW and in other organisations. An 'unexpected outcome' was the extent to which TW nurtured leadership and capability¹through their programmes, thereby **building a culture that nurtures a sense of co-responsibility and leadership**. Throughout the duration of the program, TW was consistent in its effort of involving volunteers and users alike in important decisions.

Figure 3.3, Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 show how staff members



Figure 3.3: Number of focus groups conducted



Figure 3.4: Average attendance of focus groups

¹The evaluator's usage of 'capability' is as per the capability approach (Sen (1993) [16]) which understands people's wellbeing according to their levels of real freedom and ability to do and become that which they substantially value and find meaningful.

Nawras's role within the organisation progressed from being a participant, to taking on more leadership responsibilities as a volunteer, to eventually joining the staff team. He has currently taken on a leadership role at The Welcoming Sustainable Garden.



Figure 3.5: Number of people surveyed

"I worked as a volunteer involved in many activities with Welcoming A Greener Future. I got my paid job [with The Welcoming] in 2018, and my contract ended in 2020 when the lockdown started. Nowadays, I'm working as a sessional worker. I was involved in many activities, including home energy, giving advice to people. My role was home energy worker. But nowadays, I'm working at [the] allotment. and I'm basically involved in the home food growing programme."

- Nawras



Staff member Nawras working in a polytunnel in The Welcoming Sustainable Garden

The WAGF project built capability and resilience through building knowledge in the commu-

nity. Participants passed on new knowledge, such as home energy advice or food growing tips, to their friends and local networks. For example, as previously mentioned, Osman benefited from practical support and advice to grow food and home, and after gaining experience, he then *"[gave] what he learned to the other people"* (Nawras). Equally, the home energy advice provided to individuals and families was passed on informally in their wider networks, spreading the benefits.

"You explained this to one family, and then they are able to pass on the information to their network, whether they are relatives or their neighbours, and so on. You build knowledge within the community, and understanding within the community."

– Chiara

WAGF was a stepping stone towards embarking on vocational pathways in the sustainability field. Amani, Osman's wife, volunteered for TW and was subsequently recruited by a local conservation organisation as a senior project officer doing environmental activities with communities.

TW also enabled the formation of the ReMode Collective, an independent social enterprise promoting waste reduction and

"Amani really is an example of success for a Syrian woman who arrived newly in Edinburgh, got in touch with The Welcoming, found the volunteering opportunity, and then she was helped to actually find employment. And she's still working for that [conservation] organisation."

- Adil (translating for Osman)

upcycling. Through a swap and reuse project, surplus leftover textiles were skillfully 'upcycled', or reused and altered to create a product of higher quality or value than the original. TW explored the idea of founding a social enterprise, but could not support this within the organisation. After a democratic vote by participants on the future of the enterprise in 2017, they decided that it should become an independent entity, and TW worked with the group to advise on a legal structure. Two participants joined the board of the new Community Interest Company that was founded to continue ReMode Collective – now an award-winning social enterprise.

WAGF staff members attended various training sessions that were relevant to supporting participants and to the project activities, **building capability around social and environmental justice within the staff team**. Beyond training sessions with a practical focus such as monitoring, evaluation, energy advice and New Scots' rights and entitlements, some staff members attended more policy-oriented or campaign-related training events. These included, for instance, the 'Energy Action Scotland Forum' in September 2018, 'Good Food Nation Consultation' at Score Scotland in March 2019 and a 'Movements Builders' training course for climate justice in Catalonia in September 2019 (CCF report 2018 - 2020). This shows that staff members were engaging with climate change and sustainability more broadly and deeply than the funding parameters required. Participants and staff members alike then had the opportunity to engage in COP26-related activities and connect to global climate justice movements.

4 Strengths of the Programme

WAGF was successful in meeting CCF targets while also creating numerous tangible and intangible benefits for its participants. This section highlights the programme's strengths, particularly in holistic ways of working, in supporting new leaders, in inspiring vocational pathways in the field of sustainability, and in community-building and wellbeing.

The programme has:

- \gg Connected environmental and social benefits
- Sparked or intensified interest in pursuing careers in the climate change and sustainability field
- >>> Offered opportunities for leadership and decision-making within the organisation
- Screated synergies between the WAGF programme and the employability skills programme
- Sontributed towards building a community that celebrates different cultures in Edinburgh and in which New Scots are valued
- >>> Taken a collaborative approach with other organisations, which has enhanced The Welcoming's impact

Holistic Ways of Working

WAGF built on the intersections between climate change and environmental issues and the lives of participants and service users, **connecting environmental and social benefits**. This has been demonstrated in numerous ways in section 3.2. TW's work intersected across a number of important areas of policy and practice, including: diversity and inclusion, physical and mental health, education and employment, anti-racism, social and environmental justice, community development, support for migrants, and carbon reduction activity. WAGF activities often had an impact on several of these strands simultaneously. For example, activities in the Welcoming Sustainable Garden included English language classes (education, integration, and employability), community gardening (therapeutic benefits of access to green space, carbon reduction, and food security benefits of local organic food production), and social connectivity activities (inclusion and community development).

Sustainability Leadership and Vocational Pathways

A strength, not only of WAGF, but of TW as an organisation was that **opportunities for leadership and decision-making arose within the organisation**. The evaluators discussed how participants were included in decision-making, could take on responsibilities as volunteers, and how some eventually stepped into paid positions within the organisation, or served on the board of directors. Tesfu Gessesse, TW director, drew upon his own experience as a former refugee to better understand the needs of participants. Effective leadership is best understood as a *"process grounded in an internalised sense of shared group membership that leaders create, represent, advance, and embed"* (Haslam & Reicher 2016¹). The leadership style expressed within TW reflected this approach.

Participation in WAGF sparked or intensified interest in pursuing vocational pathways in the climate change and sustainability field, as suggested in section 3.3. Nawras and Amani were examples of former participants whose experience at TW contributed to having chosen a sustainability career. Additionally, Nawras stepped up to contribute to running the WAGF programme. TW's holistic approach means created synergies between the WAGF programme and the employability skills programme. The many different WAGF activities provided spaces for the TW to run volunteering and training schemes. This has given participants specialist experience in the climate change and sustainability field.

A particularly strong point of WAGF was how the programme **made links to climate justice** and to participants' own stories of migration. People in the majority world² are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, despite contributing less to global emissions³, and BAME communities in the West are often disproportionately affected by exposure to illegal

¹Haslam, S.A., Reicher, S.D. (2016) [8]

²Majority World refers to areas in which most of the world's population and landmass are located, but are often economically poorer (Alam (2008) [1])

³Althor, G., Watson, J., Fuller, R. (2016) [2]

levels of air pollution⁴. There are other examples of policies and practices that lead to lowincome and communities of colour dwelling in close proximity to environmentally hazardous sites and industrial facilities. Taken together, this phenomenon has been described as 'environmental racism'⁵. Additionally, Scotland's low birth rate and ageing population is expected to lead to acute labour shortages and a possible need for increased migration⁶. TW is well placed to make a significant contribution to successful integration of migrants and to fostering intercultural exchange that promotes climate justice in Scotland.

"We realised at the very early stages of the project that newcomers bring with them a rich repertoire of experience of food growing, cooking, reusing and recycling as well as a real appetite for sharing their traditions with other people. However, without access to learning opportunities and to the necessary resources, they are limited in their capacity to participate in informal learning groups and take action against climate change."

- WAGF final report 2020

Community-building and wellbeing

Building a community that celebrates different cultures in Edinburgh and in which New Scots are valued is another important strength of the wider TW programme including WAGF. Staff members mentioned that they hope to place a stronger emphasis on exploring and celebrating participants' cultures and heritage in future projects.

Taking a collaborative approach with other organisations enhanced TW's impact beyond the organisation's current remit. For example, TW worked with the Spartans, whose focus is working with young people, to establish a summer programme. Other examples were notable for growing out of WAGF's own activities – such as the establishment of the ReMode Collective as an independent Community Interest Company, and plans to found an independent Syrian community organisation.

WAGF's project activities contributed to the health and wellbeing of service users by **enabling access to healthy food, shared meals, social connectedness, and green space exposure**⁷, each of which are known to improve a wide range of health outcomes. TW's focus on the distinct health and wellbeing needs of refugee and asylum seekers was a distinctive contribution to community health in marginalised populations. Community gardening improves physical and mental health for refugees and new immigrants who may encounter stressors adjusting to a new country and potentially coping with past traumas⁸, and can facilitate the recovery of individual agency and construction of new forms of knowledge and participation⁹.

⁴World Health Organisation (2010) [20]

⁵Climate Reality Project (2021) [3]

⁶Scottish Government (2021) [15]

⁷Twohig-Bennett, C., Jones, A. (2018) [18]

⁸Hartwig, K.A., Mason, M. (2016) [7]

⁹Cumbers A. et al (2018) [4]



Food baskets prepared for the Sustainable Cooking Club (March 2021)

5 What can be Improved

In this section, the evaluators outline what might be improved, based on their own observations, and on a few comments and reflections by staff members.

WAGF, or a programme that builds on its success, could

- Provide more opportunities for participants to directly engage with energy and food policy and climate justice through workshops and consultations
- >>> Offer further support with education and training opportunities
- \gg Set up a community organisation for Syrian Scots.
- \gg Work directly with New Scots under 18 years of age.
- Solution Collaborate with other organisations to address climate justice, poverty, gender, race and other topics

Engaging with Policy Frameworks

While staff members attended training sessions relevant to energy and food policy and climate justice, some would have liked to have the capacity and resources to provide **more opportunities for participants to directly engage with energy and food policy-making and climate justice through workshops and consultations**. Here the organisation was subject to funding constraints. Participating in wider discussions on country-level environmental policies could, furthermore, help New Scots to contextualise climate justice in relation to UK and Scottish politics. Some participants stated they feel free to talk about policy-making in Scotland, after having lived in fear of the repercussions of doing so in their country of origin. Engagement into policy discussions could increase their sense of empowerment and agency. Additionally, BAME people are under-represented in conversations around climate change in Scotland and further work is needed to build solidarity between those working on climate change and those working on issues of migration, housing and inequalities.

"Climate challenge is not properly looked into in terms of policy in terms of commitment [and] resources, and for our organisation to do what we want to do. We always are restricted by what we can do in terms of the funding, in terms of the geographical area."

– Tesfu

Education and Training Opportunities

The desire for **further support with education and more training opportunities** was also reflected in the focus group and the survey responses. Under the CCF guidelines this would have been hard to implement, but it might be a matter for seeking funds in the future. Most requests were for more practical training such as a *"driving course in English, childcare course, nursery assistant course, retail assistant course, sales assistant course, social media marketing course, post office training"* (survey response), but there was also a request for support to apply for a postgraduate degree. There is a much wider need for vocational pathways, retraining and jobs in the field of sustainability and a just transition in Scotland that could follow on from training and volunteering opportunities within TW's programmes. This can have positive knock-on effects in wider society, as work in community projects can prefigure work in economies that are better prepared for current and future impacts of climate change and the biodiversity crisis¹.

Syrian Scots and Community Building

Future plans included **setting up a community organisation for Syrian Scots**. Given that TW has such a strong link to the Syrian Scot community, and has experience in supporting to set up an independent CIC (the ReMode Collective), they are in a strong position to offer

¹Meyerricks, S.; Mackenzie, E. (forthcoming) [11]

similar support to set up an institution that could help the community develop a higher degree of autonomy and defend their interests.

TW's strong link with the Syrian community is a strong basis for building an Arabic-speaking community in Edinburgh. However, the flip side is that **the organisation needs to proactively counteract potential perceptions of exclusivity** in relation to other migrants and cultures. On the staff team, languages spoken while WAGF was running were Italian, French, Spanish, German, Greek, Tigrigna and Farsi. Such diversity on the staff team helps to ensure that different communities are represented.

"Recently we've been talking about establishing a community organisation for the Syrian community, where they manage themselves, they make decisions, they can apply for funding for their own activities. So to empower the community in that way, The Welcoming is looking into that." What external circumstances would allow a programme like WAGF to flourish? Reliable long-term funding that would allow TW to connect their social and environmental programmes would facilitate the kind of holistic approach the organisation strives for. As is common in the voluntary sector, TW receives funding from different sources, each tied to their own set remit and outcomes depending on the funders' priorities – in WAGF's case, the CCF. This puts pressure on the organisa-

– Adil

tion to compartmentalise their activities, and presents a barrier to a more joined-up programme of work. Chiara noted that *"what is needed for the future is like an integral approach"* that would *"consider climate action as one of the many, many elements of both our association and of the needs of our participants."*

Including Young New Scots

While the collaboration with the Spartans was an unexpected positive outcome, it arose from the fact that at the time of writing, TW did not **work directly with New Scots under 18 years of age**, except indirectly by supporting families. Some staff members opined that TW should work with all ages, and in particular engage young people in their programmes. TW's work was developed initially as Adult Education, specifically with regard to English language learning, and as under-18s would access this in school or other educational settings, the focus was on adults. This was recognised as a gap in provision.

Including young people who are 'New Scots' either in the first or second generation in the WAGF project design and activities would have reflected TW's holistic approach by explicitly including people of all ages. There are three aspects in which including young New Scots would advance the objectives of WAGF: First, it would make the project more inclusive, extending it to users engaged in care of children who are often left out; second, it would promote inter-generational cohesion in a community where the pressure to integrate can alienate new generations from their elders, and prevent transmission of shared cultural values; and third,

it can energise environmental projects themselves with the vitality of the new climate-aware generations. Youth climate movements gained traction in recent years, slowly diversifying by placing more emphasis on climate justice and a just transition².

Working Together on Intersectionality

Tesfu noted that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) organisations and White organisations tend to work largely in parallel, but should instead **collaborate in relation to addressing climate justice, poverty, gender, social class, race and other topics**.

"The White working class community, and the BAME community, refugees, need to work together and come together on our commonality, because if you are talking about housing, if you are talking about electricity – it affects refugees, White working class people, poor people, homeless people - we need to bring these people together."

– Tesfu



Staff member Robin preparing seed parcels for the home food growing programme

²Friends of the Earth (2021) [5]

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, WAGF made a substantial contribution to the inclusion and wellbeing of New Scots to Edinburgh, with a positive impact for service users, as well as the wider community and environment. There is a number of activities which the project may wish to review and redesign, and some suggestions for new activities TW may want to offer in the future to strengthen their holistic approach.



A WAGF swap shop

6.1 Conclusions

According to the CCF projects reviewed for this evaluation, all the intended project outcomes were achieved. WAGF successfully delivered the CCF outcomes around CO₂e reductions, and the integral approach taken led to valuable social, environmental and integration benefits. The project made climate change and sustainability relevant to the needs of their core service users and led to an increased sense of belonging and integration from participants. Good partnership working and collaboration with other local statutory and voluntary agencies was also evident. Additionally, a number of unanticipated positive outcomes emerged in the course of the work.

Critical to the project's success were:

- The inclusive and participatory ethos of TW, in which service user's needs and aspirations were taken into consideration.
- A holistic approach which ensured that social and environmental benefits were integrated.
- Building capability and leadership among participants, and more broadly including them in decision-making.

WAGF's demonstrable success means that any legacy projects can draw upon a wealth of experience and organisational learning, as well as work with an existing community that has formed around the project. TW's target community is more in flux than communities of place of the kind that the CCF usually funds, because there is a constant stream of new migrants coming to Edinburgh.

6.2 **Recommendations**

While the programme's success means that the core of the project, if continued, would be very likely to produce continued intersecting social and environmental benefits, some recommendations follow on from the findings.

The first recommendation is aimed at potential funders, however. WAGF encountered some barriers in aiming to implement their "The need for the project to continue is important because there's constantly new arrivals coming to Edinburgh, who will need the support."

– Robin

projects holistically and synergistically. Funding entities, by their very nature, tend to be specific in their aims, with very limited time-bound targets and performance indicators. A degree of **freedom and flexibility for the recipients of grants to apply more holistic approaches** like TW's would be in the interest of promoting best practice and centering intersecting social and environmental benefits.

Food, Fuel Security & Housing

The project's approach to food security was holistic, incorporating food growing, communal meals and cookery workshops, demonstrating an understanding of the critical role of food in belonging and identity. TW may wish to build on this by **developing an integrated food justice approach that links food growing, sustainable food systems, the social and cultural aspects of food**, and equitable access to affordable healthy food using a 'right to food' framework. This work has already commenced with the project's involvement in Nourish Scotland's consultation. This will avoid unintended consequences of surplus food distribution that can impact on the dignity of service users who require access to food in emergency food aid settings¹.

The **advice and advocacy work on home energy efficiency** led both to financial savings for service users and a reduction in fossil fuel use. This activity will remain crucial, particularly after Ofgen's announcement of the domestic energy price cap increase by 54% from April 2022², causing significant increase in heating costs. TW could play a key role in **integrating this advice and advocacy work with wider collaboration and consultation with local and national policymakers**, in line with climate change targets and 'clean heat' proposals, bringing an intersectional lens informed, for example, by the diverse needs of New Scots with regards to acclimatisation and domestic cultural needs.

Health, Belonging & Wellbeing

A continuation of TW's food growing activities, shared meals, community building and green space exposure will strengthen health and wellbeing benefits. TW may wish to incorporate some appropriate monitoring and evaluation exercises in the activities, or work with traumainformed visiting students and researchers on health and wellbeing, to demonstrate these benefits to funders and policymakers. Original research may focus on multiplier effects emerging from the long-term health and wellbeing benefits accruing to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups from this activity. Participatory action research methodologies³ may also be employed, which would have the advantage of participants taking a more active role in the research if they so wish. Such practice can contribute to long-term belonging and integration by grounding participants in a sense of place, identity, responsibility and values⁴.

Inter-generational Practice

There may be some scope for TW to **offer more explicitly inter-generational activities**. Adil emphasised that it was important for the organisation to work with young New Scots if the plans come to fruition to embark on new projects exploring participants' heritage: *"There is an*"

¹Riches, G., Silvasti, T. (2014) [13]

²Ofgem (2022) [14]

³Institute of Development Studies (n.d.) [6]

⁴McIntosh, A. (2008) [10]

obvious need to engage with young people because obviously, [with] heritage, you need to look at all all different generations and how heritage is passed on and so on."

There are numerous ways in which young people could be more actively involved in the programme, should TW want to explore offering some youth-focused programmes - beyond those they helped initiate in collaboration with youth organisations. Building on the work at COP26 with the global climate movement where young climate leaders have had a stronger voice in recent years, TW could explore supporting young New Scots to develop climate leadership skills through WAGF, and offer relevant training opportunities for those who consider seeking vocational pathways and jobs in the field of sustainability and just transition.

Climate and Social Justice

Building on the work undertaken during COP26 and elsewhere, TW could deepen and expand its work on climate justice in Scotland, and work with researchers to feed into policies around the vision for a just transition. Holistic work of the kind TW delivers recognises the complexity of natural, social and cultural systems, and demonstrates an understanding of wider socioe-conomic determinants of poor health, social exclusion and inequalities. In the future, TW may wish to develop a planning horizon that takes into account the predicted increase of climate migrants to Scotland due to sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity⁵. Resource conflicts are likely to accelerate displacement⁶ and anti-immigrant sentiment may rise⁷, which increases the need for the kind of intercultural community-knitting TW nurtures.

⁵IPCC (2021) [9] ⁶Sherbinin, A. de (2020) [17] ⁷Milman, O. (2021) [12]

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Commissioned by:



The Welcoming Association

Written by:



The Centre for Human Ecology www.che.ac.uk