

## Young Migrants

Every year a special message is issued for the *World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees* by His Holiness the Pope. This day is celebrated in the UK on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. It is the 94<sup>th</sup> year that there has been a special message and blessing for migrants and refugees in this way.

The theme for 2008 is on young migrants and refugees and the particular difficulties they face with regard to their expectations and education; how they feel they fit in to society; issues of enculturation and tension between children who wish to be like their friends and fit into their new society in the face of traditional cultural values held on to by parents. Pope Benedict XVI particularly draws our attention to the needs of students, often under pressure of their studies and with an additional financial burden, which adds to their pressures. We all know how expensive it is to study at university these days. If we throw into the mix concerns about asylum claims and extreme financial pressures faced by those left destitute by the asylum process it is a source of wonder and amazement how so many manage to not just pass but do so well.



Children in school, JRS Angola

One young woman from Uganda, who volunteers regularly at JRS has just passed her HND in Applied Sciences with a triple distinction and is applying for university courses – despite not knowing when her asylum claim will be fully resolved; despite having been detained during part of her course; despite being destitute. In this newsletter there is also a short item about Jean Paul Buhalargha, who has just graduated with a BSc in Biomedical Sciences and all his other achievements.

Pope Benedict XVI encourages the young migrants and refugees to prepare themselves to “build ... a more just and fraternal society” and to “be protagonists as of now of a world where understanding and solidarity, justice and peace will reign”. This is an exhortation

we also would do well to follow so that no one's skills and talents are forgotten or left unused to their detriment and to the detriment of us all.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of December (in the first week of Advent) is a poignant and apposite moment to remember refugees and migrants especially. It is a time of waiting expectantly in hope for a new Stranger we want to welcome, Jesus, our Saviour. It is a time of preparation for merriment and family for many of us. So it is appropriate to remember those “strangers” who are not normally welcomed in our society, who may be far away from family or who may have lost their families, and who may not have much cause for joy in their lives, but who are constantly waiting expectantly for their asylum decisions.

If you would like a copy of the message, or if you would like to organise a special prayer service or liturgy for refugees and migrants around the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December (or indeed at any other time) and would like some copies of liturgy resources we have, please contact us at the office.

Louise Zanre

## Blessing for Young Migrants and Refugees

To Mary, the Mother of all humanity, and to Joseph, her most chaste spouse, who were both refugees together with Jesus in Egypt, I entrust each one of you, your families, those who take care of the vast world of young migrants in various ways, the volunteers and pastoral workers that are by your side with their willingness and friendly support.

May the Lord always be close to you and your families so that together you can overcome the obstacles and the material and spiritual difficulties you encounter on your way. I accompany these wishes with a special Apostolic Blessing for each one of you and for those who are dear to you.

Pope Benedict XVI

Message for 94<sup>th</sup> World day of Migrants and Refugees

**We have received a total of £1,537 (so far) from sponsorship for our marathon runner, Jan's efforts in running to raise money for our hardship funds!**

**THANK YOU ALL!**

**If you would like to run for our hardship fund, please contact the JRS office.**



**H**and knitting is the symbol that

would best describe my experience at the Jesuit Refugee Service. I am told that knitting is an art that requires lots of

patience, time, and a selection of good quality yarn so as to make a masterpiece.

Knitting is a method by which thread or yarn may be turned into beautiful jumper, cardigan, scarf, a woolly hat or a pair of warm gloves ideal for the cold winter.

Knitting consists of loops called stitches pulled through each other.

The active stitches are held on a needle until another loop can be passed through them. Knitting done by hand offers the possibilities of creating numerous styles each producing unique masterpieces. Different yarns and knitting needles may be used to achieve different end products, by giving the final piece different colour,

## KNITTING RELASHIONSHIPS

texture, weight, or integrity.

Now, as I look back, it seems to me that I was indeed learning the art of knitting. This time however, I wasn't making warm gloves, or a woolly hat; but I was entrusted with the responsibility of holding the fragility of people's lives together, respecting and accepting their particular circumstances and giving the person the dignified treatment he/she deserves.

This difficult but attainable task became easy over time as I took to heart the words of a very wise person "...you might be that person to bring back a smile on their faces..." That I tried to do, even in the face of uncertainty.

Often times I felt overwhelmed by vast quantities of information that I needed to know or have access to so as to meet the needs of the refugees. This meant I had to learn quickly and effectively to stay on top of my game. I found that networking, team work and personal commitment to be the types

of yarn needed to make all the qualitative difference in the lives of those we encounter.

At a deeper level, the one -to -one relationships developed at JRS made me realise the importance of being more present to people in the sharing of their joys as well as in the sharing of their sorrows. Even though it was tough I feel that it has done a lot for my prayer, reflection and person response as I journey with refugees.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn a lot from the JRS model of accompaniment. I see this way of working and learning together as an expression of hope. I feel very privileged to have had the experience of pastoral accompaniment at JRS.

**Godfrey Veerasammy SJ**

(Godfrey finished his regency placement with us in June this year, part of his training to become a Jesuit. We are grateful for all his help and dedication while he was with us)

## DETENTION SAPS PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ENERGY

**I**n May we attended a JRS Detention Visitor Support Group seminar, focusing on intercultural communication training. The seminar, held in Brussels, brought together JRS detention centre visitors and workers from across Europe. We would love to tell you lots about the 4-day programme and our experiences and reactions to it. As space will only permit us to be brief, I'd like to share with you two things that stayed with us most.

I, Anna, was impressed by the Diversity of experience. There is no such thing as a typical detention centre in Europe. True, I've only made visits in one immigration removal centre but what time spent with other JRS workers/volunteers revealed so starkly is that there is a great diversity of structures, processes, laws and hence experiences of detention across Europe. We were shocked to learn that in Malta, for example, men and women are held together in big warehouses where the conditions are terrible, and where there have been several cases of violence in-

flicted on detainees at the hands of detention centre staff. The physical context of the Heathrow-based centre that I visit is comparatively better. But environment, we came to appreciate, isn't everything. In Malta a detainee knows he/she will be released in 12 months; in UK there is no limit. The indefinite duration of time spent in detention can sap both physical and emotional energy – after 2 years, 1 year, even 6 months. I have seen it happen and it's heartbreaking. Also, seeing the breadth of ways that JRS operates within the legal and administrative systems of different European countries was both hugely informative and inspiring.

Another part of the meeting was a workshop run by a consultancy in inter-cultural exchange between people from the richer and poorer nations. I, Ros, felt this was an extremely constructive workshop and learnt a great deal about how we might appear to our clients as JRS visitors and also ways to improve communication. The facilitators were ideally placed to provide a fresh perspective for us since

they had personal experience of being immigrants themselves. They ran seminars to help us to understand our own cultural upbringing and how that affects our behaviour and judgement. In the same measure we were to understand the client's background so that we could meet the other person on a level playing field without prejudice. We were asked to identify and analyse situations that we had encountered in our work where there had been conflict or difficulty. Critical moments of difficulty were often hard to relive for the JRS visitor in question. However with the help of the group, alternative approaches could be suggested that may have facilitated a better negotiation. This opportunity to review and trouble-shoot difficult encounters was beneficial to all.

Anna Nawakowska

Rosalind Perrin

(Volunteer visitors to detainees)

**If you would like to volunteer as a detention centre visitor please contact Sr. Margaret at the JRS office!**



## DESTITUTION ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION PROJECT

Asylum Aid (a charity giving legal assistance to asylum seekers and refugees) is working with JRS on a new project, which started on 16<sup>th</sup> September. Once a week, on a Tuesday, Asylum Aid holds a legal surgery at JRS for destitute asylum seekers, to offer advice on their asylum claims – whether a second opinion or looking to see if there is anything left legally which might be done for a person in their attempt to seek protection in the U.K. Caseworkers will be looking for possible challenges to the refusal of protection and taking forward those with a realistic prospect of success.

Research has shown that a significant proportion of refused and destitute asylum seekers in the UK have strong and

legitimate claims for protection that are not being met. Many, (estimates vary between 10%- 60%) did not receive adequate, or in some instances any, legal advice or representation in support of their asylum claims. This situation has been exacerbated by the cuts in legal aid for asylum cases, which has pushed many solicitors out of business or has driven them to accept fee paying clients only. The project will also generate reliable qualitative and quantitative data, which will be used to influence the UK Border Agency and the Legal Services Commission in respect of their policies on dealing with rejected asylum seekers. In addition it will serve to inform the ongoing debate on the quality of decision-making in asylum claims.

We will keep you updated with the progress of this project and its findings

Claire Lawrence

- JRS –UK is transferring our Thursday drop– in centre to Stamford Hill starting from the 23rd of September 2008
- Marine Harrington, our community fundraiser, is on maternity leave. She had a lovely boy on 14 July. Victoire Dally is covering her post during the maternity leave. Victoire is a refugee and was previously one of our service users.

**CHRISTMAS CARDS**  
**A flyer is enclosed with this mailing. If you would like to advertise our cards please contact the office for more copies of the flyer!**

## BECAUSE YOU TRUSTED HIM!!!

### Jean Paul Buhalargha BSc



**I**t is our pleasure to be able to share some good news with you all. Way back in 2005 we helped Jean Paul with a donation towards his university fees. He has now graduated with a degree in Biomedical Sciences from Newcastle University.

As if getting his degree were not enough, Jean Paul has been awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service for setting up and running the Muungano

Community Association for Africans living in Newcastle, to help them integrate into the local community and to re-build their social lives. And he has been invited to the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace!

His future remains uncertain. After six years, he is still an asylum seeker and not allowed to work. He does not know when his claim for asylum will be heard. Currently it is not considered safe for anyone to be returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo. So in the interim he is planning to take a post-graduate course in public health, which will consolidate his qualification to be a public health worker.

We were only able to help Jean Paul in 2005 because of donations received at that time. It will be costly for him to undertake the post-graduate qualification – money, which he does not have as he has no financial support from the government and cannot work. If you would like to make a donation to help Jean Paul continue his education, please send a cheque payable to Jesuit Refugee Service to the office. Please mark the back of the cheque as being for Jean Paul's education or indicate clearly in a covering note that you would like the donation to be used in this way.

Louise Zanre

## What does JRS do?

The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic non-governmental organisation, at work in over 60 countries, with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons. In the UK JRS works mainly with detainees and destitute asylum seekers.

**Accompanying:** being with the individual, befriending him or her but also in some way enhancing that person's dignity and personal growth.

**Serving:** offering some practical assistance while being with the person.

**Defending** the rights of refugees: working towards changing qualitatively the person's life for the better by influencing public opinion, lobbying and raising awareness about the real hardships that asylum seekers and refugees face in the UK today.

## Values

JRS is grounded in Catholic social teaching and draws on the principles of Ignatian spirituality in discerning with whom we work. All members share a common set of values and principles concerned with justice, the dignity of the person and a responsibility to carry out the social mission of the Church.

## " We feel a bit alive"

I was looking forward to the JRS party as usual every year at Stamford Hill. It was a good occasion to meet other asylum seekers and refugees and to share stories and ideas.

It was more comfortable to see gathered under one roof people from different backgrounds and countries. I was really happy to see many people interested in asylum seekers and ready to help if they can. It was so comforting.

The weather was generous and we could enjoy variety of foods and entertainment. We also played a quiz.

The quiz was very interesting as each of the 8 teams wanted to be the winner. The members of the winning team are from Togo, China, Cameroon, UK, Guinea, Iran and Ivory Coast. We received a special prize and the other teams were encouraged. The ambiance was amazing and everyone left the party very pleased.

We take this occasion to thank JRS' staff, members and supporters for giving us the opportunity to feel a bit alive.

Marc Preville Fokou Takountie

## Update from office

We had over 650 visits to our drop in service in July. We helped 103 men, 138 women and 51 children (3 with special needs ) during the month. 38 people received food subsistence grant.

Claire Lawrence

## DIARY 2008

### Events involving JRS:

11th October: JRS is running a workshop at Birmingham J&P day

25th October: JRS is running a stall at the Westminster J&P event, Harrow.

3rd November : JRS is giving a talk to Meopham Christian Life Community group

22nd November: JRS is giving a talk at the St Vincent de Paul National Conference, Ushaw

9th December: JRS is giving a talk to the Kings Lynn J&P Group

Did you like this newsletter? Spread the word and pass it on to someone who does not know JRS. You can also email us at uk@jrs.net to receive more copies. When you have finished reading it, recycle it!

**EDITOR: Victoire Dally**

## Support our work

### What should you do?

If you want to send a donation:  
 by cheque (payable to Jesuit Refugee Service) or cash: Fill the information in the box on the right and send it back by Post to: JRS, 6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP

Or make a secure payment on:  
<http://www.justgiving.com/jesuitrefugeeservice/supportus>

If you want more information please contact us on 020 7357 0974

- Please add me to your mailing list
- Donation enclosed Amount: £ \_\_\_\_\_
- I am a UK taxpayer and would like to gift aid my donation to JRS** (*Gift aid increases the value of your donation to us by 28p in every pound*)

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_