

GOOD NEWS !

My name is David and I come from Burundi. I came to the UK in 1995. Upon arrival I was issued with the immigration document, the IS96, which meant I was liable for detention. The immigration office failed to provide me with my SAL2 paper, which in turn made it very difficult for me to get support from any service provider, as I was unable to prove my identity without it.

In 1999, I sought help from JRS, who through sheer tenacity successfully obtained my SAL2 paper, allowing me to apply for my driving license. Later that year, the local education author-

ity reviewed my university funding. After submitting a letter from the college, a photograph certified by JRS and my SAL2, I waited to see if funding for my second semester at university would be approved. In the same year I was granted Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) in the UK but only for 4 years.

A year before my ELR expired, I applied for a job as a bus driver, but did not pass the test. Candidates, who wished to re-apply, could do so but only after a 6-month period. Restricted by my ELR status, I could not retake the test.

In August 2004 I worked as a catering assistant for Scotland Yard but after a month my contract was terminated on the grounds that my leave to remain in the UK was coming to an end, even though I had seven months left. Fortunately, JRS offered me a job (for three months) as an administrative assistant in order to help them plan their office move, which restored

my self-confidence and allowed me to regain my independence.

My attempts to get a job have been hampered once potential employers came

to know of my ELR status. Once my ELR status expired, getting

a job, even though I was entitled to work while waiting to hear from the Home Office if I was going to be permitted to remain in the UK, became impossible. Employers were not prepared to risk giving me a job in case I was not allowed to work and they would then be prosecuted.

Fortunately this summer I heard, after an 11 month wait, that I have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK. I have waited 10 years for a settled status. The waiting has been one of the most difficult things to endure not to mention the psychological stress one goes through. My case was not

a unique one, unfortunately there are worse cases and each one different but with a common denominator: being an asylum seeker and liable to destitution.

Refugee Party



Friends and families, including some 50 refugees, came together to celebrate **World Refugee Day** on 18th June at St Ignatius church, Stamford Hill, London. The sunny weather set the perfect mood for a wonderful day outdoors, as did the music. Special thanks goes to Geraldine from Zimbabwe, for providing us with an excellent assortment of mouth watering dishes and to those who helped with the party preparations and clearing up afterwards.



BY DAVID SAVO



A Table Without Borders

I arrive at the JRS office at 1pm for my weekly apostolate. My main duty consists of compiling news booklets, which give detailed information on the current situation from countries affected by political unrest to be distributed later by detention centre volunteer visitors.

“The lunch hour makes us forget that we belong to two different worlds”

But downloading news is only a pretext for a Jesuit pastoral adventure larger than life. Tuesday is also the day when many of the asylum seekers come to JRS - as it coincides with their weekly registration at the immigration office close by. The office is soon full, brimming with men and women seeking advice, assistance, or who simply have a desire to share their story.

The lunch at 1 o'clock opens the ritual. Under the careful orchestration of a JRS staff member, Sou Huoy, the table is meticulously set – with extra places for those flying visits. The entire JRS staff project an image of genuine kindness, understanding and approachability, so much so that lunch is never chaotic despite its spontaneous nature: whoever comes is fed. There is also a volunteer, Michael, a “quintessential” English gentleman, who makes bread for the occasion. Among the asylum seekers there are regulars who bring the tone of familiarity to the meal and their jovial approach towards life is both humbling and makes it a pleasure to be around them. Jokes about the thickness of Michael's bread crust always seem to bring a few laughs.

The lunch hour makes us forget that we belong to two different worlds: some of us will sleep under a secure roof tonight, but some will be back on the street or will have to beg friends for shelter. After lunch, one of our guests says to me: “Father, I don't understand why the world is this way, but I never felt God's presence more intensely than through this support of British people once I was deprived of everything.”

Matthew Motyka SJ

NJPN Conference in Swanwick

The 27th Annual Justice and Peace Conference provided an excellent opportunity for refugees to participate in thought provoking debates and interact with those sympathetic to their cause. The conference allowed us to increase awareness on asylum seeker issues. We also found time to sell a fair amount of African handcraft work on behalf of the JRS, Kenya. Below are the thoughts of one of the refugees, who attended the conference:

“I found the conference to be a success overall. The venue, hospitality, food and leisure activities were well organised and enjoyable. It was refreshing to meet people from different parts of the country and discuss various issues faced by different communities on a daily basis, in the UK.”

Georges

Thank you !

JRS would like to thank you for the generous contributions made towards the refugee hardship fund appeal. Your support has enabled us to continue making small travel assistance grants to destitute asylum seekers and to continue providing basic hygiene packs and telephone cards.

Make Poverty History

JRS staff, volunteers and three refugee friends joined the 225,000 people, who had gathered for the **Make Poverty History** rally in Edinburgh on 2nd July. The event brought

together people of all ages and from different walks of life. The atmosphere was very lively and uplifting. It was truly inspiring to see so many people committed to the cause of tackling poverty issues in Africa and urging policy makers to address the urgency of the situation there.



We hope you are happy with the new look of the newsletter and welcome any comments or suggestions that you might have to further improve its quality.



Camp for internally displaced people (Maimu I) in Salala district, Bong County, Liberia

The Meaning of Accompaniment

Five months ago I followed my husband to Ivory Coast, West Africa, where I planned to get a job. At the time my future looked bright and promising. I was aware of the civil unrest last November, sparked by the deaths of 150 Ivorian citizens and 9 French soldiers, which had led to 10,000 French citizens fleeing the country. I soon realised that the economic slump together with a strong dose of anti-French sentiment had effectively ended my chances of obtaining gainful employment. If it were not for these hurdles life had thrown at me, I would never have contemplated the true meaning of JRS' mission to "accompany" the forcibly displaced.

Accompany, could it mean to walk by someone's side? I was walking down the street one day, when a man said to me: "Look at the colour of this woman, she stinks". My initial reaction was that of self-consciousness, hurt and frustration - that I should be prejudged by the political climate of the country. At the time, I wished one of my Ivorian friends had been with me, so I would not have felt so alone. I wonder: "Is this similar to what an asylum seeker experiences?"

Accompany, could it mean simply to act as a confidante, to comfort and reassure the person? Despite my extensive experience in marketing and project management, I have had difficulty getting a job. This at times has left me with a feeling of despair and helplessness, but I am comforted by the love and support my husband and friends give me. Is this what an asylum seeker needs, to be listened to and loved?

Accompany, could it mean relating to the daily life of the person? The compound I live in is beautiful and comfortable, but my house is near a swampy area, the humidity makes my clothes full of mildew and the mosquitoes are quite a nuisance. I would never have chosen this house, if I had the choice! Do asylum seekers have any choice?

Accompany, could it mean encouraging participation in projects geared towards self-discovery and hope for a better future? The children of my compound asked me to teach them English. I bought books to prepare the classes, revised my grammar and really checked that my preparations were coherent. These classes have reinvigorated me and given me a sense of purpose in life. Do asylum seekers crave the desire to be productive?

Marine Harrington Bernier



Conditional asylum

The government has introduced a new policy from 31 August 2005, whereby refugees are given limited leave to remain in the UK for five years. After this time, they may be asked to return to their countries of origin if the situation there is considered safe. This will jeopardise any chances for those with refugee status from having a secure future and conflicts with previous government policies targeting refugee integration within the U.K. Please contact your MP and ask him or her to support Early Day Motion (EDM) 569 on Refugee status and leave to remain in the UK, proposed by Neil Gerrard MP. The full text of the EDM is available from the JRS office.

You will also receive a copy of the Briefing on the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005 put together by the Methodist Church and the Quakers and sponsored by JRS with this mailing. If you would like extra copies for distribution in your parishes, communities or groups please contact the JRS office.



Jesuit Refugee Service, 6 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP
Tel: 020 7357 0974 Fax: 020 7378 1985 uk@jrs.net
 www.jrsuk.net www.jrs.net www.jrseurope.org
 www.detention-in-europe.org

Mission Statement

The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic non-governmental organisation, at work in over 50 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.



Diary

8th October (Saturday)

LONDON 10.00 am-4.45pm

Refugees and the Environment

Organised by NCRF, JRS and other sponsors. Venue: Church of the Holy Apostles—Church Hall, 47 Cumberland street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 4LY. For further information please contact Uta Sievers on: 078-7164 6224 or uta@refugee-forum.org.uk

8th October (Saturday)

6.30pm-9.00pm Music and Dance from different countries

Organised by the justice and Peace Commission— Diocese of Brentwood. Venue: Cathedral House (behind Brentwood cathedral, Ingrave Road). For further information please contact: Nevenka Sabic, refugee worker on: 01277-265252 or 01277-265290 or nevenka@dioceseofbrentwood.org.

20th October (Thursday)

Refugee Children: Safeguarding the future of those hardest to protect Organised by the Refugee Council. Venue: Regent's college. For further information please contact the training and events officer on: 020-7346 6739

3rd/4th November (Thursday and Friday) Detention training organised by JRS

Venue: Amigo Hall, Southwark Cathedral. See enclosed leaflet for further information or phone JRS on 020-7357 0974.

19th November (Saturday)

2.00pm Mass celebrating JRS' 25th Anniversary, followed by light refreshments. Organised by Bernadette Farrell and JRS. Venue: St. Ignatius church, Stamford Hill. For further information or to let us know that you will attend please contact the JRS office on :02073570974 or uk@jrs.net.

23rd November (Wednesday) 1.00-3.00pm Talk on "Hospitality, Asylum and the Gospel Christian hope in Middle England", speaker: Rev Robert Wiggs.

Organised by Justice and Peace Commission— Diocese of Brentwood. Venue: Cathedral House, Ingrave Road— Brentwood. For further information please contact Navenka Sabic on: 01277-265 290 or 01277-265252 or nevenka@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Jesuit Refugee Service
6 Melior Street
London SE1 3QP
Tel: 020-7357 0974
Fax: 020-7378 1985
e-mail - uk@jrs.net
website: www.jrsuk.net
www.jrs.net
www.jrseurope.org
www.detention-in-europe.org

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: _____