

Issue 17

Summer 2011

Survival

The Newsletter of
the Refugee Survival Trust

RST

Refugee
Survival
Trust

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

60 Years of Sanctuary

Celebrate Refugee Week with us

Refugee Week 2011 (June 20th - 26th) marks the 60th Anniversary of the UN Convention on Refugees, the key international legal document which defines who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states.

Join us in marking the occasion at our Refugee Week Networking night on **Thursday June 16th**.

This informal event will be an opportunity to meet RST trustees, staff and volunteers and other supporters over a glass of wine. You will also hear from our speakers including: Eileen Baxendale, Chair, Refugee Survival Trust; John Wilkes, Chief



Executive, Scottish Refugee Council; and Carlos Arrendondo, Chilean Singer, Songwriter and Poet.

Scottish Refugee Council has coordinated a varied and exciting programme of events again this year so there are lots of opportunities to take part in other events across Scotland.

Have a look at the enclosed programme for full details or visit the website below.

Book your place: 6-8pm, Thursday June 16th, The Melting Pot, Edinburgh <http://rstnetworking.eventbrite.com>

Further info: www.refugeeweekscotland.com

2010-11 RST Grants

The people we helped last year thanks to your support

RST supported over 700 people with Destitution or Access to Education and Employment grants in in 2010-11.

Here is an update on those who we were able to help with the support of our members and funders.

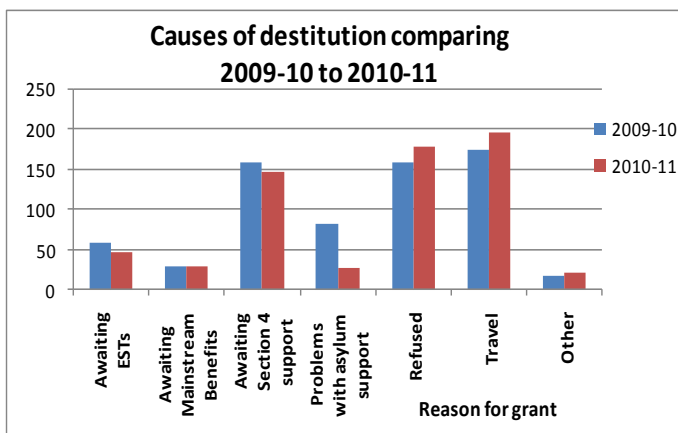
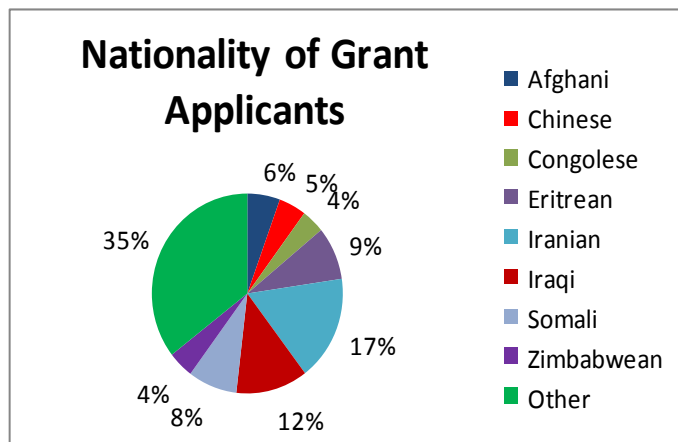
Destitution

RST awarded 644 grants to prevent the destitution of 681 refugees and asylum claimants living in Scotland. All of the people we supported had no other means of supporting themselves. They had come from all over the world, fleeing persecution. The most common countries of origin were Iran, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia, all countries suffering serious repression or violence.

Many of the people we helped also had additional vulnerabilities.

Beneficiaries included:

- 253 people who were homeless
- 11 pregnant women



- 9 new mothers
- 9 unaccompanied minors

The most common reason for destitution grants this year was for travel costs for single people and childless couples seeking asylum

who are required to travel to a screening centre in Croydon to submit their claim for asylum or to Liverpool to submit an appeal on their claim.

196 travel grants totalling £9,178 made up 23 per

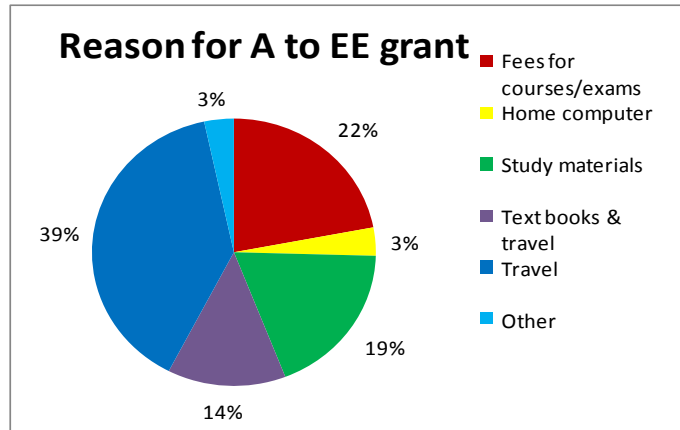
cent of the total awarded in the year. This compares to £7,637 in 2009-10 .

Over the past two years there has been a welcome drop in applications from people having problems with asylum support (e.g. support being stopped erroneously by UKBA or faults with the ARC payment cards). There has also been a small decrease in people awaiting their emergency support tokens (ESTs).

However, the number of refused asylum claimants approaching RST for support continues to increase. This reflects the number of people who are reaching the end of the asylum process and are either gathering evidence for a fresh claim, appealing the decision or are unable to apply for section 4.

Access to Education & Employment

In 2010/11 RST awarded 58 grants with a value of £8,018 to support 36 refugees and 22 people



seeking asylum to access employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

The grants paid for travel to college, course books and equipment, examination costs and

home computers.

Grants for travel costs have become increasingly important as many applicants have no cash available and there is often no other source for this type of grant.

The people who received our grants

John, a refugee from Zimbabwe, was given an Access to Education grant of £150 to help with his travel costs. As part of his college course he had a placement to assist a Glasgow church in improving community outreach. His wife is studying full-time so it was essential that he found funding for the extra cost of travel.

RST gave two Destitution grants of £70 to a **young woman from Eritrea**. She had come to Scotland to join her husband but the marriage broke down and he refused to support her. Because her legal position was very complicated, she needed assistance until she could get see a lawyer about her status.

Ahmed's Story: Forced to live with no support

Refused, left penniless and homeless and then accepted as a refugee

Ahmed* is 27 years old and he arrived in Scotland fleeing persecution in his native Sudan. Instead of being offered sanctuary here, he was refused asylum at every stage of the process and left with no financial support or accommodation.

After two years of terrible uncertainty, and six months of destitution, the Government changed its position and he was finally recognised as a refugee and allowed to remain in Scotland.

"When I got refused by the High Court, they sent me a letter to leave the house and to stop my support.

"It was a hard time. When you've left your country, for example because of some political circumstances or humanitarian issues, when you need help, if you don't get that help it's like the end of the



©Becky Duncan

world for you".

When Ahmed's asylum support was cut off, he had no way of surviving except to rely on charity

and friends. He was grateful for a small RST grant of £40 to buy food when he was penniless. He is also hugely grateful to various friends who

gave him a place to stay, and let him use their shower or washing machine, despite struggling for money themselves:

“I was sharing with friends, a couple of friends. I was with one friend for about two months, but then my friend also had some [asylum] case problems. I decided to leave because having me living with him was affecting his case. I left to go to another friend.”

His friends didn't have spare bedrooms and Jim spent most of the time sleeping on the floor in sleeping bag he picked up from the British Red Cross.

“It was a really, really painful time. Even if I went to college, I couldn't cope with lessons. I was too busy thinking, when the class finishes today who am I going to stay with, or how am I going to contact my friend to get into the house – especially if it was raining. Sometimes I would wait for an hour

for my friend at the door.

“My friends were generous and very caring, but they were also just on vouchers, they didn't have any money. It wasn't enough for him and me, so it was really hard for both of us.”

Ahmed mentions others who helped him get through this time. The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Destiny Church and Positive Action in Housing he says gave him good support, and the bus pass he received through college was vital. He adds that he remains “very grateful” to Ann McLaughlin MSP for her help.

Returning to Sudan was never an option for him, and eventually the UK Government agreed that it would not be safe for him to return there. After six months of destitution

and suffering, the Government changed its policy on non-Arab people from Darfur, who they had previously argued could be returned safely to Sudan. They now agreed that was not the case.

Ahmed was finally allowed to make a fresh asylum claim and, just a few weeks later, he was recognised as a refugee.

“The good thing is, or maybe the strange thing, I don't know how to describe it, is that I was destitute and I've had a lot of difficult things put in my way, but somehow I knew I was going to succeed with my status and I was going to stay in Scotland. Since I've come to Scotland, I feel like I am home, somehow.

“I didn't lose my hope that one day I would get another house or maybe one day my case would be accepted.”

*Name has been changed

Thanks to British Red Cross New Voices team for conducting this interview.

Ending Child Detention

Update on the Coalition Government's commitment to stop detaining families

In December 2010 Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg announced that the detention of children for immigration purposes would end by May 2011.

RST has now learned that UK Border Agency (UKBA) will instead use a new process to encourage families to return home voluntarily.

If families refuse they will be referred to a new Independent Family

Returns Panel who will help UKBA develop individual plans to ensure a family leaves the UK.

Dungavel will no longer be used to detain children and the Yarl's Wood family unit has closed. Families may however be moved to new pre-departure accommodation near Gatwick.

We will keep you updated on developments and how they affect asylum seekers in Scotland.

Scottish Refugee Council suffers budget cuts

In the Spring edition of Survival we reported on the news that Scottish Refugee Council's (SRC) budget from the UK Border Agency had been significantly cut.

Our sister organisation has been through the difficult process of restructuring and sadly has lost some staff through voluntary and compulsory redundancy.

SRC's advice services now operate by appointment only in the afternoons. The office will also be closed to the public on Thursday afternoons.

Further info:
on changes to service



www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Diary Dates

Tuesday Sept 13th

RST AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be at Glasgow City Chambers at 2:30pm. Invitations and papers will be sent to members and supporters in August. Don't forget to renew your membership before the meeting to ensure you are eligible to vote.

Saturday October 29th Fundraising Ceilidh



© Ceilidh Collective

Bring your friends along to the Steiner School in Edinburgh to support RST at our fundraising ceilidh organised by the fabulous Ceilidh Collective. Tickets will be on sale nearer the time at the www.thebooth.co.uk and in The Chocolate Tree Cafe in Edinburgh.

Win Prizes, support RST

Thanks to generous donations from a range of local businesses we are holding a prize draw to raise funds for RST.

Please help us by selling the raffle tickets enclosed with this newsletter. All funds raised will go towards our grant giving programmes.

Why not take them into your workplace, church or other groups during Refugee Week?

We really need help selling the tickets so if you could sell more than one book, please get in touch and we will post you some more.

The prize draw will take place at our fundraising ceilidh on Saturday October 29th. You have until Friday October 21st to sell tickets and post us back the money and ticket stubs.

A huge thank you to all of the generous individuals and organisations who donated these prizes to support RST's work.

The prizes include:

*** 3 nights in a private room for two in Stationmasters Hostel**
Relax in a historic building in an idyllic location at the head of Loch Carron, 15 miles from Skye.
www.stationmastershostel.co.uk

*** Dinner for two at Iglu, Wild, Local & Organic Restaurant**
Enjoy a delicious 3 course meal in this award winning restaurant that prides itself on using ingredients from small, local producers. www.theiglu.com

*** £40 Scotmid voucher for use in any Scotmid, Morning Noon & Night or Semichem store across Scotland** www.scotmid.com

*** Holistic Massage** *relax and improve your health through a one hour massage by Franzisca Pauline Berdat in Glasgow*
www.pressuredrop.org.uk

*** Two Filmhouse tickets**
Take your pick from the varied and exciting programme at Edinburgh's independent cinema.
www.filmhousecinema.com

*** £20 voucher for Indaba African restaurant, Edinburgh—** an eclectic mix from Spain, South America, South Africa and Scotland www.edindaba.com

***3 pairs of tickets to any Ceilidh Collective ceilidh in 2012**
www.ceilidhcollective.org.uk

Terms and conditions apply to each offer— see individual vouchers for details .

Membership

To keep up our vital work we need to increase our membership.

Enclosed with this newsletter you should find a copy of our new membership leaflet. Please help us to recruit more members by:

Joining us: If you are not already a member, please consider joining RST.

Getting a friend join us: mark Refugee Week by getting one other person to join using the membership leaflet enclosed with this mailing.

Getting lots of friends to join us: If you could distribute some of our new leaflets in your workplace, church, community centre, local shop or living room, then please drop us an email and we will post you as many as you can use.





Refugee
Survival
Trust

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Email: info@rst.org.uk

Visit our website:
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

Please make a donation:

Last year, RST made grants of over £40,000 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