

*RST is a small volunteer-led charity that provides grants to asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland.*

*These grants either alleviate poverty and destitution, or help refugees and asylum seekers to overcome obstacles in accessing educational and employment opportunities.*

*RST uses the information and experience gained from providing these grants to lobby for improved conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.*

Please read this newsletter and pass it on to spread the word about our work.

Keep in touch – sign up for email updates at: [www.rst.org.uk](http://www.rst.org.uk)

## Harsh government cuts threaten more destitution

Drastic funding cuts to Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) may force more people into destitution because **they won't be able to** access the crucial advice and support that SRC currently provide.

From April, the UK Border Agency grant to **SRC's one stop service**, which offers advice to asylum seekers and refugees has been cut by 62%, and funding for their support services for new arrivals has been halved. Their service which helps refugees to settle in Scotland, will also end in September. Similar cuts will also hit the other refugee support agencies across the UK.



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RST is extremely worried that this reduction in support will cause more hardship and force more asylum seekers and refugees into destitution due to delays and errors.

We will be working with SRC to monitor impacts on people seeking asylum and to do everything we can to prevent destitution. Our destitution grants will be even more vital at this difficult time and we will keep members up to date with changes.

# End the 400 mile trek for asylum seekers



We used the public launch of our report, *21 Months Later*, to highlight the plight of people who have to travel unaided from Scotland to South London, to claim asylum.

While launching our joint report, RST and British Red Cross called on the UK Border Agency to allow people to claim asylum in Scotland.

Since 2003 when the Government introduced the requirement for people to travel to England (initially to Liverpool and now to Croydon) to claim asylum, RST has paid £46,500 in grants to enable 1,162 people who would not otherwise have had the

money to travel. We have funded a further 112 people to travel to Liverpool to submit fresh submissions.

## ➔ Take action

Ask your candidates to **support Red Cross's call to allow people to claim asylum in Scotland:**

<http://tinyurl.com/Holyroodaction>

## ➔ Further info

Download the report:  
[www.rst.org.uk/knowledge/research/](http://www.rst.org.uk/knowledge/research/)

## A Cold Welcome

John arrived at the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) offices exhausted, hungry and scared. After a long uncomfortable journey in a truck, he had arrived in the early **hours of the morning and spent a cold frightening night in a phone box. He hadn't had anything to eat or drink and barely spoke a word of English.**

He said he wanted to claim asylum and was struck by fear and incomprehension when **he was told his journey wasn't over, and that he must turn around and get on the night bus to Croydon.**

**'What is Croydon,' he asked, through a translator. 'Is it an internment camp?'** After reassuring him it was not, all SRC could do was give the young man a map to the bus station, a bus ticket, and money for a meal, paid for through an RST grant.

# The people that we help

Since April 2010 RST has provided lifeline support to 637 destitute people, including 36 children. Here are some of their stories...



Both photos ©Becky Duncan

Shahab is an Iranian refugee. Even though he received good news and was granted refugee status, he was then made destitute through delays and errors. The job centre would not process his **application for Job Seeker's Allowance** until his support from UKBA ended and he did not receive his last Emergency Support Tokens because he was not informed of the delivery through an administrative error. We gave him £35 to survive on while these problems were resolved.

Joseph was issued with an ARC card (which is used to collect asylum support )but it had not been loaded into the computer system. When he went to collect his support at the Post Office, he was not able to collect his money and was left with nothing. After resolving the problem with his card, he returned to the post office to find that it had moved and the new post office could not handle his card. RST awarded him £10 for food until the problem was sorted out.

Meriem, a 19-year-old Eritrean refugee was given a grant of £35 to provide her with food while her application for mainstream benefits was processed. She had had to move from UKBA accommodation after she was granted status and this meant that she had to change to a new job centre so approval of her application for **Job Seeker's Allowance** was delayed until she could be interviewed there.

*Names have been changed to protect people's confidentiality*

# Sectioned off

An asylum seeker on Section 4 support describes the weekly grind of getting by on a £35 token



©Becky Duncan

Being an asylum seeker is very difficult. Trying to escape our homelands, we board any moving thing not knowing where it is heading, searching for a peaceful place to survive.

We arrive in a country perhaps not knowing the language. Many do not know which country they are in until they are told.

We are given support

by the Home Office. We feel safe and live on, trying to forget the experiences we have faced. Some were tortured, raped, trafficked, have seen their loved ones killed, and more. Some have lost everything they owned and loved.

We try to look to the future, but the future holds its own struggle.

You have claimed asylum and the decision comes back negative. Maybe you are fully refused, your support is stopped and you become homeless. You look like a lost sheep - you do not know where to go.

Or, if you have a fresh claim and you are lucky, your application is accepted and you qualify for Section 4 support. On

Section 4 you are housed, and given a Visa card called 'Azure' worth £35 a week. But it comes with its own disaster. I'm a Section 4 user and I've seen the ups and downs.

**You can't get money** with the card. You can only use it in specific supermarkets which are miles away from your **home and you don't have** any money to use to travel there. To get from where I live in Scotstoun to the nearest big supermarkets in Anniesland, Govan, St Rollox or Partick, it is a walk of from 30 mins—1 hour 40 mins. This is when you are not carrying anything. Think about when you have done your shopping and have lots of stuff to carry. Living on a low budget means buying cheap **tinned food and it's very** heavy. Think about a mother walking with her bags and her children.

And then there are those who have to attend very important hospital **appointments. You can't walk if you're not well.** Or there are appointments

with lawyers which are very important and you must attend. Vouchers or tokens for travel really are necessary.

## Humiliation

But there is even more to tell about the Azure card. Lots of times when you manage to get to the supermarket, there comes another humiliation. You know that the card is worth £35 and you try to count everything you put in the trolley, but when things have been scanned, the **machine says 'payment denied'. Maybe a product wasn't labelled** properly and has scanned at a higher price. If you have spent one penny too much, it will deny everything. Sometimes it **just doesn't work even** though there is credit—**you don't know why.**

Often, when everything has gone through, the cashier asks you for a letter with your signature, even though the back of the card says **'no signature necessary'.** You stand there like a

criminal waiting to be sentenced. There is a queue of people all looking at you and you feel very small.

**I can't return to my** country – there is war there, I have lost all my **family, I don't have a** home. It is not a safe place. My fresh claim is being considered, sometimes it takes years **and years. It's like** starting all over again, counting the days again from today, maybe four years into the future. Living on Section 4 is better than being homeless. But why does life have to be so hard even somewhere you thought was a safer place?

*Thank you to British Red Cross who allowed us to publish this article by one of their volunteer asylum seeker journalists. A longer version of this article was first published in their newspaper 'New Voices'.*



### Take action

Add your voice to the campaign for cash support to replace the Azure Card

[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/support\\_us/campaign/](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/support_us/campaign/)

## Coping with Destitution

New Oxfam report reveals survival strategies

A new report published by Oxfam in February highlights the lengths that asylum seekers have to go to in order to survive destitution.

Past research by RST is confirmed by *Coping with Destitution's* finding that refused asylum seekers are suffering long periods of destitution rather than returning to their home countries. The new report argues that this indicates that people have been wrongfully denied protection.

The report also highlights the fact that people are not accessing much-

needed services for fear of detection, including women who give birth without medical support. Oxfam are calling for the Government to take action to improve asylum decision-making and to allow asylum seekers to work to support themselves and to ensure people refused asylum are supported until they can return home.

 Further info

Download the report

[www.rst.org.uk/knowledge/research/](http://www.rst.org.uk/knowledge/research/)

## Glasgow Destitution Network

Glasgow Destitution Network is building a website to help groups which support destitute asylum seekers and other migrants in Glasgow.

The network is made up of individuals, churches and community groups which coordinate emergency housing, food,

clothing, cash and other support to homeless and destitute people. They are increasingly concerned about the number of people with no access to government support. You can find out more and get involved through:

[www.destitutionaction.org.uk](http://www.destitutionaction.org.uk)

## Diary Dates

Thurs June 16th: Refugee Night at the Melting Pot  
Join us for a glass of wine **at our members'** networking evening in our lovely shared Edinburgh office space to find out more about our work, meet other members and hear from speakers.

Refugee Week: From June 20th-26th there will be a programme of events celebrating the contribution of refugees to Scotland. Email [michelle@rst.org.uk](mailto:michelle@rst.org.uk) to join our email list and receive the programme by email nearer the time.

Tues Sept 13th AGM  
Our Annual General Meeting will be at Glasgow City Chambers at 2:30pm. Papers will be sent to members in **August**. **Don't forget to** renew your membership before the meeting to ensure you are eligible to vote.

## Could you help to fundraise and spread the word?

RST relies on the support of committed individuals to fund our vital grants. Here are a few simple ideas of things you could do to support us.

**1** Run for RST: A team of men will run the **Glasgow Men's 10K on June 19th to raise funds for RST**. Email [info@rst.org.uk](mailto:info@rst.org.uk) to find out how to join them. We are also looking for women to **run the Glasgow Women's 10K on May 8th**. There are also lots of other runs you can take part in across Scotland including: Edinburgh Marathon- 22 May, Great Scottish Run - Glasgow Sept 3rd, and Loch Ness Marathon— Oct 2nd. Find out more, set up your sponsorship page at [www.justgiving.com/refugeesurvivaltrust](http://www.justgiving.com/refugeesurvivaltrust)

**2** Raise £35 for RST during Refugee Week: Could you take up the challenge of finding a creative way to raise £35 (enough to support one destitute asylum seeker) during refugee week? You **don't have to run to raise money for us!** You could run a cake sale, have a collection in your office, **organise a talk about RST's work in your church, club or group and ask for donations....**

**3** Donate to us while you sell on ebay: eBay for Charity allows you to list an item on eBay and donate 10-100% of your final sale price to us. <http://ebay.co.uk/ebayforcharity/>

**4** Keep in touch: Send [michelle@rst.org.uk](mailto:michelle@rst.org.uk) your email address so we can send you occasional updates on our work between newsletters

**5** Join us: **if you're not a member, or ask a friend** to join us if you are. Sign up online or using the form overleaf.



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**If you've got a fundraising idea** contact us and we will do what we can to support you:

[info@rst.org.uk](mailto:info@rst.org.uk)

0131 243 2660



Refugee Survival Trust  
The Melting Pot  
5 Rose Street  
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Charity no: SCO24328

Phone:  
0131 243 2660  
Email: [info@rst.org.uk](mailto:info@rst.org.uk)

Visit our website:  
[www.rst.org.uk](http://www.rst.org.uk)

*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 harsh legislation and an often ineffective asylum system forces 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. You can also donate online: [www.rst.org.uk](http://www.rst.org.uk)*

## Please make a donation:

Last year, RST made grants of over £50,000 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, The Melting Pot, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PR