

Survival



The Newsletter of the Refugee Survival Trust

Our new newsletter design

This newsletter is now smaller in size—yet still as full as ever of project updates and stories of the people supported by the Refugee Survival Trust.

This new size is as a result of the change in postage costs. This smaller newsletter costs less to post, so we can keep our costs to a minimum.

We want as many people to find out about our work as possible. Please contact us if you would like us to send you more copies of this newsletter to send to friends and family, or if you would like us to speak at any forthcoming events.

Thank you.

10th Anniversary Celebrations

On 30th September 2006, the Refugee Survival Trust will be marking its 10th Anniversary with a 10 hour celebration at St John's Church, Edinburgh. With each hour symbolising each year of RST's existence, the event will include a variety of activities from a range of groups and individuals, with music, dance, drama, art and readings.

High profile supporters including Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, Bishop Brian Smith and Sir Tom Farmer will be attending throughout the day to speak of their involvement in RST and their support for our work. Our partner organisations, including Oxfam, the Edinburgh Refugee Centre and the Scottish Refugee Council, will all be hosting various

activities.

With no entry fee, we would like to invite all of our friends and supporters to drop in throughout the event. You are free to pick and choose activities of interest from the programme and participate as you please. We look forward to seeing you there.

RST aims to recruit 100 new members to mark our 10th Anniversary. If you are not already a member, please fill in and return the enclosed membership form. Members form the backbone of the Refugee Survival Trust – showing the public, politicians and the media that people in Scotland will not stand for destitution on our streets.



No Place for a Child

In our last newsletter, we asked our supporters to support the 'No Place for a Child' campaign, calling for an end to the detention of children in immigration detention centres.

Each year over 2000 children and babies are detained and the figure is increasing annually. Detained children are highly susceptible to suffering ill effects from their unnecessary experience and even though there are viable alternatives as

demonstrated in Sweden, Australia and the USA, the practice continues here in the UK.

Since the campaign started, over 13,500 members of the public have supported the campaign by contacting the Home Secretary and lobbying their MPs and MSPs. 137 MPs signed a parliamentary motion backing the campaign.

Thank you all who have supported this campaign so far. We will keep you informed on how it progresses.

More destitution than ever before...



Despite our best efforts, and the support of our many partner organisations, destitution continues to be an increasing problem for refugees and asylum seekers. This time last year, RST supported up to 70 children and adults

each month. In recent months, we have been supporting over 100 people each month – including pregnant women, unaccompanied children, families and those with mental and physical health difficulties.

More destitution than ever before...

In the three months since our last newsletter, RST has provided 164 grants, supporting 194 adults and 133 children, including:

A mother with two young children received an RST grant of £106 after her NASS support was stopped erroneously and she had no money for food. Emergency support tokens from NASS arrived 5 days later.

A grant of £10 was given to an elderly asylum seeker who

had problems walking. This enabled him to buy a bus pass so he could access other services. He was in section 4 accommodation, living off vouchers, so had no money whatsoever for travel.

A 19-year-old pregnant woman was given a grant of £100 to help her buy essentials for the birth of her baby. She was living in section 4 accommodation, surviving on vouchers, and had no cash to buy nappies, cream, blankets or soap for her baby.



Working with NASS

RST is grateful for the interest shown in its work by the Glasgow NASS office. A key recommendation of "What's Going On?" the 2005 Oxfam-funded research project into destitution, was that RST should work more

closely with NASS to prevent procedural causes of destitution. RST and NASS now meet quarterly to discuss current concerns and trends in destitution. As a result, RST has seen a reduction in the proportion of grants

given to families with children, and better access to emergency support tokens. We look forward to continuing to develop this relationship to prevent other incidences of destitution.

Khartoum safe as 'ghost' houses?

A new report last month by the Aegis Trust details the danger faced by hundreds of survivors of the genocidal violence in Darfur, who having fled to the UK are now threatened with removal to Khartoum as unsuccessful asylum seekers. The Trust estimates there are about 1000 people in this situation.

The most recent Home Office position

paper of May states that ordinary non-Arab ethnic Darfuris are not at risk of persecution outside the Darfur states. However the report provides evidence that this is not the case and the 'ghost houses' of the title are in fact anonymous addresses used by the Sudanese security forces as informal prisons, in which there is no regard for human rights.

Right to health care

The Refugee Council has asked the government to re-instate free secondary health care for rejected asylum seekers, a request supported by numerous medical charities, unions and advisory bodies, as more examples of distress and suffering emerge.

In their letter they state that the current legislation was brought in to combat health tourism and there is no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers come here for benefits of any kind.

A reprieve for Shetland resident Sakchai Makao

You will recall that we covered the story in our last newsletter of Sakchai Makao who faced deportation from his Shetland home after he was caught up in the furore over foreign

prisoners who had been released from prison without being deported. We are pleased to note that he has now won his fight to stay following a campaign by the local community.



A greater welcome in Scotland?

A new report published by the Institute for Policy Research says that Scottish public attitudes towards asylum seekers are more tolerant than those of England. However the report also states that the least tolerant groups in Scotland are younger people and those living in Glasgow, where the majority of asylum seekers are housed.

Linked to this notion of welcome, Edinburgh is participating in the project Cities of Refuge, with 50 cities

participating in Europe, North America and Mexico.

The core idea is to offer shelter to a writer and family for a period of 2 years under threat of tyranny. The role will be ambassadorial and will provide great benefit to the city, involving schools, community and business groups. Workshops will be run by writers sourced from the community of refugees and asylum seekers already in Scotland.

Stop deportations to Iraq

A recent conference, organised by a coalition of groups and organisations brought together to stop deportations to Iraq, has called on government to grant protection to all Iraqi asylum seekers, to recognise them as

victims of war and allow them the right to work or to receive a decent level of benefit. There are over 400 Iraqi asylum seekers living in Scotland who will be eager to see if any progress is made.

Other reading...

Also published in recent weeks are: What am I living for: Living on the streets of Leicester (www.leicester.anglican.org/bsr/pdf/Destitution_Report.pdf) by the Leicester Asylum Seekers & Refugees Voluntary Sector Forum

First do no harm: denying healthcare to people whose asylum claims have failed (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/downloads/rc_reports/Health_access_report_jun06.pdf) by the Refugee Council

Shaming Destitution (www.citizensadvice.org.uk/shaming_destitution.pdf) by the Citizens Advice Bureau

Recognising Rights, Recognizing Political Realities (www.jcwi.org.uk/news/RegularisationReport.pdf) by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

Destitute & Desperate the reality for refused asylum seekers in Newcastle

Churches Action against Poverty has been helping City Church Newcastle in their research into the reality and scale of destitution in Tyneside. Their extensive report lays bare the devastating effects of extreme hardship and deprivation on individuals, including those with mental health issues, pregnant women and older people. It also maps out the responses by agencies in the area.

You can access the report at <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/campaigns/LivingGhosts/Destitute%20and%20Desperate.pdf>

Your Questions Answered...

Why can't the Refugee Survival Trust offer support to asylum seekers who have exhausted all rights to appeal?

It is a continual struggle to raise sufficient funding to support all the destitute asylum seekers and refugees within the asylum process. RST is able to offer a limited amount of funding to these individuals whilst our partner agencies try to get NASS, social work or benefit support reinstated. RST does not have the funding to be able to support anyone indefinitely – those outwith the asylum process are unlikely ever to have an entitlement for support again, and therefore RST does not have the resources needed to help them. We are able to support people as they await section 4 support, and offer a one-off 'breathing space' grant of two week's support to those whose asylum claim is unsuccessful.

What influence does the Scottish Executive have over asylum issues?

The Scottish Executive has powers over devolved aspects of asylum issues, including health, education, social work and policing. However, immigration is still a reserved policy, and immigration policy remains the responsibility of the Home Office in Westminster.



Send your questions to be answered in our Winter newsletter to:

Juliet Harris

juliet@rst.org.uk

or to

The Refugee

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*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.***

EVENTS DIARY:

Thursday 27
 September

Scottish Refugee Council conference in Glasgow

"Positive Futures? - current asylum policy and its impact on asylum seekers in Scotland." The all day event will include details of the New Asylum Model which will shortly be implemented in Scotland. Go to www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk to find out more.

Saturday 30
 September

RST 10th Anniversary Event

12 noon to 10 pm. Admission free. 10 hours of contributions to represent the 10 years of our existence. Drop in whenever you want and celebrate with us.
 Venue: St. John's Church Hall (corner of Lothian Road/Princes Street, Edinburgh).

Saturday 7
 October

RST Fundraising "Welcome Ceilidh"
 7pm - 1am

featuring the Robert Fish band with an in-house licensed bar selling a selection of local beers, European organic wines, and fair-trade juices, plus cider, single malt whisky, organic lager, and Engine Shed chocolate brownies...
 Tickets £10, available from the Refugee Survival Trust or Susie's Diner, West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh
 Venue: Rudolf Steiner School Hall, 60 Spylaw Road, Edinburgh