

SUMMER 2007

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

Reg. Charity 230165

## RUNNING 26.2 MILES MADE A DIFFERENCE TO 100 REFUGEES' LIVES!

5 hours and 36 minutes is the time it took Marianne Cronin to run the 26.2 miles of the London Marathon and raise £1, 061 for JRS hardship fund. The hardest part: "Having to wait for 30 minutes to go to the bathroom!", the best part: "My husband's pride" and her final thoughts: she "can't wait to do it again"!



All smiles: Marianne wearing her medal after the marathon.

As regular readers you will know that the £1 061 Marianne raised for our hardship fund will be spent mostly on hygiene packs, telephone cards and bus passes. With £1 061 we can help refugees with 71 hygiene packs, 70 phone cards and 150 bus passes. Every week, we have over ninety people coming into the office who need this help. Thank you so much to those of you who already sponsored Marianne, but if you still wish to show your support we are still accepting sponsorship in the form of cheques made payable to Jesuit Refugee Service (clearly marked "Marathon Sponsorship" on the back).

Apart from the Marathon Marianne also raised £200 by selling American cakes to American companies in London. The hardest part of it, "Having to prevent her husband from eating the cake at night", the best part of it: "JRS bought 67 bus passes" which helped some refugees to go and see their lawyers, report to the home office or come to the JRS office. Like Marianne you could make a visible difference to the life an asylum seeker by raising money for the JRS hardship fund. The Marathon is on again next year, so please let us know if you are interested or know someone who might be! The training starts in December and we would support you all the way. Or if you are interested in another form of fundraising and wish to get some ideas please email [marine.harrington@jrs.net](mailto:marine.harrington@jrs.net) or phone Marine on 020-7357-0974

To find out more about our hardship fund please look at the leaflet enclosed with the newsletter.

### JRS Party 16 June 2007

Thank you to all those who joined us : The wet conditions did not dampen the spirits of those who came to Stamford Hill (picture right).



## Pedro Arrupe Award 2007 Prize giving ceremony

On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007, at the European Parliament, the Polish and Slovakian winners of the refugee awareness Pedro Arrupe Award 2007 assembled to collect their prizes.

This Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe award, now in its second edition, seeks to promote understanding and tolerance of the refugee issue among young people as well as encourage their creative engagement with the issue. 35 schools from 14 European countries participated in the award with entries as diverse as DVDs, board games, songs and cartoons.

Manfred Weber, the German MEP, sponsored the ceremony. The Slovakian winners, from the school Gymnázium sv. Tomáša Akvinského in Košice, collected their prize from Anna Záborská, the Slovakian MEP. They will spend a week in Croatia visiting various JRS refugee projects. The Polish students, from the school Gimnazjum i Liceum Jezuitów in Gdynia, will receive a trip to Macedonia to visit a summer camp for child landmine victims.

JRS Europe Director, Jan Stuyt, praised the quality of the entries and the dedication and sensitivity shown by all the school children involved. "The young people of today are our real hope for the future", he stated, "at a time when refugees are finding it more and more difficult to gain support and entry into European countries, it is inspiring to find young people so willing to engage and learn about the situation of refugees."



## Through the Flame of a Candle

Have you ever gazed into the flame of a candle in the dark? If so, you will have felt the warmth of its glow and experienced its light washing over the darkness, gently revealing unknown surrounds. Such a glow transforms all within its reach. A reassuring presence, bringing peace and tranquillity. Our unspoken fears have been exposed for what they truly are 'groundless and irrational.' Through our gaze, as it intensifies, the darkness dissipates and a new awareness of what darkness 'does not hold' floods our imagination and gives us hope.

This year in Malawi, working as a volunteer, journeying with these beautiful, suffering people of Dzaleka has been, a little, like gazing into that candle flame. Feeling its warmth, experiencing its transforming power, over darkness, as it gently reveals the hidden and allows 'unfounded fears' to vanish and be transformed into joyful wonder and expectation of a future unborn but one which holds promise.

Entering the lives and encountering the hopes of our 'Dzalekan' people, especially the young, has been a cherished experience. This personal knowledge constantly transforms one's understanding. JRS opens doors – beyond transitory and shocking images – into inspiring lives of people struggling to defend their rights, protect their families and give their children a future.

Such has been the reality of my journey, whilst accompanying these materially poor and powerless people. A people who have known and experienced the horrors of true darkness, have not succumbed to its terrors but have allowed their minds and hearts to be healed by the power of the Spirit's flame burning within, redeeming the darkness and shedding its light. This has been the experience of so many refugees, here in Dzaleka,

whose faith in the Omnipotent God is strong, courageous and, for me, humbling. Their life's experience has taught them that miracles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continue to happen and astonish! The miracle of survival and of heartfelt yearning for an improved, opportune future, both, for themselves and their families are realised daily as they struggle to 'defend their rights and long for a better future for their children'



'Serving with the mind and heart of love' is the spirit, soul and person of Sister Anne Elisabeth, (Outgoing Country Director for JRS). Guided by her strength, courage and thirst for justice, her

staff received inspiration to embrace the ethos of such service. The young adult refugees have so aptly described Sister Anne as: 'A voice among the voiceless.'

Among the refugees, I consider myself a fortunate person, one who has been graced with the opportunity of accompanying and assisting some of our young men and women in realising their hopes and longings of encountering a better future through the IELTS program. Our successful candidates travel to Canada where their new life will begin as undergraduates, studying at some of the most prestigious universities. I am confident that these people will become model citizens; enriching the lives of those they befriend and, I have no doubt, will eventually contribute to the growth and development of their host country. Not all of these students will have families to share the miracle of their successes. However, they will continue to seek out Sister Anne, their mother, friend, counsellor and advocate to share their successes, confident .

Margaret Baxter SSMN

## The Hidden Tragedy

**A very good experience about helping people in circumstances which strip them of their dignity.** Hopefully these words express the ambiguity of the feelings that come to my mind when reflecting on my way-too-short volunteering experience at JRS in London. Personally, I enjoyed assisting the volunteers and staff, and above all helping the asylum-seekers that came to the office near London Bridge. It is always good when one has the opportunity to focus one's energy and talents to helping others, even – or perhaps especially – when there's no glory in it. At the same time, it was often disheartening to witness the difficult circumstances some people are in and to realise how little I could do to help them. Still, all in all working with JRS and asylum-seekers was and rewarding. I learnt more about the need of many immigrants for recognition, dignity and social justice; the need for a more informed and, particularly, caring and generous immigration policy, and the need of myself and all well-off people to help those who are less fortunate in life as best as possible. Lastly, I also learnt something about myself and how God works in the lives of people.

As an untrained volunteer with no prior experience and with only five weeks available to help, it is probably not surprising that one cannot work miracles. But that is not the point. In this kind of work, one cannot simply describe 'success' in terms of numbers anyway. The refunding of bus-tickets which JRS does is not about numbers but about enabling people to visit friends and compatriots outside London.

Speaking about miracles: I am reminded of that wonderful truth of the faith which is celebrated daily in the Eucharist, which is that God can use our most simple, inconspicuous and mundane efforts like bread, and turn them into the Host of divine essence, love and joy. I presume this is true for many low-profile volunteers in any good work. Looking back on my short experience with JRS, I can't think of anything spectacular I have done. Still, my brief presence has made a difference. If that was the case with me, how much more with other people! I encourage everyone to volunteer with JRS in whatever way fits your talents and stretches your horizon.

**Wouter Blesgraaf nSJ**

**If you wish to know more about volunteering with JRS, please give a call to Claire on 020 7357 0974 or send an email to [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net)**



## LANDMARK CONVICTIONS FOR THE USE OF CHILDREN IN ADULT'S BATTLES!

For several years, June 20 has been a day for commemorating refugees and highlighting their plight and suffering. This day, chosen by the United Nations (UN) as the World Refugee Day, was this year marked by the passing of milestone verdicts against three men from the rebel Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (ARFC) for, among other charges, the recruitment and use of child soldiers in hostilities.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted the three men for the atrocities which were committed during the 11 years of that country's war. From 1991, at the onset of the conflict until 2002, children were enlisted, indoctrinated and turned into hardened and indiscriminate killers. They were compelled to carry out brutal and barbaric offences and killings, some of which were so accurately and uncompromisingly depicted in the movie, *Blood Diamond*.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, of which JRS is a founding member, has always maintained that the Special Court for Sierra Leone should prioritise the prosecution of those who have recruited children as soldiers rather than child soldiers themselves. These convictions not only mark the first ruling of an international tribunal on the conscription of children who were forced into combat during an armed conflict; but are also a significant advance in the endeavour to stop the use of children in adults' wars.

In the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone, like in many other conflicts, children suffered and lost everything. The conflict as described in the final report of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, "impacted heavily on children, as their rights were systematically violated by all of the armed factions. Children

suffered abduction, forced recruitment, sexual slavery and rape, amputation, mutilation, displacement and torture. They were also forced to become perpetrators and carry out aberrations violating the rights of other civilians."

It is imperative therefore that many more recruiters of child soldiers be brought to justice. Hopefully this judgement, which sets a historic precedent, will send a clear message that, those who recruit and use children in armed conflicts; their impunity is something of the past. Children should not be denied the opportunity to be children!

**Rampe Hlobo S.J.**

To get more information:  
<http://www.child-soldiers.org/>

## STRANGERS INTO CITIZENS

On 7 May thousands of migrants, some of the undocumented, marched from Westminster Cathedral to Trafalgar Square with the backing of faith leaders, politicians and trade unionists, to call for a "pathway into citizenship" for the 500,000-odd "undocumented migrants" in the UK who have been left in legal limbo. The rally put on display the breadth of support for the campaign. Church leaders – including Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, and Bishop Tom Butler of Southwark – spoke passionately in favour of recognising the rights and dignity of all people, including the undocumented. Jon Cruddas MP and Baroness Shirley Williams added their voices to those of the trade union leaders, Jack Dromey of the TGWU and Dave

Prentis of UNISON. Lewis Alsamari, the Iraq-born star of "United 93", spoke of his long struggle to gain status. Billy Bragg sang Bob Marley

The crowd was vast (the media reported 20,000) and colourful. Union Jacks jostled with banners and placards. Even as the heavens opened there was a light, carnival atmosphere. People spoke of coming out into the light, of the relief of knowing that there were faith leaders and others who understood what it was like to live in a dehumanising limbo of fear and uncertainty.

Since organising a rally of thousands in Trafalgar Square on 7 May the campaign "is growing faster than its sponsors dared hope", according to *The Observer* on 3 June. *The Independent* and *The Tablet*

have commended the proposal in editorials, as have Madeleine Bunting and Polly Toynbee in *Guardian* comment articles.

The Government has rejected the idea of an "amnesty", but Strangers into Citizens has never proposed a general amnesty but a pathway into citizenship for long-term migrants.

The Immigration Minister, Liam Byrne, faced questions on 20<sup>th</sup> June from MPs calling for the regularisation of long-term migrants. The "Regularisation of migrant workers" adjournment debate was led by Jon Cruddas MP. Cruddas commended the 'Strangers into Citizens' campaign proposal that migrants who have put down roots in the UK should be given legal recognition.

More information on: <http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/>

*"Evil is an undeniable feature of our world. We can and ought to struggle against it always by trying to overcome it and convert it into a good of a higher order. But very often we make it worse, for ourselves and for our fellow human beings, by the very selfishness with which we pretend to escape from it. Called to love by the best part of our very nature, made by God to God's own image, called to a higher vocation of love by grace and the example of Christ, we humans, inherently low-spirited and cowardly, evade that call, withdraw within ourselves and, wishing to gain all, lose all."*

**Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ (1907-1991)**

### Mission Statement

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 people.

The purpose of JRS UK is to accompany, to serve and to advocate on behalf of all asylum seekers from their first arrival until they are satisfactorily settled. This work is carried out in collaboration with other JRS offices round the world, other Church and secular organisations, voluntary and governmental, which are active in the same field.

### 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.

**Newsletter Editor : Claire Lawrence.**  
**Assistant Editor : Rampeoane Hlobo S.J.**

## London Churches Refugee Fund

There is now a new fund bringing together support from churches from all parts of London and of a wide mix of denominations to support destitute asylum seekers. The fund recognises the desperate situation of asylum seekers who are not allowed to work and have no access to benefits, housing or healthcare. The monies will be distributed through church run projects across London. JRS will be among those applying to the fund to meet the increasing and desperate need of asylum seekers who come to our office.

The fund was launched on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June at a special service at Westminster Abbey. The Acholi choir sang to welcome us and send us on. The trustees pledged to administer the funds guided by the spirit of Christ. They also asked the prayers of the congregation for all those who need help from the fund and that the fund would be generously supported.

The patrons are  
 Bishop Dr Joe Alred (Church of God of Prophecy), Rt Rev. Bernard Longley (Roman Catholic Church),

Revd. The Baroness Richardson of Calow OBE (Methodist Church), Revd. Roberta Rominger (United Reformed Church), Rt Rev. Peter Wheatley (Church of England)

It is hoped that no only will the fund provide for the material needs of those who come in need of protection but also help raise awareness of the inhumanity of the current laws and help change media perceptions and public opinion about asylum seekers.

### DIARY

**3 November 2007: On the occasion of Pedro Arrupe SJ's birthday we will celebrate the gift of refugees and in the evening enjoy a dinner and a play.**

**Details to follow soon.**

**02073570974 or [uk@jrs.net](mailto:uk@jrs.net)**

Did you liked 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](mailto:uk@jrs.net) to receive more copies. When you have finish to read, recycle it!

## 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

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

**JRS will not share your details** with other organizations. However we keep your information for our newsletter, other mailings and processing of donations. Occasionally we may need to contact you with a specific query. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick here

- 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)*

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