

The Refugee Survival Trust only exists thanks to the generosity, help and support given by people in Scotland— individuals, churches, clubs, companies and schools. It is thanks to you that we are able to prevent so many vulnerable people from being destitute on the streets of Scotland. However, as harsher legislation and a continually ineffective asylum system forces more and more people to rely on RST funding to survive, we need your help more than ever.

Please pass on this newsletter to friends, family and colleagues, and encourage them to support us—ask them to show their support by becoming a member or regular donor.



Refugee Survival Trust
19 Smith's Place
Edinburgh
EH6 8NT
Charity no: SC024328
Phone: 0131 554 6776
Email: info@rst.org.uk

Visit our website:
www.rst.org.uk

Please make a donation:

By the end of this financial year, RST will have made grants of over £85,000 to prevent the destitution of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. RST only has limited funds, and desperately needs to raise more if it is to continue. Without RST, asylum seekers, refugees and their children would be left with no money for food, and often no accommodation. Please make a donation now to help us continue this essential work. Thank you.

Title: Mr / Mrs / Ms / Other

Full Name:

Full address:

Postcode:

- I would like to make a donation of £ and enclose a cheque/postal order payable to the Refugee Survival Trust for this amount.
- I am a UK Taxpayer and would like the Refugee Survival Trust to reclaim tax on this and all donations hereafter *(please tick)*

NB This only applies if you currently pay tax on income or any savings you have. You must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations in the tax year.

Please return to: The Refugee Survival Trust, 19 Smith's Place, Edinburgh, EH6 8NT

Survival

The Newsletter of the Refugee Survival Trust



A difficult year

Welcome to the Spring 2008 Newsletter of the Refugee Survival Trust (RST). As you will see from the articles inside, 2007 has been a challenging year for RST.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of grants needed to prevent the destitution of refugees and asylum seekers. Our fundraising has struggled to keep up. We have only managed to continue providing grants thanks to people like you. With your donations, interest and your concern for the welfare of some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland, we have managed to prevent the destitution of over 1300 refugees and asylum seekers since April 2007.

We have also helped 60 asylum seekers and refugees access education,



employment and training through our "Access to Education & Employment" grants.

A further key achievement of the year has been to develop a strong relationship with Job Centre Plus and continue our partnerships with the Scottish Refugee Council and Positive Action in Housing. These relationships have enabled RST to help tackle the causes of destitution, rather than just put a sticking plaster over the immediate problem.

STOP PRESS! Date for your diary!

RST's AGM and Annual Meeting will be taking place at Glasgow City Chambers at lunchtime on 19th June 2008. Please keep this date free. We will send you further information nearer the time.

Churches support RST

Faith groups are continuing their support of the Refugee Survival Trust. In autumn 2007, the tithing committee of Old St Paul's Church in Edinburgh made a donation of £1200 to fund our grants in and around Edinburgh, particularly those made through our new partnership with the Edinburgh Refugee Centre. Other donations from churches included continued support from the congregation of the Sacred Heart Church in Edinburgh and the Quaker Meeting House. RST also spoke to a group of young people from St Andrew's and St George's Church in Edinburgh and will be speaking at the Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House later this spring.

After such a difficult year, RST needs your church's support more than ever. We would be happy to speak to your congregation about our work, or send you information that you could include in your church newsletter. Please call Juliet at RST if you church is able to help us to fundraise, or if you would like a speaker to visit.

RST informs and influences

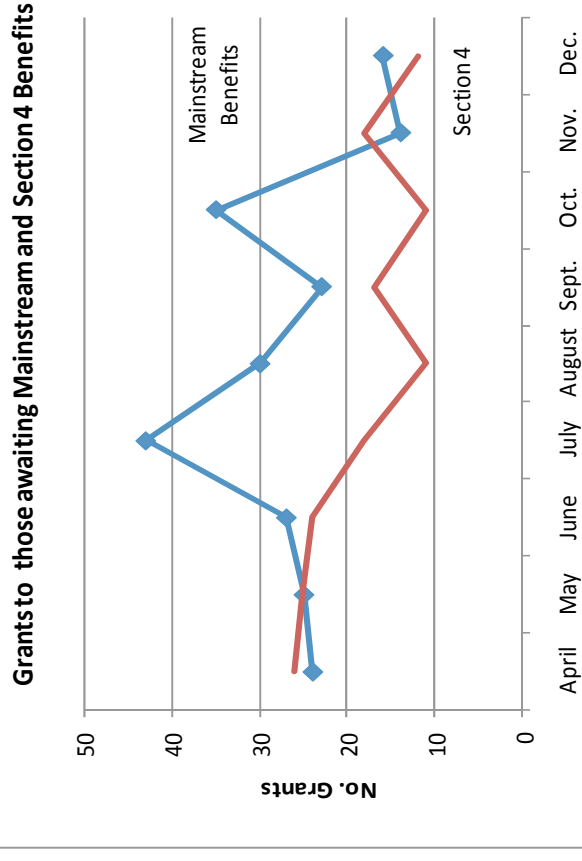
The information about the scale of destitution gathered by RST in the course of its grant-making can be invaluable in influencing policy and public opinion surrounding refugees and asylum seekers. As such, we share information about the numbers of people being made destitute, the reasons for their destitution, and the length of their destitution with a number of public enquiries and with research teams. RST submitted a report to the Independent Asylum Commission (IAC) which will help to inform a fresh, impartial investigation of the asylum system that will go on to make credible recommendations that will restore public confidence in the asylum system whilst providing sanctuary in the UK for those who need it. RST's submission is available on the RST website. RST has also presented to a research team from the Centre for Social Justice to support their research into destitution among asylum seekers and refugees. This

Independent Asylum Commission
CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **CITIZEN** ORGANISING FOUNDATION

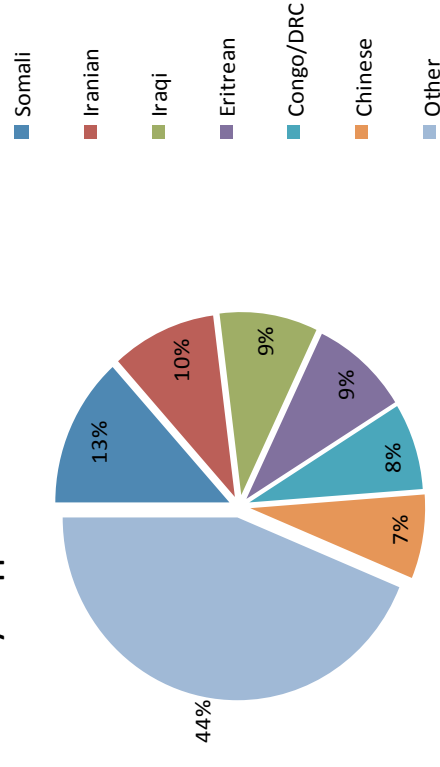
research will be presented to politicians to help inform the debate around deprivation and poverty in the UK.

RST will continue using its experience and expertise to try to influence policy and public opinion. Look at our website (www.rst.org.uk) for our latest articles and submissions.

“Between April and December 2007, RST gave 795 grants valuing £64,416 to destitute asylum seekers and refugees; assisting 985 adults and 417 children.”



Nationality of Applicants



Refugees facing more destitution than ever before...

In the past nine months, RST has seen more destitution than ever before in its 12 year history. Between April and December 2007, RST gave 795 grants valuing £64,416 to destitute asylum seekers and refugees; assisting 985 adults and 417 children.

This is a significant increase on the previous year, when only 536 grants were made for the entire year from April 2006 to March 2007 at a cost of £37,856. There are two main reasons for the increase in destitution (see figure 1):

The first is that asylum cases are being processed more rapidly by BIA through the New Asylum Model (NAM). Legacy cases (those who applied before NAM was introduced) involving families were also being reviewed in a focussed programme that took place from September 2007 to February 2008.

These developments coincided with the reorganisation of Job Centre Plus, which involved many staff changes and the introduction of a new telephone system for new benefit applications.

Delays and errors in processing benefit applications resulted in payments being delayed for up to 9 weeks and refugees (237 grants) suffered greatly as they were left for months with no money for food or other essentials.

The second reason for the increase in destitution is that applications for Section 4 support (for those who have exhausted their appeal rights) continue to be handled slowly with delays of 4-6 weeks being common (162 grants).

The improvement in the time taken to approve applications for Jobseekers Allowance has been the result of productive

meetings between Job Centre Plus, Scottish Refugee Council, BIA and RST which have led to Job Centre Plus forming a special unit of staff who are specifically trained to deal with refugees.

Although there has been some decline in the number of grants to Section 4 applicants, there is still much room for improvement and BIA Scotland are hoping that such decisions may be devolved from Croydon to Glasgow.

The country of origin of those to whom grants have been made continues to be an indicator of the areas of the world in the there is conflict, as shown in Figure 2 below. The 44% of refugees and asylum seekers in the 'other' category originate predominantly from Africa but with significant numbers from the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and the former Soviet Union including

Your Questions Answered...

Why doesn't RST support asylum seekers that have exhausted all rights to appeal?

RST does support those who have exhausted all right to appeal, as long as they have applied or are applying for section 4 support. RST also makes a discretionary payment of £80 to all those at the end of the asylum process to give them 'breathing space' while they assess their options.

RST would not be able to raise the funds needed to indefinitely support all those who have exhausted all rights to appeal and has made a considered judgement to concentrate its support on those within the asylum process. This way, RST can make a real difference to tackling the causes of destitution within the asylum process and make a longer-term difference to the lives of new asylum seekers.

How does RST fund its office, Development Manager and day-to-day running costs?

RST receives a grant from the Big Lottery Fund which is used to fund 75% of the office, Development Manager, volunteer, events and printing costs (including this newsletter!). This funding is complemented by a grant from the Allen Lane Foundation, which funds the remaining 25% of the costs. Access to Employment grants are funded by the Scottish Government's 'Scottish Refugee Integration Fund' (SRIF) and by an anonymous trust funder. This currently means that every £1 donated by the public and by other trusts and foundations is used directly to fund grants that alleviate destitution among asylum seekers.



Send your questions to be answered in our summer newsletter to: Juliet Harris juliet@rst.org.uk or to The Refugee Survival Trust 19 Smith's Place Edinburgh EH6 8NT

In the News

A round-up of the stories that have been hitting the headlines in recent months...

Championship footballer to stay

One high profile asylum case for which there has been a happy outcome is that of the footballer, Al-Hassan Bangura who plays for Watford. At the age of 15 he fled Sierra Leone to Guinea in fear of his life and was trafficked from there to London by a man who wanted to use him in the sex trade. He escaped and was placed in care and was noticed by a Watford scout and joined the club's youth training. Last month his appeal against deportation was turned down but a campaign has led to him being granted a footballer's work permit and he will now have the chance to apply for leave to remain. Bangura had previously told a press conference that "it's not the end of my career if I went back. It's the end of my life."



"It's not the end of my career if I went back. It's the end of my life."

Hassan Bangura

Asylum applications fall

Government figures show that applications for asylum have fallen steadily from 2002 - when there were 84,130 applications to 2007 - when there were only 23,430: Liam Byrne, the Immigration Minister, regards this as "impressive". However, because there is a general perception in some parts of the media that asylum seekers and migrant workers are the same group, much reporting and comment gives the impression that Britain is being swamped by asylum seekers and that ever more stringent measures are required to control them. RST shares the concern of its partner organisations that this reduction in asylum applications does not reflect that the world is a safer place. It reflects the fact that increasingly stringent UK border controls make it far more difficult to flee persecution and are limiting the fundamental right to claim asylum.

Worrying developments for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children fleeing from danger and persecution could be put at even more risk by new Home Office reforms. The new rules give the Border and Immigration Authority the power to forcibly return children back to places where their safety cannot always be guaranteed. Children could be returned to face the same atrocities from which they may have fled without any definite guarantee of their safety.

Previously unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had the right to stay in the UK up until the age of 18. This decision will mean that children who are frightened, alone and may not speak English are being forced through an asylum process which is unsuitable for children.

The Scottish Government has now agreed to waive the tuition fees of young asylum seekers who have been at school in Scotland for at least three years. 15 young asylum seekers took up their places at university in autumn 2007, and are now excelling at their studies, which include subjects as diverse as accountancy, product engineering, law and design.

Scotland leads the way for young people

Scotland is leading the way as young asylum seekers in Scotland can now take up the chance to go to university. This follows a decision by the Scottish government to waive their tuition fees.

Young asylum seekers were previously denied the chance of further education as they were classed as 'international' students, and therefore had to pay the £10,000 a year international fee - utterly out of reach for a young person living off a weekly allowance of just over £30.

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