Refugee Children and Young People

• New Reports and Funding Opportunities
• A Report on the Refugee Week Seminar: “Why Women Flee?”
• Courses & Training & Let’s Build Up
New Research into the Lack of Childcare Provision for Refugee Women

Last year, RWA initiated research to assess the childcare needs of refugee women and to identify the difficulties faced by them in accessing under-5 childcare provision in London. The research has now been completed and a report will be launched soon.

The aim of the research was to highlight the childcare needs of refugee women and to enable policy makers, funders, early years service providers and researchers as well as those campaigning for assessable childcare, to gain a broad picture of refugee experiences in London. Through this report RWA aims to ensure that the needs of refugee women are being taken into account when childcare service providers develop strategy and allocate resources, and include access to the services for refugees in monitoring.

The qualitative information collected focused on individual refugee mothers and organisations that work with or provide services to refugee parents. A total of 147 individuals and organisations, representing 25 nationalities, participated in the research.

Lack of quality childcare is one of the major barriers for parents, particularly women, attempting to access employment. However, for refugee women, as one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, the situation is far more critical as they are faced with additional barriers including restrictive immigration, laws, housing problems, isolation, and lack of language skills.

The research makes a number of key recommendations which we will take to the Greater London Authority and the London Development Agencies, to ensure they are included in the London Childcare Strategy.

The report will be launched in October 2005.

Transnational Activities

In June and July, RWA visited partner organisations in France and Hungary as part of the Equal funded projects for asylum seekers. A report on these activities will be included in the next edition of Refugee Women’s News.

New Members of Staff

In July we welcomed 2 new members of staff to RWA. Monica Tucker is temporary Education and Training Advisor, and Suzette Nicol is the new Partnership Development Officer. Welcome!

Volunteers

Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the work of RWA. In June this year, three new volunteers joined us: Moza Himid worked as volunteer assistant to the Finance Worker throughout June and July and is leaving as at the end of this month. Ilaben Chauhal also worked without throughout June and July and helped out on the newsletter, the new e-newsletter, and general administrative and project work. Carolyn Reed also joined us in June and will be staying with us for a while longer, working on the newsletter and generally helping out with our information work. We are sad to see Moza and Ilaben leave us after the end of their work placements, and we thank them for their hard and wish them very well for the future!

Refugee Week Event

For Refugee Week 2005, RWA was involved in organising a seminar entitled Why Women Flee: Persecution against Women. The seminar was organised by the Refugee Council, the Refugee Women’s Resource Project at Asylum Aid, Refugee Action, Action for Refugee Women and RWA in partnership. A brief summary of the day is included here on page 15.

New RWA Info Service

In June, we launched a new information service: Our RWA Info-Service E-Newsletter sends out information about jobs, training, conferences and social events and the latest funding news and reports to interested individuals and groups every week or two, depending on the availability of the information. In the short time that we have offered the service, we have already had much positive feedback, and we are happy to be able to expand on our information services in this way.

If you would like to receive our e-newsletter, please email corinna@refugeewomen.org.uk.
Dear Friends,

It has been a very busy period for RWA these past couple of months. As you can see on the right, we have been involved in co-organising a seminar on refugee women and persecution for Refugee Week 2005. Debora Singer of Asylum Aid provides an account of the day here on page 15. We have also been busy with research into the childcare needs of refugee women, travelling abroad as part of our Equal funded project, and launching a new information service which provides regular information on jobs, training and events to individual refugee women and small groups. Last but not least, details of the training courses we have been busy organising can be found on page 18.

Refugee Children and Young People

This month’s feature topic is dedicated to refugee children and young people. We are sorry that we have not been able to be as inclusive on this issue as we would have liked to, but in the summer months it can be hard to get a hold of people! So the voices of young people themselves are under-represented in this issue, although we are glad that we were able to find a few young girls who were more than happy to provide us with some delightful art work for this issue (see page 10)!

On pages 4-5, Jane Dykins, Head of Children at the Refugee Council, gives an overview of of asylum policy and practice for children and young people in the United Kingdom. Her article mentions the detention of children as a particular cause for concern in the UK, and our volunteers Carolyn and Ilaben have decided pursued this issue in more depth. You will find their contributions on children in detention on pages 6 and 7.

On page 8, Constanza Martinez describes the Hosting Scheme at Praxis, which organises a host family for unaccompanied minors in London. Laura (not her real name), one of the participants in the scheme, talks more about her experiences on page 9. On page 11, Sarah Reynolds, Director of Salusbury World, tells us about the organisation’s work with refugee children, and on pages 12 and 13 we explore the situation of young people in the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand.

This issue also includes the usual set sections on funding and grants (pages 16 & 17), training (page 18) and events (page 19).

Evaluation of the Newsletter

The production Refugee Women’s News is a central part of our work to provide the best possible advice to refugee women, to raise awareness of their needs, and to place their issues firmly on the agenda of policy makers. In order to measure the effectiveness of our communications work and improve our information services, we would be very grateful if you would complete and return the enclosed evaluation form to us.

All surveys received by 30 August 2005 will be entered into a prize draw. Prizes for three lucky winners include:

- A copy of the new anthology Silver Throat of the Moon: Writing in Exile together with Jennifer Langer’s earlier book, Crossing the Border: Voices of Refugee and Exiled Women, courtesy of Five Leaves Publications;
- A copy of the new anthology Soft Touch, Refugees Writing in Wales, courtesy of the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group; and
- Free cinema vouchers for two courtesy of Riverside Studios Cinema in Hammersmith.

We thank you in advance for taking part in this important evaluation process!

As always I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue, including our volunteers Carolyn and Ilaben who worked very hard for this issue.

Stay safe this summer,

Corinna Ditscheid
Editor

On the front cover

On the front cover is a picture of a Karen refugee child from Myanmar in Tham Hin, Ratchaburi, Thailand. © UNHCR/K. Singhaseni, June 1998.

See our report on the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand on pages 12 & 13!
Children who are claiming refugee status in the United Kingdom can be with their parents, or arrive unaccompanied - that is, without anyone who can be their caregivers (they are then known as unaccompanied minors). Many of the children who seek refuge here, whether they arrive within their families or unaccompanied, have possibly suffered trauma of war, conflict, rape, separation from their home lives. Many of them have had to travel in horrendous circumstances, to the United Kingdom. Whilst they are here, they must be safe, free from adult worries, and enjoy their lives as children. The United Kingdom has an admirable history of protecting children and giving them opportunities to develop; for refugee children, however, this is sometimes compromised. This article will outline some of emerging trends in policy and practice which are compromising their safety and protection.

The Asylum Position for Children within Families

Children within families have their asylum claim considered with their parents and are accommodated within the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), which means that they may be dispersed to housing, where they are expected to link into education, health and their local communities. There are no statistics on the numbers of children who claim asylum within families.

Children within asylum-seeking families may also be detained in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) where they are held pending removal or for their asylum claim to be fast-tracked. It is extremely concerning that children are held in IRCs, and the Refugee Council is totally opposed to this policy. There are approximately 350 beds for asylum-seeking children and their families within 4 IRCs - Dungavel outside Glasgow, Tinsley House near Gatwick, Oakington in Cambridgeshire and the biggest Centre for families which opened in January of this year - Yarl's Wood which has 160 beds for children and families. Many of the families held in detention are single-parent families with the mother as the carer. The effect on children in detention has been well researched both in the United Kingdom and abroad, and finds that their mental health suffers and they suffer distress (Cole, 2003; Ayote, and Williamson, 2001; McLeish, Cutler and Stancer, 2002).

Despite assurances that they are to be held for the minimum period of time, information from 2003 in a Parliamentary answer stated that children had been held for between 2 and 268 days. Several recent cases have shown clearly that children are not just held pending...
removal: The Ay family for instance were held in Dungavel for 12 months (see page 6), and the Konan family of a mother and her child were detained for 6 months. Statistical information is not available about the number of children held in detention, the length of time they are held, nor the reasons they are held. The lack of this information raises the concerns over the practice of detaining children. Additionally, there are concerns highlighted by recent inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) of Dungavel, Tinsley House and Oakington that child protection procedures are not robust and staff working with children in the Centres are not police checked to the correct level (more information on the HMIP's report can be found in the Reports section on page 14).

Children in detention are further traumatised by the often brutal removal from their homes and schools, transfers between centres, where they are not allowed comfort breaks and witnessing distressing events and incidents, which may involve their parents, within the Centres. On my first visit to a family unit within an IRC, I witnessed an attempt to remove a 7-month pregnant woman, in the presence of her 2-year old daughter. Approximately 5 members of staff were attempting to restrain this traumatised and screaming woman, most of this in front of her child. The attempt was finally abandoned when she fell to the floor, and the health professional present was clear that any further attempts could damage her unborn baby. This practice must stop. Children should not be subjected to this traumatising and upsetting practice and detention for children should end.

The Asylum Position for Unaccompanied Minors

Unaccompanied minors are children below the age of 18 who arrive on their own in the United Kingdom to claim asylum. The Refugee Council has a special Children's Panel of specialist advisors to support these children and help through the asylum process, as well as helping them access Social Services for care, education and health. The United Kingdom is the country in Europe that receives the highest numbers of applications for asylum from unaccompanied minors in Europe. In 2003, the number of new arrivals of unaccompanied children was 3,180, with Austria being second with 2,050 and Switzerland third with 1,330 applications. Within the United Kingdom in 2004, over 8000 unaccompanied minors were receiving support from Social Services. The countries where they were arriving from were Somalia, Angola, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and recently from Iraq and Iran.

Once they have claimed asylum, they are entitled to services from their local Social Services. Under 16s must receive a high degree of provision under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 which means that their Social Services are their corporate parents and must promote the best interests of the child. For those aged 16 and 17, the expectation enshrined within the Hillingdon Judgement in 2003 is that they must also receive Section 20 services, but in reality some Social Services still only offer a lower provision of support under Section 17 of the Children Act - this means that they may be living in large hostels and bed and breakfasts, where they receive a small amount of money for all their food, toiletries and clothing. Young people aged 16 and 17 who are supported by the Refugee Council, and only receive Section 17 support, struggle to budget on monies sometimes as low as £35 a week, and are living in accommodation where there can be poor cooking facilities.

Some of these unaccompanied minors are young women and girls who have been trafficked, and who need a higher level of support and protection from Social Services. If they have managed to escape their traffickers, they are vulnerable to re-trafficking and need ongoing support and contact with caring adults to help them to come to terms with their position and also to possibly give information to the police to protect both themselves and others. At the Refugee Council's Children's Panel, there is a specialist Young Women's Adviser who works with this group of vulnerable young women to support and orientate them to life in the United Kingdom. Within Social Services, there is an increasing awareness of the issues affecting trafficked young people, and the police and social work staff are working together to try and ensure that young people are protected and are safe.

One of the most pressing concerns for those working with 16 and 17 year olds, and sometimes those younger, is that an increasingly high number are being age-disputed. This means that the Home Office records them as being over 18 when they register their asylum claim and they are thus treated as adults until Social Services have completed an age assessment of the young person. This age assessment must follow the Merton Guidance, with clear practice and processes, but it may take some time to take place and in that time the young person may be dispersed by NASS, and often detained. The detention of unaccompanied minors who are age-disputed is extremely concerning; they suffer the same mental health affects as all refugee children but do not have their parents with them to support them and protect them. They are placed with adults with all the ensuing concerns around child protection issues and feel lost and vulnerable. The Refugee Council is clear that no age-disputed young person should be detained whilst they are awaiting an age assessment.

For unaccompanied minors, they are currently allowed to remain in the country until they are 18, although there are changes to trailblaze a programme within the Home Office to return under 18s - possibly starting with returns to Albania. At 18, unaccompanied minors face a very uncertain future, as it seems that more are being removed. They remain young people in need of care and protection and suddenly at 18, for them to be expected to act as adults when they have experienced trauma and fear is concerning. The Refugee Council, along with other voluntary groups working with refugee children, wants to see guardians for all unaccompanied children - an independent child care worker who can act in the best interests of the child, and who can build up a trusting relationship with the child to be able to determine what is best for him or her. This may be that it is best that the young person is re-unified with their parents/carers in another country with the support of the Red Cross Tracing Service. Or it may be that they need ongoing support from Social Services through the Leaving Care Act to remain in the United Kingdom and settle here and invest in their education and training in their new country.

The most important thing is that all children need to be protected and safe. They should not have to suffer further trauma and distress in detention centres, they should not have to worry about returning to a country where they do not know anyone and do not feel safe. We need to make sure that the United Kingdom maintains its long tradition of caring for vulnerable people and surely children need our support most. Refugee children, like all children, need to be able to act and play like children.

Jane Dykins

References


The drawings are from Anice, age 7, from Iran.
The detention and deportation of the Ay Family

The Ay family spent 15 years away from their native Kurdish homeland seeking a safe and tolerant democracy in which to put down roots and to be free from the fear of repression based on their ethnic background. Perhaps the most difficult portion of this journey was the record time - more than a year - that Yurdurgal Ay and her four children spent in Dungavel detention centre in Scotland while their asylum petition was being processed.

Despite the clear danger posed to them as Kurds should they be sent to Turkey and the fact that the children had been settled in English Schools, the family's asylum request was finally turned down by British authorities. Speaking to journalists prior to deportation to Germany, Beriwan said: “Everyone at Dungavel calls it a prison because it’s a prison with fences and barbed wire... where children can’t go outside and have their freedoms and enjoy themselves. Detention centres are very bad for their mental health.”

The suffering of the Ay children in Scotland may have played a part in persuading German officials to grant the family indefinite leave to remain. The decision was apparently reached on humanitarian grounds, based on psychiatric reports on Medya and Newroz which showed that they had been psychologically traumatised during their incarceration at Dungavel. A consequence of the ruling is that it automatically applies to the other Ay children, Dilovan and Beriwan, and their mother, Yurdugal.

Meanwhile, other children are still being held in detention at Dungavel. In a report on a recent inspection of conditions at Dungavel, Anne Owens, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, found an urgent need to ensure professional and appropriate care for detained children, including independent social service assessments of needs and risks and called for the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) to insure that professional care was provided as a matter of urgency. The inspection found evidence that even the internal procedures laid down for detaining children were not being followed. The recommendations of an earlier inspection that had not been achieved - such as access to competent independent legal advice and welfare support, and the provision of sufficient activity - are matters that require, and should get, action by the IND in conjunction with other agencies. Full copies of both reports can be obtained from NCADC, by sending a blank email to ncadc@ncadc.org.uk and putting Subscribe Dungavel/Tynsley in the subject line.

Carolyn Reed

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Beriwan and Newroz Ay’s story

In the following, Beriwan and Newroz, the two oldest Ay children, relate their time in Britain:

“We came to England in 1999 because the Germans wanted us to go back to Turkey and we were scared that we wouldn’t be safe there. All our relatives have escaped to other countries. Kurdish people cannot live freely in Turkey. We aren’t even allowed to keep our Kurdish names but are forced to change them to Turkish names.

We paid a lot of money to hide in the back of a lorry and come to England. We spent a day and a night in the lorry and it was very hard. In the night it was very freezing and in the day it was very hot. We didn’t have enough air to breathe and my little sister and brother nearly died because they couldn’t breathe properly.

We claimed asylum when we arrived in England and have lived here for four years. Three of them have been very good. All our family was together and we were happy in the house we were living in. For the first time in my life we felt safe and that we didn’t need to run away and escape. We forgot about everything that had happened to us before and started to relax. I didn’t know what detention was until we were taken away. But if we are freed from detention I don’t think we’ll be able to forget about it because it has been too hard being locked up. We went to Northfleet School for Girls in Gravesend. We had 100% attendance certificates. We loved school. Our grades were good and we never wanted to miss anything. Everyone accepted us and supported us, the pupils and the teachers. We want to be a doctor (Newroz) and a lawyer (Beriwan) but we have fallen so far behind with our school work since we went into detention that I don’t know if we’ll still be able to follow our dreams.

Last year was not a good year for us. As an asylum seeker our dad had to sign on once a month at the police station to prove that he was not running away anywhere. But last May they arrested him there. We children came home from school and our dad wasn’t there. We were all shocked and crying a lot. [...]”

We didn’t know what to do when they took my dad so we stayed at home for four days and then immigration officials came to take us. We didn’t want to go to school. We were crying and scared. They took us to Gatwick Detention Centre. We stayed there for two weeks. Then one day they knocked on the door at 6am. We didn’t know why. They said we had ten minutes to pack our bags. We asked the officers where we were going but they didn’t say anything. They put us in a van and then they told us we were going to Scotland detention centre. We were all shocked because it’s so far away and we didn’t know why they were taking us to Scotland.

Several times they have taken us to different detention centres. Each time they move us they search us three times a day, they check our clothes, coats, hair, inside our shoes and inside our mouths. When they move us we get very tired and stressed, we get headaches and we can’t sleep. Most of the officers are bad. Every time they check us they check us like animals; we are humans. My hair keeps falling out and I have been diagnosed with depression, the doctor said I think about things a lot. (Newroz) Our little sister wakes in the night crying out: ‘Why are we here, when are we going home’. She cries because she has no one to play with. There is not much to do here. The lessons are an aim at primary school children and we are only allowed outside from 4-5pm. .

There is a yellow line painted on the ground outside and the staff shout at us if we cross it. We don’t know why it’s so important not to cross the yellow line on the ground when we’re surrounded by high fences and barbed wire.”

Reproduced here from: www.humanrights.de/doc_es/countries/kurdistan/story_beriwan_newroz.html
The Prisons and Probations Service had been asked by the Home Office to investigate his death. On the same day there was also another ‘incident of self-harm’ in a detention centre, namely that of an Iraqi man who had managed to swallow a needle in another apparent suicide attempt. He was treated in hospital and has survived.

The two cases, as well as the other five suicides in detention centres in the past 12 months, highlight the terrible effects that detention can have on vulnerable people, especially young people like Ramazan.

Campsfield is run by Global Solution Ltd (GSL), the company which was and is still the subject of a number of Prisons and Probations Service Ombudsman investigations. The company is also facing a complaint in the UK and Australia for human rights violations in Australian detention centres.

According to documents seen by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), suicide prevention is built into performance measures for detention facilities. For companies such as GSL, there is also a financial penalty exacted for each ‘successful suicide’. But obviously neither the IND standards nor the financial disincentives are enough to protect asylum seekers.

It is shameful and sad that youngsters are driven to kill themselves in the United Kingdom, a country which aims to be democratic and respect human rights. Young asylum seekers are hoping to be able to stay in the United Kingdom and make significant contributions; they want to be and feel useful, but the treatment they experience and the uncertainty they face can cause them suffering and despair. If we judge civilised nations by the way they treat those who flee less civilised regimes, then UK has a lot to learn.

Does the government need more deaths in detention centres to address the injustice of detaining asylum seekers? More specifically, the government has to defend not detain young children who flee their country in order to find safety. It is inadmissible that what they find in the UK is another horror. The fact that they were driven to kill themselves in a so-called ‘free country’ puts a new perspective on what they have had to endure and risk being returned to at home.

And what about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child adopted by the UK in 1989? Does the government think that it has fulfilled its obligation simply by allowing young people to stay in the UK until they reach 18? Surely detaining them is not to protect children, and long-term uncertainty over their fate once they reach 18 has severe implications for children’s mental health. The detention of children and young people must stop!

Ilaben Chauhan

On Monday 27 June 2005, Ramazan Camlica, a 19-year old young Kurdish Turk, was found hanged in his room at the detention centre Campsfield House in Oxfordshire. He is thought to have been depressed by the prolonged uncertainty over his future. A long-term health problem, the prospect of being forced into the Turkish army once deported and the recent death of his mother also added to his state of despair.

At this year’s Celebrate Sanctuary Festival, an activity organised by Amnesty International involves children building cages to symbolise and oppose the detention of asylum seekers. Photograph © RWA.
Praxis is a voluntary organisation which aims to help new residents, including refugees and asylum seekers, integrate in the UK, both to their benefit and that of their new community. Praxis helps people who arrive alone and with no knowledge of the English language, to cope with the most basic requirements of daily life such as putting a roof over their heads, the means to buy food until they can work and help in finding a job. The Praxis Hosting Scheme provides support and a host family to some of the most vulnerable new arrivals, unaccompanied children seeking asylum in this country. Constanza Martinez went to Praxis to find out more about the scheme.

Praxis is a voluntary organisation created in 1984. In the words of Vaughan Jones, the current Director, its aim is to support "individual new residents to find their place in the UK and to facilitate the creation of new communities."

The Praxis Hosting Scheme was initially designed to provide temporary accommodation for single adult asylum seekers referred by local authority Social Services departments. But as a main Praxis objective is to cater for the most vulnerable persons, the scheme was expanded to meet the needs of unaccompanied minors and young people aged from 16 to 21. The co-ordinator of the youth project is Rene Mugenzi, who initially worked for the adult scheme. Daniela Uribe, a Mexican economist with a Masters in Rural Development is the Support Worker who looks after the placement of the young clients (aged 16-18) with hosting families. Further support comes from the organisation’s advisors in education, health issues and legal matters.

Daniela has been working with the Hosting Scheme since 2003, helping children from Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Romania. The scheme was expanded to children and young people because the existing social services structures were not able to give appropriate attention to unaccompanied minors. The scheme places such young people with families in London able to give them the home life they are missing, and draws up an individual plan for each of them covering education, health care and personal safety. The aim is to prepare young people for independence.

"This is different from the work of social services", says Daniela. “Praxis does not arrange semi-independent accommodation. This can be good in some instances, but we consider that children of this age (16 to 18), especially given the situation they are in, still need support from a family. We also monitor them and prepare reports to the councils which refer them. It is a quality service", she emphasises.

Praxis is an open place for these young people, and they are always welcome at its offices in Pott Street in Bethnal Green, east London. “They can contact us whenever they need it, or can come to visit us if they want to. They make links with every body here and they do not only contact me but also other people in the office”

The main aim of the project is the children’s personal development. “We aim to help them to adapt themselves to the new country, in which they have arrived because of hardship, such as war or violence of different sorts”.

The first step in the process is to find a suitable host family where the children will live. Families are assessed very carefully to match backgrounds and circumstances. In that way Praxis can be sure that hosting families can give the most appropriate help to the newcomers. There needs to be agreement between families and children, and there are rules and responsibilities to follow on both sides.

A main part of Daniela’s work is to introduce the children to the families, and to explain what each can expect from the other under the scheme. Although the majority of participants in the scheme accept the conditions there are sometimes exceptions. Some young people, for instance, prefer to live with others of their own age, which means they cannot take part in the Hosting Scheme.

Daniela’s second task is to draw up a comprehensive assessment of an individual child’s needs. Then she sits down with them to prepare a jointly written personal development plan and agree a pattern of regular visits and reviews. The aim is to create an appropriate environment in which the child can progress towards living independently when they reach the age of 18 or 21, or until they receive a decision on their immigration status.

For the programme to work Daniela must establish good communication with the youngsters, so they can express how they feel and what they need. She helps them to register at college and with a GP, to find a dentist, to access local libraries or
youth clubs. Introduction to youth clubs is very important to help refugee children meet others of their age, make friends and access other social activities like dancing, music or photography.

Each individual’s development plan or ‘pathway’ is carefully monitored, and regular progress reports are shared with the relevant Social Services department. The majority of the children that have been with the Hosting Scheme also study to improve their English and gain useful qualifications, but some do ask for support to find work in London. These cases can be referred to CONNEXIONS, an organisation which offers supports in this area.

Apart from finding suitable accommodation for unaccompanied children, Praxis also helps children with their legal status, an area where children are very vulnerable. At the age of 18, when they become adults, their legal position also changes and there is a risk that their asylum claim might be refused. This is also the age when Daniela’s role ends and the young people start living independently. However, there have been cases where a young person has continued to live with the hosting family even when they have formally left the scheme because they reached the age of 18.

At the moment Praxis is reviewing the way the Hosting Scheme works. One of their charges has just reached the age of 18 and so left the scheme, which leaves only two young people in host families at the present time. As Daniela observes: “To have only two youngsters in the scheme is not a very positive result when our service has capacity for five children. I have been working with the project for two years now and establishing contracts with local boroughs has not been an easy task. We are currently working with Haringey and Essex, but referrals from Social Services are very limited. There is also a lack of knowledge of what we do among Social Workers. The scheme needs to be promoted more, but this takes time and there are only two of us working on the scheme at present.”

**IT IS HARD, VERY HARD**: BEING A YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKER

Laura* is a 17-year old teenager. She was happy but apprehensive when she arrived in the UK in 2004. Glad to be safe, she was hoping that good things would happen to her here: “When you come from a very poor country like the Congo, you always expect good things from a country in Europe”, she told me. At her request, the interview was conducted mainly in French. We sat together in the sitting room of her home. Ilaben, a French law graduate specialising on human rights and currently a volunteer at RWA, was also present and acted as interpreter. Daniela Uribe, the support worker from the Praxis Hosting Scheme Programme had also joined us. It was not easy to start the interview. Laura was sad because she had just heard that one of her friends had been deported, and she did not know what would happen to him back in his home country. Maybe she was also thinking about her own future, and the uncertainty of her own situation. We sat and listened as Ilaben and Laura talked. Long questions drew only short answers. But at the end, suddenly, everyone was talking in English. I was quite surprised how good her English was. Why did she decide to talk in French? Clearly it wasn’t because her English isn’t good enough. It turns out she simply feels more comfortable speaking French, which is her mother tongue, and we should respect that.

Laura did not choose to come to London, she was sent here to be in safety. When she arrived she was very worried. She did not know where she would sleep at night, she did not speak any English and she did not know anybody. Now she looks strong. But is she really? Of course she is also vulnerable, like any young person who lives without the support of their family would be, but with the added difficulty of having lived through very difficult times.

Laura never speaks to her parents simply because she does not know where they are. She still has friends in the Congo, and sometimes she is able to talk to them. Laura is a bit defensive when she talks, which makes sense given the environment in which she finds herself, claiming asylum in a country which does not always welcome refugees as it should. She has lived through some traumatic experiences but they remain hidden inside her. She is trying to overcome her trauma and she has started to do so. Her Praxis ‘host’ is a south African lady, a 70-year old refugee woman who has been living in Britain for about 30 years now and who understands something of her situation. This lady’s niece also lives in the same house and she and Laura have become friends. Laura is beginning to relax, to live like any teenager in London. She is studying Maths (not her preferred subject) and English. In her spare time, she likes to dance, draw and enjoy nice food. She sometimes goes out to the cinema, which she would love to be able to do more often. She also attends a youth club in Brixton.

Praxis is helping Laura to adjust to her new life. As a vulnerable child the Social Service referred her in April 2004 to join the Hosting Scheme. Daniela tells me that Laura has responded very well to the scheme. She is learning quickly, she enjoys studying, she has many friends. Laura is gaining independence. She has started studying photography. She asks if we would like to see her photographs... They are good! So good in fact that she has already been asked her to make an exhibition.

Constanza Martinez and Ilaben Chauhan

* Laura is not her real name.
Above (left) and top:
Anice, age 7

Middle row and bottom centre:
Emily, age 4 1/2 and 9

Bottom right:
Mathilde, age 5
Each child was asked to think about how they would make a visitor feel welcome in their home. They made decisions about what objects they thought it was important to have around them to feel comfortable and what they would like to share with visitors. They then each decorated a shoe box and filled it with furniture and items such as flags, miniature football posters, platters of food etc. Finally, all the shoe boxes were fitted together to form a block of flats. They continue to admire the fruits of their labours, connected by their joint experience as refugees and young artists working collaboratively.

“In the After School Club is a really good place to have fun. When you just go home it doesn’t feel as good. I feel excited when it’s time to go to the club. It’s nice to get the chance to be creative—it makes you happy. You don’t always get that kind of happiness when you’re just leaving school to go home at 3.30.”

Nivedha, 8, from Sri Lanka.

“Despite unimaginably hard conditions we have appreciated the opportunities which have been offered to us through our primary and secondary schools. I hope to achieve my lifetime dream of becoming a doctor. I may not be able to serve this society at present in an influential way but I believe I can contribute my determination, ambitions and hard work to the community and hope that in the future I can make a change, be it small or large.”

Ardita, 13, from Albania.

SALUSBURY WORLD

SALUSBURY WORLD is a grass roots charity which first opened its doors in 1999. We now have seven staff and around 25 volunteers. We are attached to a large, energetic and diverse primary school in Kilburn and provide support to refugee children and their families through a variety of educational and social support structures and services. The main aim is to promote the integration of refugee families into school and community.

Central to our philosophy is the need to provide a warm, welcoming and relaxed atmosphere where everyone feels valued and at home. Emotional wellbeing is fundamental to self esteem, confidence and the ability to learn and develop.

In our small centre we provide a range of services... from curriculum support for the children, to advice, referral and advocacy for the parents, after school and holiday clubs for the children (and the odd parent!) and community activities such as yoga, family learning, home school liaison and lively coffee mornings for parents. We are lucky enough to have partnerships with Brent CAB who provide specialist advice one morning a week and with the St John’s Wood Adventure Playground whose excellent facilities the children use during the holidays. Through a jointly held grant from Better Play, we have been able to have brilliant Summer holiday programmes with trips to an ice rink, Epping Forest and even Chessington World of Adventures!

In term time specialists supported by a team of volunteers, give creative workshops at the After School Club. The children have a great deal of fun at the club, make new friends, develop new skills, raise their self esteem and improve their English enormously.

Alongside the daily delivery of these services we also feel it is vital to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the facts around immigration and asylum. With this in mind our trainer works with schools, libraries and other organisations, raising awareness of refugee issues and assisting in the development of supportive procedures and practices. Some of our refugee volunteers help in the delivery of this training and one has secured a permanent job in the library service as a result!

Our book, “Home from Home” includes a lot of practical advice and contact information and this will shortly be supplemented by our website: www.salusburyworld.org.uk, which will contain many useful links and downloadable resources.

By helping to unravel practical problems, supporting children in and out of school, listening and responding to parent’s needs and signposting to appropriate training opportunities we hope to contribute to the fulfilment of personal ambitions and the breaking down of barriers for refugees.

Sarah Reynolds

Sarah Reynolds is Director of Salusbury WORLD.

Salusbury WORLD, Salusbury Road, London NW6 6RG

Tel: 020 7372 2244  Fax: 020 7372 2244  Email: mail@salusburyworld.org.uk

Visit the website at www.salusburyworld.org.uk!
The situation of Burmese refugees is unlike that of the many other refugees living all over the world. The present Thai government is sometimes good to the Burmese refugees, even though they have not yet signed the refugee convention. However, in some ways the Thai authorities clearly cause much distress for refugees. Being a refugee is like being a prisoner. The way that the Burmese refugees are made to live in Thailand, and the way they are being treated by the authorities, means their life is like that of a prisoner.

There are about 10 Burmese refugee camps in Thailand, made up of mainly Karen and Karenni people. This is because the only ethnic group to be granted official refugee status in Thailand are the Karen and the Karenni, even though members of other ethnic groups also meet the United Nation’s definition of a refugee. The Burmese people are made up of over 135 different ethnic groups. The refugees come from such different ethnic backgrounds and areas as Mon, Shan, Pa- Ao and Rohija.

The conflict (civil war) in Burma between the military dictatorship (who has held political power since 1962) the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and ethnic groups (so-called ethnic revolutionary groups) has raged on for many decades. As a result, many people have fled their homeland to escape civil war and forced relocation. Most of those fleeing Burma have sought refuge in Thailand. Indeed, Thailand has more Burmese refugees living within its borders than any other neighbouring country. There are currently over 100,000 Burmese people living in refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border.

This refugee population is mostly made up of families with two or three children (although some families have up to five or six children). Normally, families try to stay together as they cross into neighbouring countries, but many have had to see one or even several family members die on the journey to the border because of armed fighting between the SPDC and the ethnic armies, or as a result of the harsh journey. Some refugees have to hide from the SPDC in the jungle, going for days without food, shelter or clothing and with no security or protection whatsoever. It is very hard to survive the flight. Refugees have been known to hide for days, months and even years. Some have fled their homes, but never made it beyond the border. They are then referred to as “internally displaced people (IDP)”. Burma has many IDP camps as well.

In the refugee camps in the host country, most Burmese refugees live in thatched bamboo houses. They have access to water but this is scarce and in many situations they have to do without it. There is also no electricity in the camps, although a generator provides power for a few events and special occasions. They are given rice, India bean (yellow bean), fish paste, salt, oil and chili. These are the main food types that are distributed by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), although there are differences between camps. In the Karenni camps, for instance, people do not get fish-paste.

There are schools, churches, monasteries and clinics in the camps. All of this exists due to the help of foreign NGOs. There are a few shops as well, although most of the items sold have been smuggled across the border and the authorities do not give out licences to sell goods in the camps. The authorities then use this as an excuse to arbitrarily confiscate the people’s property and keep it for themselves.

There are various organizations working on different issues to empower the people in the camps and to build organizational capacity. For example there are youth and women’s groups, and various groups working along ethnic or political lines.

Young people in the camps tend to have access to education in most instances. Most of them can also participate in a range of school and camp activities, such as religious activities or sports. In the Karen and Karenni camps especially, young people are getting English language tuition through volunteers working for the local NGOs. This is very helpful, and allows them to become involved in international and social issues. There are also offices for these NGOs outside of the camps, in nearby cities. Having organizations opening offices in the town helps a few young people get more access to education and skills development than they had in the past. It also means they get to share their experiences with the international community through using the Internet or by attending seminars and trainings. On the other hand, it has to be said that the majority of the young do not have the opportunity to get out of the camps. They have no contacts beyond the camps, and not enough knowledge to get out. This is because their world is so small. They do not know anything beyond the camps because they are not allowed to leave the camps without special passes and permission from the Thai authorities.

The majority of young people do not get enough support beyond school. When they finish high school, they often have no happiness at all. Eventually they lose their hope and dreams because they have nowhere to go and they do not know how to continue their education. A few manage to smuggle themselves out of the camps and then find work in Thai farms or houses. Some work as teachers, or in youth organizations. Some go back to their homeland. But for most people, there is no real place to call their own. There is nothing for them to do with their schooling.

In the Karenni and Karen camps, a limited number of young people can attend further education if they received good results in their high school exams. Some people (both young and adult) also take part in a Distance Education Programme (DEP) sponsored by Australia.

On the whole there are many obstacles for young people living in the refugee camps in Thailand. The people of Burma need a good government and good governance in the nearest future. The young people especially are the future of the Burmese people. They deserve to be given more opportunities from our modern world.

Daw Aye Aye Khaing

Daw Aye Aye Khaing is from the Burmese Women’s Union
Burma or Myanmar?

Myanmar was called Burma in the past. In July 1989, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed the name of the country, along with several other large cities and administrative divisions. The United Nation and many governments subsequently recognised these name changes, although some countries still refer to the country as Burma. While the regime, reconstituted as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in November 1997, claims that it has simply re-instated the original transliterations for the country, its political opponents regard the name change as illegitimate. The opposition movement calls on a boycott of the name ‘Myanmar’ as a form of protest against the regime’s human rights abuses.

Populations Without Refugee Camps

Unlike the Karen and Karenni populations (discussed on page CHECK), people fleeing persecution from Shan state have not been permitted to establish refugee camps in Thailand. As such, they are unable to receive humanitarian relief from the consortium of NGOs that provide material assistance to refugee camps along the border. In July 1996, a group of Shan volunteers in Thailand made an urgent appeal to UNHCR. They drew attention to the persecution by the Burmese army and asked to be able to set up refugee camps. In particular, they wanted to alleviate the suffering of the children, the sick, and elderly grandparents who had been forced across the border. The Thai government continues to deny that refugees from Shan state exist. It is estimated that Shan refugees have been arriving in Thailand at an average rate of at least 1,000 per month for the last few years.

Only recently, the Royal Thai Government pushed over 400 Shan refugees, mostly women and children, at Loi Tai Laeng on the northern Thai border back into the war zones in Burma. The Shan community, via various associations, launched an appeal to the Royal Thai Government to reconsider this order which is against their human rights.

The Gateway Protection Programme

People who are fleeing the country are disseminated in Bangladesh, India and Thailand where they are living in camps. Those countries accept them temporarily but they are reluctant to become indefinite hosts. At the beginning of 2004, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reached an agreement with the ‘Myanmar’ government on preliminary efforts to create conditions that could eventually allow the voluntary return of refugees from camps. But the current situation is not conducive to refugee returns. However the refugees’ situation in the camps is not viable either which is why the UNHCR has sought to involve safe third countries.

The Gateway Protection Programme is a programme run by UNHCR in collaboration with safe third countries in order to provide help to a persecuted population. It is a programme for people who have lived in a refugee camp for long periods of time. The programme organises resettlement in safe country when return to the country of origin is still dangerous.

Sanctuary in the UK?

The UK is offering protection to refugees in the Gateway Protection Programme as part of its obligations as signatory of the Geneva Convention. As such resettlement efforts are a fundamental element of the international protection system for refugees.

As part of the programme, the UK has accepted to resettle 500 refugees in Britain each year, and among them there will also be Burmese refugees. The resettlement is organised with UNHCR and with the cooperation of local authorities in Britain. In May 2005, more than 50 Burmese refugees nominated by UNHCR arrived in the UK, most of them women and children.

Upon arrival in the UK, the Burmese refugees received a briefing and induction course just outside London, after which they were transferred to Sheffield. As a direct result of the hostile political climate surrounding immigration and asylum only two local councils (Sheffield and Bolton) have agreed to be part of the Scheme. At the present time the UK government still has difficulties finding local authorities to take part in the programme. It is currently turning to Scottish local authorities in an attempt to meet the Gateway commitment.

While the programme offers crucial protection to vulnerable groups, the way in which it differentiates strictly between those arriving through the Gateway Scheme and asylum seekers risks increasing the negative stereotyping of asylum seekers. Refugees arriving under the Scheme already have refugee status, they have been through compulsory health screening and they are therefore described as being able to integrate into UK society more directly. The programme is designed to provide a legal route into Britain to stop refugees being driven into the hands of people traffickers. This is a good thing, but people who have had no access to the programme, and who have had to make their own perilous way to the UK, should be treated with the same amount of respect for their human rights and dignity.
Unannounced inspection of Harmondsworth Immigrations Removal Centre

Harmondsworth was closed in July 2004 after serious disturbances sparked by the apparent suicide of one of the detainees. The unannounced visit of Anne Owens, Her Majesties Chief Inspector of Prisons, made in February, 4 months after it reopened, was her first since issuing recommendations following her 2000 inspection. Improving conditions at Harmondsworth are critical as approx. 12,000 detainees pass through each year. Yet this new reports shows that 44 of the recommendations from Owens’ last report have been ignored and a further 24 only partly achieved. For a copy of the full report, email ncade@ncadc.org.uk and in the subject line put, subscribe Harmondsworth.doc

Refugee Women - From Volunteers to Employees

This report by the Working Lives Research Institute and the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit of London Metropolitan University documents the experiences of refugee women as volunteers in a range of organisations and identifies the barriers refugee women face in making the transition from voluntary to paid work as well as the resources they use to overcome them. The report identifies some examples of good organisational practice for voluntary and community groups to support refugee women volunteers and to make the best use of their skills and experience in helping the women find employment. A summary of the recommendations and a copy of the full report are accessible at www.workinglives.org/volunteers.html.

Inspection reports on Detention Removal Centres at Tinsley House and Dungavel

In her reports on Tinsley House and Dungavel, Anne Owens, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, found an urgent need to ensure professional and appropriate care for detained children, including independent social service assessments of needs and risks and called for the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) to ensure that professional care was provided as a matter of urgency. Full copies of both reports can be obtained from NCADC, by sending a blank email to ncade@ncadc.org.uk and putting Subscribe Dungavel/Tynsley in the subject line.

The Forbidden Workforce: Asylum Seekers, the Employment Concession and Access to the UK Labour Market

This report suggests that the July 2002 decision of the Home Office to withdraw the work concession allowing principal asylum applicants to apply for permission to work if, after six months, they had not received an initial decision on their claim has severely affected asylum seekers. The survey of asylum seekers in England and Scotland conducted for this report discounts the Home Office justification for withdrawing the work concession on the ground that they were speeding up the decision-making process and making 80 per cent of initial decisions within six months. The survey suggested that having no right to work undermined their ability to support themselves and encouraged their reliance on the state for accommodation and financial support. Recommendations to the Home Office included allowing asylum seekers and their dependants 16 years or over to work preferably from the first day of their application. Such a policy will not only ensure asylum seekers achieve their full potential and pay something back to the UK but would project a positive image of asylum seekers, which in turn could impact on community cohesion.

For the full copies of the March 2005 report, contact Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ

The Impact of Asylum Seekers on the Glasgow Economy

This COSLA report shows that asylum seekers or contribute to the Glasgow economy by generating new jobs and economic growth in Glasgow. University of Strathclyde economists found that the £40m Home Office benefits given to the 5,000 asylum seekers in Glasgow each year is spent mainly on goods and services. The estimated impact resulted in the creation of nearly 500 jobs and £10m worth of wages, mostly in Glasgow. Asylum seekers can also help plug Scotland’s population shortfall because they tend to be educated and under 34. The report can be downloaded at COSLA website, www.asylumscotland.org.uk.

New Amnesty International Report

Calls on Government to Reveal Annual Asylum Detention Figures

In a new UK report, Seeking Asylum is Not a Crime: Detention of People Who Have Sought Asylum, Amnesty International challenges the UK Government to reveal how many people who have sought asylum are detained each year and for how long. Amnesty suspects that over 25,000 people who have sought asylum in the UK, including women and children, were detained solely under Immigration Act powers in 2004. Detention is in many cases protracted, inappropriate, disproportionate and unlawful, and the organisation calls for an automatic review of the lawfulness of each detention by a court or similar independent body. Alternative non-custodial measures, such as reporting requirements, should always be considered before resorting to detention.

The report shows that an increasing number of asylum-seekers, whose claims are “fast-tracked,” are being detained for the duration of the asylum process. The impact of cuts in publicly-funded legal advice is particularly acute for those in detention who are at the end of the asylum process. The full report is available online at www.amnesty.org.uk/news/press/16177.shtml.

Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Women: Refugee Council Conference Report

Women asylum seeker and refugees have many special needs, and the challenges they face are varied and complex. This report aims to highlight some of the issues and barriers faced by female refugees and asylum seekers as identified at the recent Refugee Council conference. Download the conference report at: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/refugeecouncil/training/conference_details.htm

Tackling Domestic Violence, Home Office Development and Practice Report

The Home Office has produced two reports on how to tackle domestic violence. These reports offer guidance for practitioners on how to provide support for survivors of domestic violence, including people from black and minority ethnic communities. For more information visit www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence49.htm
Why Women Flee: Persecution against women was the title of a seminar held during Refugee Week on Thursday 23rd June 2005 at AMICUS office in central London to highlight the persecution specifically faced by women in their country of origin and the difficulties they experience in the UK.

The theme for this year’s Refugee Week was persecution. The traditional image of a refugee is that of a male activist, persecuted for his involvement in protests against the State. Women’s political activities often take a different form, including giving shelter or food to those in hiding, or they suffer gender-specific forms of harm or are punished in gender-specific ways. Unfortunately, the result is that women who have suffered cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment because of their gender can be denied the protection offered by refugee status.

The seminar was run by a partnership of organisations: the Refugee Council, the Refugee Women’s Resource Project at Asylum Aid, the Refugee Women’s Association, Refugee Action and Action for Refugee Women. It was attended by about 70 people and chaired by Simin Azimi, Director of the Refugee Women’s Association.

The seminar started with a film “Women’s rights are human rights & women’s rights are universal” introduced by Gona Saeed on behalf of the Kurdistan Refugee Women’s Organisation. This shocked the audience through its showing of the horrific domestic violence women experience (often in the form of being burnt) in Iraq. This was followed by a presentation by Claudia Hasancbegovic, Domestic Violence Coordinator for the Latin American Women’s Rights Service who spoke more broadly about the types of persecution which women face. Gloria Ajok then read a moving poem entitled “My Long Journey” written by a group from African Women’s Care.

In one of her first public appearances in the UK, Bemma Donkoh, the new UNHCR Representative to the UK, spoke about the vulnerability of women who flee persecution and the international protection available to them.

Jeremy Oppenheim, Acting Senior Director, Asylum Support Casework and Appeals, at the Home Office referred to the Gender Guidelines adopted by the Home Office in March 2004 but said there is still a gap between what is published and what is done. He stressed the importance of sensitivity to women’s needs and their situation. Debora Singer, Coordinator of the Refugee Women’s Resource Project at Asylum Aid continued this theme of women’s experience once they reached the UK by talking about the difficulties with the new asylum legislation and procedures such as the fast track which now included women and the lack of legal advice available. Finally, Anna Reisenberger, Director of Development and Policy at the Refugee Council spoke of the need for country of origin information to reflect women’s experiences. There followed a lively discussion and the seminar finished with a dance performance by a Rwandan women’s group.

The partnership were very pleased that as a result of the seminar Jeremy Oppenheim agreed to host two meetings at the Home Office, one regarding female genital mutilation (FGM) and asylum, the other regarding a wider range of asylum issues relevant to women, to take further the points raised at the seminar.

A report of the seminar will be available on the partnership agencies’ websites later in September.

Debora Singer

Debora Singer is Coordinator of the Refugee Women’s Resource Project at Asylum Aid.

To the left, above: Anna Reisenberger of the Refugee Council was one of the speakers.

Centre: Dancers from a Rwandan women’s group at the event.

To the right:: Debora Singer speaking at the event.
Funding & Grants

CARA ASSISTING REFUGEE ACADEMICS

CARA aims to assist academics forced to flee their home countries because of political, religious, racial or ethnic discrimination by providing grants to further their educational or vocational goals. Grants may cover expenses such as course, exam, or bench fees; associated research, travel and equipment costs; conference costs; childcare expenses; and in limited cases maintenance. Applicants must have been held a paid academic post such as lecturer or researcher in the country of origin or other country (except UK) and hold status as UK Refugee Status, Leave to Remain (Indefinite, Exceptional or Discretionary) or Humanitarian Protection. Asylum seeker may be assisted in exceptional circumstances.

The Allocation Committee’s next meeting is the 1st of September 2005. Applicants will be notified of the decision of the Committee by the week of 19th September 2005.

To learn more or request an application pack please contact Brooke Sperry, Programme Assistant, on 020 7021 0884 or sperry.cara@lsbu.ac.uk, or Marielke Stroink, Programme Officer on 020 7021 0884 or schreiber.cara@lsbu.ac.uk.

Funding & Grants

FUTUREBUILDERS

FutureBuilders is a £125M Home-Office backed investment fund for developing the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to deliver public services. FutureBuilders aims to invest in the five public service delivery areas of: Community cohesion; Crime; Education and learning; Health and social care; Support for children and young people. Application form available at www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk

Application window will open on Wednesday 1 June 2005 and will close on Friday 30 September 2005.

Contact: Email: info@futurebuilders-england.org.uk or Tel: 0191 261 5200.

Telephone line is open weekdays between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm (10:00 am to 12 noon only on Thursdays).

PAUL HAMLYN FOUNDATION - REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER YOUNG PEOPLE

This Fund was set up in 2003 to encourage projects which help vulnerable 11-18 year olds become integrated into mainstream provision. The Fund also aims to build capacity within organisations that represent these young people and to support the development of best practice wherever possible. Funding will be available until April 2006. The Foundation encourages applications which:

- focus on the needs of unaccompanied young people in imaginative and practical ways, particularly at the transition moments of 16+ and 18;
- enable Refugee Community Organisations to work in effective partnerships with other organisations on behalf of refugee and asylum seeker young people through the arts, learning and extra curricular activities;
- draw public attention to the need to involve young refugees in the mainstream community;
- offer new approaches to joined up service delivery; and
- are time limited, up to three years; and show strong evidence of consultation with, and involvement of, the young people themselves.

Next closing date: 1 December 2005 but you must contact Foundation with an outline proposal no later than 17 October 2005. To find out if you are eligible to apply and how to make an application, please visit the website, www.phf.org.uk, or contact Foundation on 020 7227 3500.

Funding & Grants

LOCAL NETWORK FUND FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Local Network Fund for Children and Young People provides grants to small, local community groups in England to support vulnerable children and young people. This Fund is currently undersubscribed in West Yorkshire, so this is a good chance to apply for some money for a project you might have in mind.

The next deadline is 18 March 2006

Contact the Local Network Fund National Call Centre on 0845 113 0161 (RNID Typetalk 18001 0845 113 0161) for an application pack and details of support on completing the form. Return the form to your Local Network Fund Area Office, as stated on the back page of the form.

ABBEY NATIONAL

The Trustees are committed to supporting local communities and favour smaller charities, local charities or local appeals from national charities. Support will be focused on education and training and local regeneration projects which encourage cross community partnerships, as well as financial advice which helps disadvantaged people manage their money. Support will be focused in Camden, Glasgow, Bradford, Milton Keynes, Sheffield, Northern Ireland, and Teesside where Abbey National has a Community Partnership Group.

Apply by writing a letter to PO Box 911, Milton Keynes, MK9 1AD, email communitypartnership@abbey.com or visit Abbey National’s website at www.abbeynational.com/home/comm_inv/comm_inv-trust.htm

ALEC DICKSON TRUST

This trust has awards of £250 to people under 30 to kickstart volunteering projects which will improve the lives of marginalised people.

Contact thealecdicksontrust@talk21.com or visit www.alecdicksontrust.org.uk.
Funding & Grants

ALLEN LANE FOUNDATION

This charitable Trust makes small grants to voluntary not-for-profit organisations (which need not be registered charities, provided the work carried out is charitable) which are small and where the work benefits groups of people who are unpopular in UK society today: Black & minority ethnic communities; Refugees & Asylum seekers; Offenders & ex-offenders; Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people; People with mental health problems; People experiencing violence and abuse; Older people; Travellers. Single, one-off grants range from as little as £500 up to £15,000. Grants repeated for more than one year vary from about £500 per annum up to £5,000 per annum, for a maximum of three years.

Guidance notes are available on the website, www.alllenlane.org.uk. Applications can be made at any time and are processed throughout the year. For more information, contact Executive Secretary: 90 The Mount, York YO24 1AR. Phone: 01904 613223 Fax: 01904 613133 Email: info@allenlane.org.uk

ARGOS IN THE COMMUNITY

Argos focuses on registered charities and non-profit making organisations that help young people get the best opportunities in life. Charities must focus on children in the areas of health related issues, education, disadvantaged groups, or improve environment conditions. All charitable requests must be made using the Argos Charitable Donation Application Form which is available at www.argos.co.uk, click on 'about argos' and then select argos in the community.

No deadline, £100 in Argos gift vouchers

Funding & Grant

ESMEE FAIRBAIRN

Recently issued Application Guidelines are available on the Foundation’s website at www.esmeefairbairn.or.uk. or by telephone: 020 7297 4700. The new Social Change: Enterprise and Independence programme aims to enable people and communities facing disadvantage to improve their lives. The Education programme will continue to cover two broad areas: new approaches to education and hard-to-reach learners

Applications can be made at any time.

THE JACK PETCHEY FOUNDATION

The Foundation gives grants to programmes and projects that benefit young people aged 11 - 25. Grants are given through different programmes including: Achievement Award Scheme, Leader Award Scheme, Projects Grants and Sponsorship. Grants of over £17 million have been given since the Foundation was established in 1999 (£6.5 million in 2004).

For further information go to www.jackpetcheyfoundation.org.uk

JILL FRANKLIN CHARITABLE TRUST

Grants are typically £500 to £1000. There is little uncommitted cash. The Trust is soliciting applications from organisations helping and supporting refugees and asylum-seekers coming to or in the UK.

To apply, applicants should write, enclosing their last annual report and accounts and a budget for the project. The Trustees tend to look more favourably on an appeal which is simply and economically prepared: glossy, “prestige” and Mail sorted brochures do not impress the trustees. Please check exclusions before you apply at www.jill-franklin-trust.org.uk. Applications should be sent by email to apply@jill-franklin-trust.org.uk or by post to Jill Franklin Charitable Trust, 78 Lawn Road, London, NW3 2XB. Please remember to include a telephone number.

Funding & Grants

THE LANKELLY FOUNDATION

For a limited period, the Foundation has decided to consider applications from registered charities who are:
• working to prevent or tackle destitution amongst asylum seekers;
• working locally to strengthen the infrastructure of small emerging voluntary refugee groups, through the provision of training or practical support;
• providing a range of services to promote integration into the wider community.

Applications by post only; initial letter should answer the following questions: Who are you, where are you, what do you do? How much money do you need to raise and what is it for? How soon do you need it? Who else have you asked to help? What support have you already attracted? How will you measure success? You should attach:
• Brief information about the origins and current company/charitable status of your organisation;
• A copy of your most recent Annual Report and Full Audited Accounts;
• An itemised income and expenditure Budget for your organisation;
• An itemised income and expenditure Budget for the work to be funded;
• Equal Opportunities Policy;
• Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policies; and
• Any additional information requested in the individual Priority sections.

For more information and to apply, contact The Lankelly Foundation, 2 The Court, High Street, Harwell, Didcot, Oxon OX11 0EY, Tel: 01235 820044, Web: www.lankelly-foundation.org.uk.
COURSES & TRAINING BY RWA

Certificate in Pre-School Practice (CACHE Level 2)
September 2005 - March 2006
This course qualifies you to work in the childcare sector. It includes a work placement so that you get hands-on experience of working with children in childcare settings. A good level of English is needed, but additional ESOL support will be given.
The course will run at:
Hackney Community College, Falkirk Street, London N1 6HQ
Assessment Day:
Tuesday 30 August, 10.30am at Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP
Eligibility:
• Refugee status (ELR/ILR) or asylum seeker with permission to work;
• Good level of written & spoken English (level 2 or above);
• Living in London.

Accelerated English for Refugee Women
September / October 2005 - March 2006
This 6 month course combines intensive language skills with basic IT and skills that can be applied in a work situation. It will lead to a Cambridge ESOL qualification.
The course will run at:
Canal Side House, 383 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5AA
Assessment Day:
Friday 9 September, 10.30am at Canalside House
and at Leroy House, 436 Essex Road London N1 3QP
Assessment Day: Monday 19 September, 10.30am at Leroy House
Eligibility:
• Refugee status (ELR/ILR);
• Living in London.

Accelerated English for Asylum Seeking Women
12 September - 16 December 2005
This 12 week course, run in partnership with Refugee Arrivals Project (RAP), combines intensive language skills with basic IT and orientation to life in the UK. It can lead to a Cambridge ESOL qualification.
The course will run at:
Hounslow Community Centre, 9 Montagu Road, Hounslow TW3 1JY
Assessment Day:
Friday 2 September, 10.30am
Eligibility:
• Asylum seeker;
• Living in London.

Business Start-Up
7 - 24 November 2005
Venue to be confirmed
The business start-up course provides support to refugee women who are in the process of, or would like to, set up their own business.

Job Search Skills for Allied Health Professionals
10 October - 3 November 2005
Venue to be confirmed
Our job search courses provide specialist support and advice to refugee women who are seeking employment in the health profession.

Job Search Skills for Nurses & Midwives
14 November - 1 December 2005
Venue to be confirmed
Our job search courses provide specialist support and advice to refugee women who are seeking employment in the health profession.

All of our courses are free of charge. The training is for women only and is run during school hours. We also pay travel expenses and contribute towards childcare costs or provide a crèche.

Places are limited! BOOK NOW!
For information call Lucy at RWA on 020 7923 2412, or email lucy@refugeewomen.org.uk. All details are subject to change!
Closing the Door? Immigrants to Britain 1902-2005: Free Poetry Workshop for Immigrants and Refugees

14 August, 2pm-5pm Jewish Museum, Raymond Burton House, 129-131 Albert Street, London NW1 7NB

Why did you leave your homeland? What made you decide to come to Britain? What did you bring to Britain in terms of memories, artefacts and culture? What was Britain’s attitude towards you?

As part of the Museum’s exhibition on migrant and refugee communities - exploring how they have struggled and survived, and how they have enriched and enhanced British society - the Museum is running a poetry workshop, by the highly acclaimed spoken-word poet Leah Thorn, for immigrants and refugees to explore your stories.

The workshop is free but advance booking is essential.

For more information, call 020 7284 1997, visit jewishmuseum.org.uk or email admin@jmus.org.uk.

Shoreditch Festival: Africa 05

21 August, 1pm-7pm Haggerston Park, Hackney Park, London

Eat, drink and get down to the spirit, rhythms and tastes of Africa as Shoreditch Festival celebrates Africa 05. An explosion of African culture, featuring music, poetry, food, market stalls, workshops, games, crafts and dance to delight and surprise throughout the day. Your day will be buzzing with the sound of live music and entertainment from cutting-edge, international African musicians in a variety of styles from Afro Beat to African Hip-Hop. Artists include Afropean Hip-Hop fusioneers JJC & 419 Squad and Congolese rumba stara Koko Kanyinda & Soukous Kouloumbi. Also includes mouth watering, finger-licking dishes from across the continent, dance troupes solo artists, circus performers and much more. Get a thrilling taste of African market life and visit stalls offering everything from books and clothes to crafts and jewellery. Or check out the abundance of children’s activities with an arts and crafts area offering face painting and African mask making.

THIS EVENT IS FREE

E Wa Jo African Arts and Culture Festival

19/20/21 August, the CentreMK, Milton Keynes
3 September, Whiteleys, Bayswater, London

E wa jo is an African Arts and Culture festival aimed at celebrating the traditions and culture of the African diaspora. Visit the website at www.ewajo.com/wnew.asp for information on the drumming workshops, attractions, activities at the children’s corner, exhibits of African artwork, and more.

DON’T BELIEVE THE TYPE CAMPAIGN

The Refugee Council launched a new campaign ‘Don’t believe the type’ to draw attention to the state of the public debate on asylum and to start a major fight back on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. Visit the new website to sign up and to help campaign: www.dontbelievethetype.org.uk.

The London Mela

14 August 2005, 12pm-8.45pm Gunnersbury Park, London W3

The London Mela is spectacular one-day festival, which celebrates the rich tableau of South Asian culture and creativity, both in Britain and throughout the rest of the world. It is one of the few melas in the country, which commissions new work, provides a platform for emerging British artists, and brings traditional and classical art forms to a wider audience. The London Mela has it all: contemporary and classical music, dance, street theatre, circus, cabaret, comedy, visual arts and spoken word, from some of the world’s biggest names. It’s a truly family-friendly event, and one for all of London to enjoy.

THIS EVENT IS FREE

Refugee Children: Safeguarding the Future of those Hardest to Protect

20 October 2005

This Refugee Council conference aims to highlight a range of issues particular to refugee children by providing delegates with knowledge on which to build practical skills to apply in day-to-day work. Plenary session presentations and discussions will include: Protection, Legal Advice and the Asylum Process, Social Responsibility in Education, Health and Mental Health Issues for Refugee Children, Talking to refugee children about health, sexual health and pregnancy. For more details about the conference, including booking details, visit refugeecouncil.org.uk/conferences, call 020 7346 6739 or email marketing@refugeecouncil.org.uk.
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Disclaimer:
The views expressed in the Refugee Women’s News are individual and not necessarily those of RWA.

The Next Issue:
Living With Terror
The next issue of Refugee Women’s News will be out in September 2005, so we’re looking forward to receiving your correspondence by late August 2005.

Comments:
Any comments, suggestions and information that you would like to be published in Refugee Women’s News should be sent to Corinna Ditscheid.

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