



Lifesavers

Raising money to support RSG's operations is a non-stop process and it's always a bit nail-biting wondering whether we will raise enough to keep them going. We get contributions from a variety of sources including barn-dancing (see page 2), local organisations like the Co-op and Gemini Radio and national charitable trusts (see page 3). This summer we've done well enough to be confident that we can keep going for another year.

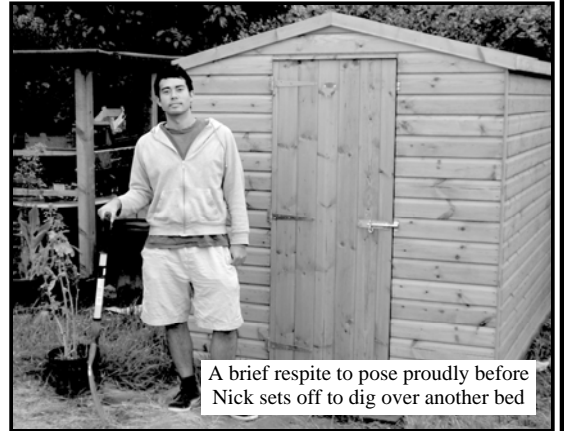
National charities once again provided vital funding and this summer we were lucky enough to get major donations totalling £74,000, spread over the next two years. This may seem a lot of money, and it is – willingness to make such large donations to a relatively unpopular cause is one of the great strengths of the British charitable system – but we now have to start thinking about the year after that, as fundraising is a slow process.

Hail to the volunteers

One of the things which perhaps makes RSG more attractive to potential funders is the extent to which we are able to rely on our volunteers to put in many hours of work. In an attempt to work out exactly what this contribution is

worth we counted up all the activities they undertake and it came to 99 hours a week. This involves a wide variety of tasks, including helping in the drop-in centre, teaching English, advocacy, fundraising, trusteeship and (of course) producing this newsletter.

What the monetary value of all this comes to depends of course on how you cost the hours, and actually the nature of the work is so varied, and much of it requires such special skills, that it's impossible to do so realistically. However the hours are the equivalent of 2½ full-time staff, or well over £70,000 a year added to our income.



Gemini give new toolshed

The new shed has arrived (see above)! The base was prepared by Zaffir, Nick and Pat. Jeremy and his trailer proved invaluable, yet again, in transporting the necessary paving slabs. The shed itself went up in a matter of minutes, thanks

to the cheery chaps from Sheds Direct. As the allotment becomes a larger enterprise, the new shed gives us much needed additional storage space. Many thanks to Gemini Radio, who provided funding.

Produce this month has included apples, beans, potatoes and courgettes. There have also been some delicious blackberries and some enormous parsnips (see photo for proof).



A small slice of humanity....

You may remember at the beginning of this year one of our Afghan friends made a personal plea for help following the refusal of his appeal to remain in the UK with his British wife and son. His only option left was to return to Afghanistan and apply from there. Well, the family managed to scrape together the funds from generous supporters which enabled him to return and submit an application from overseas. After a gruelling three-month wait, he was

granted entry clearance and is now back in the area with his settlement visa as a spouse to a citizen of the UK. After 2 years he will be able to apply for leave to remain indefinitely. His case was accepted directly – well, being married and having a dependent child and having spent the past 5 or 6 years here, how could it be refused? What a shame the family had to be so disrupted and the process required to obtain this element of security had to be so costly! [AH]

Also in this issue

Yee ha!, Recent benefactors and Trustee report (next page)

We still survive and Fran's poetry corner (page 3)

UK collusion in torture by the US (page 4)

AGM

Our annual general meeting is on 8th October at 6 pm. If you would like to come please contact the office so they can give you details of the venue and also put you down for refreshments!

Remember: trustee nominations by 10th September please (to the office).

CAN YOU HELP?

As you will see from articles inside, we need more people to work on fundraising. A major task is to investigate new possible contributors – especially charitable funds – and maintain contact with those we are already in touch with. It means learning about RSG so as to be able to answer questions and willingness to use the telephone (and sometimes email). It obviously requires enthusiasm about RSG and the ability to communicate it, and ability to establish good relations with whoever is on the other end!

If you could help please contact the office.

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RSG trustees

Next meeting will be on Wednesday 17 September in Wat Tyler House (see above), 7.30 p.m. The AGM will be on 8 October. Everyone welcome. For information contact the office.

Every ordinary meeting starts by considering any proposals or requests put forward by asylum seekers, who are particularly welcome. Agenda items to the office if possible two weeks before the meeting, please.

NB views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Refugee Support Group Devon

Trustee report

No meetings were held in this period. Trustees have been sent copies of a draft handbook of policies and also a new draft constitution. The first will be discussed at the next trustee meeting on 17 September; the second at the AGM on 8 October.

Yee Ha, Hoe Down! Barn Dance fever hits London

Emily Winterbotham volunteered with RSG for a short while last year before moving to London. She is now editor of Global Radio News Ltd. But even though out of sight, RSG has not been out of mind for Emily. Her support continues from afar and earlier in the summer she organised an event to raise funds for RSG's emergency fund.

After months of planning and a final few weeks of panicked selling, the night of the Barn Dance had arrived. The event was aimed at raising money for two charities. Whilst my friend's funds were earmarked for The Prince's Trust, there was no question as to where mine would go. Having volunteered a couple of years ago at the Refugee Support Group, I knew firsthand the valuable work it does and was keen to demonstrate my continued support for the organisation.

So, on the 27th June, after we had greeted the Barn Dance musicians and 'caller' and decked out Clapham's Battersea Arts Centre

with bales of hay, candles and gingham table cloths, we nervously waited as our guests, somewhat cautiously, trickled in.

As more and more people arrived they were quickly caught up in the dancing.

Those who were initially unsure of the Barn Dance theme were soon swinging and do-see-doeing with the best of them; whilst the experienced 'caller' encouraged the shyest of people to get involved.

The mantra of the Barn Dance company as 'an easy and enjoyable way of getting people together and dancing' was living up to expectations. As the evening



How it's done: raising money for charity

progressed, the dancing became faster and wilder, so that at times the slightly frustrated caller was unable to contain the crowd's exuberance and was forced to shout instructions to 'thread the needle' over them. The night was a resounding success: people who had met as strangers parted as friends and, most importantly, we had raised a

substantial amount for charity.

All in all, we managed to raise just over £500, which will be split between our two charities. This may have been the first charity event that I have had the pleasure of organising, but I am determined that there will be many more to come!

[EW]

Recent benefactors

The following is a list of recent donors to RSG. They have all stuck their necks out for us as asylum seekers and refugees receive a bad press and many of the public are suspicious of appeals on their behalf.

The Co-operative Community Fund

The scheme uses money donated by Co-op members for local community groups to help with specific items or projects. They have bought the Women's Group a lap-top.

Gemini Radio Charitable Trust

Gemini Radio have a charitable fund and hold numerous fund-raising events for it (especially the Royal Marines Commando

Challenge and the annual on-air auction). They like to fund specific items and they bought a much-needed toolshed for the RSG allotment.

The Hilden Charitable Fund

This is the charitable fund of the Rampton family. They are concerned with homelessness, minorities and race relations and gave us a large donation for our emergency fund.

The Leigh Trust

This trust, based in east London,

is one of the few to specify helping asylum seekers as one of their aims. They too gave money to the emergency fund.

Lloyds TSB Foundation

Lloyds is one of the biggest funds in the UK, spending £20m every year (£1.4m in the SW region). After sending one of their officers to inspect us they have agreed a large (unrestricted) donation over two years, which has greatly helped our general finances.

The Marchday Charitable Fund

This is another London fund with aims including social wel-

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Fran's poetry corner

Occasional poems chosen by readers

Not my business

They picked Akanni up one morning
 Beat him soft like clay
 And stuffed him down the belly
 Of a waiting jeep.
 What business of mine is it
 So long they don't take the yam
 From my savouring mouth?
 They came one night
 Booted the whole house awake
 And dragged Danladi out,
 Then off to a lengthy absence.
 What business of mine is it
 So long they don't take the yam
 From my savouring mouth?
 Chinwe went to work one day
 Only to find her job was gone:
 No query, no warning, no probe —
 Just one neat sack for a stainless record.
 What business of mine is it
 So long they don't take the yam
 From my savouring mouth?
 And then one evening
 As I sat down to eat my yam
 A knock on the door froze my hungry hand.
 The jeep was waiting on my bewildered lawn
 Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

[Niyi Osundare, with obvious reference to Pastor Niemöller]

We still survive

Fundraising for RSG is a non-stop process. We're managing but we spend well over £90,000 a year and refugees aren't a popular object of charity. One aspect of our fundraising (not the only one) is making applications to charitable funds.

When RSG was originally created in 2002 we got support from the Government and the lottery. Back then, dispersing asylum seekers to Devon was a programme the Home Office was anxious to make succeed. It was also supported by Devon County Council.

Unfortunately this didn't last, and by 2006 we were looking over a cliff. Since then we've had to get used to the hard grind of fundraising. This article is about one particular aspect, which is making applications to charitable funds.

There are literally hundreds of these across the UK, with widely different origins, aims and procedures. Many result from a bequest, and are often still operated by members of the benefactor's family. These will often be governed (quite rightly, of course) by how the family remember the donor's wishes. Most of these trusts only have small amounts of money to donate. Some, however, are enormous (e.g. Garfield Weston).

Another category is trusts set up by commercial organisations (locally, for example, by Gemini Radio). Many employers also encourage their staff to donate, and may match any funds raised (locally, Pennon Group [South West Water] or the Co-op).

Then there are funds which access lottery or public money in one way or another. These include the Big Lottery, with associated funds Sport England and Awards for All.

Locally there is the Devon Community Foundation. Funds like Diana or Comic Relief or Children in Need derive their money from charitable efforts on a large scale.

In order to raise money you first have to identify funds whose aims are such that there is a chance they may sympathise with ours. You do this by collecting as many as you can (our list of possibles numbers around 200). Some might only be interested in one particular aspect of RSG (say the emergency fund or the women's project). Then for each one you have to craft an application which fits in with what they expect. Here funds vary very widely: some (not always the small ones) only want a letter. Others have elaborate application procedures, sometimes involving more than one stage. It's like applying for a job – if you are wise, you read the job specification carefully.

Having made the application, you can only wait. Generally the fund's trustees will have to meet to decide on it, and such meetings may not be frequent. You don't always get an acknowledgement, and they don't always tell you if you've been turned down (or why). Some funds will impose restrictions on how you spend their money, sometimes quite detailed, perhaps because of how they interpret their founders' wishes. Some funds really only like to donate if you set up a special discrete project for them. This can cause problems for an established charity like RSG which has identified real charitable needs and simply wants to go on meeting them.

You always hope for 'unrestricted' funds, which means money from a fund which basically says: 'we've looked at you, we think you know what's needed: spend the money how you want'.

It's also nice if funds offer repeat donations – one-year sums are nice but two- or three-year grants make it easier to plan ahead.


Since we scabbled our way back from the cliff edge we have received donations from 20 funds, ranging from £500 to £30,000, and to all these we are eternally grateful. As a result we are able to continue our present level of services for this financial year. Next year (2009-10) we're currently looking at a deficit of about £5,000; but for the following year we're out £60,000. So clearly we need some significant donations.

What we can do

We are already working on raising money locally (a whole different landscape). It would be interesting to find a secret millionaire (very difficult to do). Or maybe we can persuade the Government or the Lottery to help us again (unlikely).

One job that needs doing is contacting funds by phone. Anyone like to volunteer? It needs somebody who is willing to acquire a detailed knowledge of our operation, is good on the phone and can build up a good relationship with potential donors. It's not necessarily the most fascinating work you can do for charity, but it is vital: without it all the rest collapses. See the panel on page 1. [JC]

Recent benefactors

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fare. They looked at us very carefully – like Lloyds, sending one of their trustees to inspect our operation. Although we originally applied to them for the Women's Project she (shrewdly: having experience with similar organisations) identified the difficulty in securing general funding as one of our major problems and their grant (a two-year one) is actually unrestricted as well as very substantial in size.

The Odin Charitable Trust

A Wiltshire fund with a strong focus on disadvantaged groups, such as refugees, Gypsies, the homeless, prisoners' families and tribal groups. They made a donation, used for the emergency fund.

The Pennon Group (South West Water)

One of the very few large industrial firms to have its HQ in Exe-

ter. They have, in addition to a large charitable trust (which donates, for example, to the Eden Project), a policy of encouraging donations by their staff to local charities, from which we benefited.

Pyke Charity Trust

This is based in Cornwall and it was a real concession on their part to donate to our emergency fund as asylum seekers are not as such central to their aims.

The Claude and Margaret Pike Charitable Trust

A family-run Newton Abbot charity

which concentrates on Devon.

They help students who undertake adventure missions in their gap years, but also help local Devon charities. They donated to help our emergency fund.

The Trusthouse Charitable Fund

This is another east London fund, set up by industry (Granada and Forte plc). It has a small grants fund for charities spending under £300,000 a year. They gave a substantial donation for the Women's Project.

UK collusion in torture by US

The case of a 'nobody' from west London seems likely to blow open the true story about co-operation between US and UK security services in a vast world-wide campaign of torture and illegal detentions

This is the case of Binyam Mohamed, a cleaner from an Islamic centre in West London, who went to Afghanistan in June 2001. He says he went there to see if living under the Taliban would help him cure a drugs problem, and that in April 2002, after 9-11, he decided to come back. Unfortunately he'd lost his passport and tried to fly with a friend's. He was arrested at Karachi airport in April 2002 and then illegally and secretly detained by the Pakistan security services.

Mohamed is an Ethiopian citizen but a British resident, having indefinite leave to remain.

While in Karachi he was interviewed by MI5, who decided that he was a 'nobody'. The US thought otherwise, however, and in September 2002 he was secretly flown to Morocco. Here he was repeatedly and horrifically tortured for 18 months. During that time he was questioned using information provided (he says) by the UK about his life in London. (It is now generally accepted that the US authorities have regularly used secret 'rendition' flights to move detainees to countries which can use much more brutal torture methods even than those the CIA uses in its own jails. It is also probable that Mohamed was flown to Morocco via the British territory of Diego Garcia.)

From Morocco he was taken to Afghanistan where he was again tortured in a secret CIA prison. Then he was taken to Bagram, a US air base where it is alleged at least two people have been murdered by US officers. He finally ended up in Guantánamo Bay in September 2004, nearly two and a half years after his illegal detention began.

The US case, which seems to be based mostly on confession evidence, is that he was recruited as a terrorist in a London mosque, and when in Afghanistan in 2001-2 he was trained in the use of explosives and 'dirty' bombs (devices which spread radioactive materials when they explode). His instructions are said to have come direct from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who is believed to have masterminded 9-11. The plan was that he would go to the US, rent flats and arrange gas explosions. While in Afghanistan he also participated in attacks on US troops. He got

His false passport from criminals. If these claims are true he is a terrorist and will face the death penalty if convicted in the US.

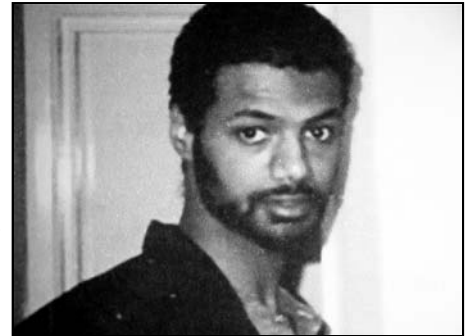
Meanwhile the Bush administration had set up military tribunals to try Guantánamo detainees. (They could not be tried in ordinary courts since their detention, and treatment while in detention, were both unconstitutional.) Mohamed was one of the first to be brought before them, but the programme was then declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Congress passed an act legalising them, however, and the administration seems determined to put large numbers of detainees on trial. Accordingly Mohamed has been put on trial again.

He now has lawyers to represent him, however, and they decided to ask the British Government for information to help in his defence. In particular they wanted any information the UK had about Mohamed's interrogation in Pakistan (in which it has admitted MI5 participated), the information collected in London which was passed to Morocco and information about the US jail in Bagram, which has seen other British residents incarcerated and allegedly tortured.

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, refused to give any information, so Mohamed's lawyers appealed to the High Court. After a recent hearing in which one MI5 witness refused to answer questions in case he was put on trial for war crimes, the High Court has asked the Foreign Secretary to reconsider his refusal. 'By seeking to interview BM in the circumstances described, and supplying information and questions for his interviews, the relations of the UK Government to the US authorities in relation to BM went far beyond those of a bystander or witness to the alleged wrongdoing.'

There have been repeated claims that the UK government has actively co-operated with illegal operations by the US, and in particular 'rendition' flights and the torture of detainees in secret interrogation centres. This goes far beyond the case of Binyam Mohamed and is becoming increasingly embarrassing to the UK, which has repeatedly denied any connivance at such practices. The UK government has often been involved in torture in the past and denials are routine: it will be interesting to see whether they are forced out of this strategy by ongoing revelations. It is even possible that with a new president in the US investigations in that country may press our government even harder than those of its own citizens.

This case brings up both moral and practical worries. Torture has of course been outlawed by all civilised governments for a long time. This rejection was codified by the UN Convention Against Torture, which came into force in June 1987. This defines torture as 'an act by which



severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person' by a public official (or someone 'acting in an official capacity') in order to extract information, and absolutely prohibits it, with no allowable exceptions whatsoever. The convention also prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment not amounting to torture.

US law also prohibits torture or 'cruel and unusual punishment', which is why the CIA have had to do their torturing outside the US.

Mohamed's treatment in the various butchers' shops he has been in over the past six years, if it is anywhere near as bad as he describes, is truly sickening (I have deliberately not tried to describe it) and something which most people would regard, as the Convention does, as inexcusable in any circumstances. US officials have suggested narrow definitions of torture (excluding, for example, repeatedly near-drowning people or sexual humiliation) but these are not intended for the ordinary courts.

There are also however practical considerations. It is not established whether Binyam Mohamed is guilty or not. If the American accusations are true, he is a criminal and deserves to be punished. What is clear is that he cannot now be brought to trial in any civilised court. He claims that his confessions were extracted by unbearable pain and are therefore meaningless. Under both English and US law any court would be obliged to disregard them, and there seems to be very little evidence otherwise. (The secrecy which surrounds such cases makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether there is or not.) His illegal detention over such a long period, and in such a variety of places where evidence is impossible to collect, makes it impossible for any prosecution to prove its case; and therefore if subjected to a fair trial he would inevitably be acquitted. Maybe, if the world comes to its senses, he may be. A vigorous initiative by our own government might bring this about. Regrettably, this seems unlikely to happen.

If our system can neither protect the innocent nor convict dangerous criminals, what use is it?

[JC]